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Crossing Borders in Irish Drama and Theatre. Art, Artist and Sacrifice

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Abstract. Among the infinite variety of borders crossed in the theatre – social, national, cultural, gender, generic, aesthetic, existential, and many others – this essay focuses on self-reflexive border-crossings in Irish *kunstlerdrama* (artist-drama) and theatre. Spanning over eighty years, in selected plays from W. B. Yeats's *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1934), through Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* (1979), Frank McGuinness's *The Bird Sanctuary* (1994) and Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* (1999), to Enda Walsh's *Ballyturk* (2014), a few forms of theatrical representation of transgressing and/or dissolving boundaries are explored while attempting to delienate which borders need to be respected, which contested, abolished, and then which to be transcended. Artist figures or artworks within drama, embodying the power to move or mediate between different realms of reality, including art and nature, stage and auditorium, life and death, reveal that sacrificial death proves crucial still in a non-sacrificial age, in enabling the artist and/or instigating spiritual fertility. In addition to his/her role, function, potential in affecting social and spiritual life, the representation of the artist necessarily reflects on theatre's art seeking its own boundaries and opening itself to embrace the audience.

Keywords: art, artist, death, sacrifice, self-reflexivity.

Theatre as an art of transformation, by its very nature, continuously practises border crossings – dissolving or transgressing, transcending or violating borders, marking or blending them, making them perceivable or hiding them. Entering the stage itself may be regarded as the greatest border-crossing in the theatre: the actor appearing on stage transforms physical place into theatrical space – as illustrated by Peter Brook's man who creates a theatrical event just by walking across an empty space whilst someone else is watching (1968, 7). The inside-outside dialectic lies, according to theatre semioticians, "at the very heart of theatrical semiosis" (McAuley 1999, 23). Theatre is the space of liminality, that is, of crossing thresholds, and the aesthetics of the performative "transforms borders into thresholds [… so it] allows for an art of passage" (Fischer-Lichte 2008, 205).

If all the world's a stage – then all the world's a border-crossing. Of course, there is no point in discussing theatrical border-crossing in such a broad sense. But the inside-outside division and its representation in the theatre is, indeed, fruitful in identifying the basic forces in a play, whether represented by physical divides on stage (emphatic doors, windows, thresholds) or remaining metaphorical and ambiguous.

In order to consciously cross boundaries, they first must be recognized and acknowledged as existing, and the reverse is also true: any attempt at, or insistence on, border crossing only confirms their existence, acknowledges their significance and marks their location. Questions to be asked concern the forms of theatrical representation of transgressing and/or dissolving boundaries. And also: which borders need to be respected, contested, abolished, and then which to be transcended? Which remain borders and which transform into thresholds? Among the infinite variety of borders crossed or dissolved – social, national, cultural, gender, generic, aesthetic, existential, and many others – I wish to focus on self-reflexive border-crossings in Irish *kunstlerdrama* (artist-drama) and theatre – without dwelling on the well-theorized relation between drama and theatre.[1] To explore how artist figures or artworks embody the potential or the power to move or mediate between different realms of reality, including art and nature, stage and auditorium, and the existential borderline between life and death. Death in all the plays I have selected to examine proves to be sacrificial in one way or another – whether it is self-sacrifice or sacrificing others. Sacrifice, this sharpest of border-crossings, has been a crucial element in both tragedy and comedy from the ancient Greeks to the present, as Gary Day asserts in *The Story of Drama* (2016). As in ancient and classical religious beliefs, and then in Christianity, the dying and resurrecting gods/God fertilize/s the life of the community, so the appeal of sacrifice in the contemporary world is that it "holds out the possibility of giving meaning to death in a culture which would rather not talk about it [...] a meaning to death that has a life-enhancing effect" (Day 2016, 9). In the *kunstlerdrama* sacrifice is frequently related to the artist figure even in today's secularized world. The representation of the artist and his/her art necessarily also reflects – in addition to his/her role, function, potential in affecting social and spiritual life – on theatre's art seeking its own boundaries and opening itself to embrace the audience.

Irish drama and theatre have often been criticized for being extensively verbal, still dominated by text, even at the time when in theatre art elsewhere visuality

1 While being aware of the crucial differences between the two forms of art, drama and theatre, the written text and the performance text, and that postmodern and postdramatic theatre primarily define themselves in opposition to the dominance of verbality in meaning-making, I believe that the written text, including didascalia, information and descriptions, can create in the "eye of the mind" (W. B. Yeats's phrase) the/a stage performance. This makes it possible to write about a play even without seeing a certain performance which, obviously, is only one interpretation and vision of the play.

and performativity were taking over the leading role. For example, Anna McMullan in 1996 observes that the Irish theatre tradition of the past hundred years is "usually perceived, as in its total reliance on text, and its avoidance or insulation from the performative experiments of twentieth-century theatre" (qtd. in Wallace 2006, 13). I hope my examples will show that, belying such views, from Yeats's theatrically innovative, avant-garde, symbolic, "total" theatre on to the present, playwrights have successfully engaged with various experimental dramatic and theatrical practices within and without more traditional forms. Theatrical elements associated with postmodernist and postdramatic theatre – such as fragmentation, denarrativization, deconstruction, freeplay, role-playing, masks (physical or metaphorical), repetition, and performance of every kind – entered the theatre although these in Irish drama and theatre are frequently *not* used to deconstruct identity or entirely abolish character. Altogether, the distrust of meaning and signification and the elimination of character in Irish theatre is less pronounced than prominent theatre theories suggest (e.g. Pavis 1992, Fuchs 1996), and even at the end-of-the-twentieth century's turn to the supremacy of the subversive power of non-verbal sign-systems, words have not lost their communicative value, dialogues can still strongly participate in meaning-making, along with the magic power of playing with words.

Thus, together with Christopher Murray and Clare Wallace, I would assert that in Ireland the division has never been too sharp, the wall never too solid between modernism and postmodernism in the theatre; "postmodernism does not seem to be acceptable as any kind of new orthodoxy" (Murray 1998, 48), nor have "posthumanist ideas been [...] successfully normalized or universally accepted. Rather, [...] the modern and postmodern coexist" in various configurations (Wallace 2006, 38).

W. B. Yeats, *The King of the Great Clock Tower*

Some of the most spectacular dramatized border-crossings occur in Yeats's *The King of the Great Clock Tower* (1934). In this symbolic, stylized, mythic play set in a King's palace in a no-place at a time defined only as close to midnight, a fairytale-like triangle and clash is acted out. A Stroller arrives who wants to see the Queen and prophecies that she will dance for him and for him alone, then he will sing to her for which she will kiss his mouth. Naturally, this outrages the King and he has the Stroller beheaded. After which the prophecy will be fulfilled.

The play reflects the "stranger-in-the-house" dramatic pattern, traditional in Irish drama since the first decades of the Irish Renaissance, in which a stranger enters the home of a family, a country cottage or a pub, changes the temperature, the

climate, stirs and often disrupts the life of those inside. This kind of transgression of borders takes a violent but very stylized, avant-garde form in *The Clock Tower*.

When the stage curtain rises, an "inner curtain," "a drum and gong" become visible on the otherwise empty stage, immediately drawing attention to the play's self-reflexive theatricality: the "Attendants," who will play the role of chorus, will introduce and close the performance inside. The Queen is sitting, wearing "a beautiful impassive mask," the Stroller arrives wearing "a half-savage mask" (Yeats 1952, 633). The greater the contrast between the visual images of the two, the higher the border, and the more audacious – and more mysterious – the transgression. The more spectacular their uniting.

In the opening scene the King reproaches his Queen for her silence: "Why sit you there, / Dumb as an image made of wood or metal, / A screen between the living and the dead?" (Yeats 1952, 634). In these first words he defines her as statue-like, as an image of art at the borderline between the living and dead, where she will actually move when she becomes animated by the appearance of the Stroller's severed head. In contrast to the fact-hunting, authoritative King, the Stroller-Poet insists on the Queen's image that he has created in his head. Although in reality he finds the Queen less desirable than what he had imagined, he continues unshaken, praising the beauty of her image. The created image is superior to kings and all their armed servants, and has its own life, which the visible world does not have to justify or validate.

The Stroller-Poet's belief in the power of imagination is fully revealed in the scenography. Yeats's drama seems to carry out the "inter-art turn" almost single-handedly in the early-twentieth century Irish theatre. He invented what theoretician Ulla-Britta Lagerroth, talking about interart relations in the theatre, calls the "language of the re-theatricalized theatre, a language […] of space and scenography, of body and choreography, of light and music. This re-theatricalized language invades the dramatic text, where it takes over the function of dialogue and monologue" (1999, 211–212). And, she goes on saying that "simultaneously with the establishment of the modern theatre language […] the theatre of silence" is being shaped (1999, 211).

Except that Yeats never approaches the new theatrical language from the aspect of Modernism's crisis of dramatic language, since the special Irish relation to language and his, the poet's cherishing the magic power of words would not allow him to silence them in the theatre. In *The Clock Tower*, along with all the visual, acoustic and kinetic elements of theatricality, words remain an indispensable part of self-expression, communication and sense-making. The whole play is written in verse, with "distinctive rhythms" used "to characterize the two men: the King's verse is full of heavy stresses and is sharply emphatic [… while] that for the Stroller is light, mellifluous and flowing, raising at times to a quiet ecstasy" (Cave 1997, 363). Meaning is created in the heterotopic space of the theatre within, and in the tension between, the different forms of art and communication.

The life-and-death border-crossing is made visible when the Stroller's severed head is brought on stage. The Head interacts with the Queen in almost mystical ways, symbolized in spoken and sung words, ritual gestures and movements. The Queen's climactic dance for the severed head on the most obvious level enacts the sexual encounter between man and woman. But its meaning may be extended, as, for instance, Shantosh Pall's reading from an Oriental (Indian) perspective shows: dance for Yeats, she argues, "is the rhythm of the universe, cosmic and microcosmic both" (1976, 113), and "transcendent reality becomes immanent in the movements of the dancer" (1976, 126). The dance symbolizes the uniting of soul and body, the physical and the spiritual, the dead and the living. That is one of those Yeatsean moments when "Unity of Being" is achieved. Where creation becomes possible.

The pitiful King with his wordly, temporal power is left out of this union. As usual in Yeats's plays, archetypal figures form pairs of antinomies: the King, the representative of rational, earthly power becomes opposed to the irrational, passionate, intuitive and enigmatic artist-figures now united, the Queen and the Stroller-Poet. Or, in other words: the world of Time (King of the Clock Tower) and timelessness (immortalized Poet).

The play concludes with the apotheosis of art and artist. The Poet-Stroller, able to step over earthly and existential boundaries, will triumph, thanks to his willing self-sacrifice. A direct contrast to the King who keeps trying to dominate. The severed head (the image itself refers to Irish mythology) of the Stroller, like the dying and resurrecting Dionysos, Zarathustra, the Romantic hero-poet, reaches the Nietzschean "tragic joy" culminating in his/its triumphant singing and the Queen's dancing for him and then kissing him.[2] The whole scenography (symbolic colours, masks, ritualistic movements, singing, dance) together makes possible the enacting of the mystery that through death – moreover, through suffering murder – the poet-hero achieves spiritual regeneration. It is also the ritual "going to hell" of the artist, as in the Hungarian folk song: "He who wants to be a piper / must go down to hell / That's where he has to learn / How to play on the pipe."

In the severed head's enigmatic song the border-crossing that has been acted out is now confirmed in words: from the perspective of the dead all mortals are only shadows. But the encounter between those on the two sides is a miracle: "What marvel is / Where the dead and living kiss?" – which happens as the Queen kisses the lips of the head at the dividing and connecting moment of night and day, old and new, at the last stroke of the "Clock tolling midnight" (Yeats 1952, 640).

The final tableau, one of the several embeddings of frozen scenes to heighten the significance of the moment, demonstrates the "conceptual base of dance in

2 As Nietzsche looked to art for meaning at the time of "the spiritual impoverishment of late nineteenth-century Europe" (qtd. in Day 2016, 16), so Yeats, greatly inspired by Nietzsche, created many of his tragic heroes and artists as self-sacrificial figures.

India, equipoise of […] opposites," the basis of all Oriental aesthetics (Pall 1976, 118). But, as usual, Yeats Westernizes the Eastern concepts and dramatic features: here not simply the pair of antinomies, but also a triangle find balance. This final tableau speaks for itself: the King (after attempting to stab the Queen) is subdued, "kneels, laying the sword at her feet" (Yeats 1952, 640) and begs admittance to the circle with the Stroller's severed head lifted up high by the Queen. Yet this frozen image, followed by the Queen's enigmatic last appearance "framed in the half-closed curtains" (Yeats 1952, 641), looking out at the audience as if on the threshold, keeps ambiguities alive, while gesturally connects stage and auditorium. As Richard Cave, the director of a 1977 London performance of this very rarely produced play suggests, in this "dramatized metaphor," this "open-ended dramatic conceit" it remains undecidable whether the King's attitude expresses reverence or exhausted defeat, if he has achieved self-discovery, or is destroyed, if the Queen has triumphed at the cost of both men, or which of the three has achieved transcendence through emotional fulfilment (1997, 364). Beginning with a still stage image and ending with a similarly still but now pregnant-with-meaning image, with coming to life, violence, ecstatic dance and miraculous singing of a severed head in between, the play turns full circle and yet keeps the boundaries open to the continuation of the cyclical movement.

Frank McGuinness, *The Bird Sanctuary*

Obviously, artist-protagonists in contemporary plays are never so heroic. Yet in Irish drama many still keep some of their Romantic-Modernist qualities. Such is the painter Eleanor in Frank McGuinness's *The Bird Sanctuary* (1994), who possesses, if not quite such magic power as Yeats's poet, then a capability for exercising black magic.

The setting stresses the artist's liminality: Eleanor's home on the edge of the sea in a Dublin suburb, physically and culturally lies on the borderline between city and country, earth and sea, her family a mixture from the East and West (of Anglo-Irish and Irish origins). Yet her home and family form a centre in this liminality, an anchor, a place to belong without which she would lose her creativity. The basically naturalistic milieu created, rife with family conflicts, is unexpectedly broadened to include a fantastic dimension: when it proves to be the price of preserving Eleanor's independence and prospects of creating art, she carries out a long-distance murder through witchcraft. A sacrifice on the altar of her art. Although the sacrificial victim is never seen or heard on stage, only appearing in references, the easy association of the artist's creative energy with her ability to kill is "unsettling" (Lojek 2004, 135). Embedding black magic, the carnivalesque within naturalism obviously destabilizes borderlines, transgresses

genre-, aesthetic-, dramatic-style boundaries, pulls down walls between different forms, qualities, concepts of space and ontological states.

The Romantic notion of the artist being both "seer and destroyer," able to evoke "chthonic forces" (Murray 2010, 75), receiving divine inspiration – but also conversing with supernatural evil forces, in Irish culture goes back to the ancient satiric poets who could not only bless but also curse. McGuinness's witchlike figures are usually revealed in their dangerous potential but then, by the play's conclusion, their creative and/or healing power comes to prevail. As if moving from the pagan, demonic wild excesses towards deeper humanism impregnated by the Christian law of love and peace.

Paintings interacting with humans participate in the dual process of marking and dissolving boundaries between art and life. Two different kinds of artwork appear onstage: the first is three realistic family portraits visible from the beginning that are part of Eleanor's self-imposed task to preserve the family. But in the play's final tableau the subjects of the paintings are repeated by the characters in the foreground who inadvertently take up the postures of those in the pictures in a *mise-en-abyme* – if not a *réduplication répétée*, it is at least a *réduplication simple* (in Lucien Dällenbach's phrase, 1977, 52). Art transcends its division from life and thus facilitates reconciliations within the family, while also enhancing the theatricality and self-reflexivity of the play (and, at the same time, playfully enacting Oscar Wilde's idea of life imitating art). It re-territorializes identity through visually confirming both continuity and change, suggesting that identity is still related to origins, family, and place.

Another kind of artwork emerges in the closing scene when a huge image of the bird sanctuary is suddenly revealed in place of the back wall. The dividing wall between nature and human artifice, outside and inside, seaside and house thus melts and transforms into art. This image in a metatheatrical manner, reflects on the two related central issues in theatrical semiosis: the "onstage/offstage dialectic and the complex relationship between the physical or material reality and the fictional, illusory world created in and by it" (McAuley 1999, 23).

Yet the very existence of the bird sanctuary painting, the culmination of the artist's whole oeuvre, the result of three years' secluded work, remains uncertain. The stage directions: "*the back wall magically reveals the bird sanctuary*" (McGuinness 2002, 342), do not unequivocally make clear if it is a painted wall, a painting framed in the wall or the wall having become transparent, offering the view of the actual bird sanctuary outside. Among the questions raised are once again those concerning artistic imagination, images created in the head: Can a strong imagination alone be regarded as art? A hypnotic power to persuade others to see something that is not there? Do the stage characters perceive it as painting or vision?

Questioning the materiality of the Bird Sanctuary painting turns the realism of the bulk of the play into surrealism. Helen Heusner Lojek brilliantly points out the

resemblance of this final stage image to René Magritte's *La Condition Humaine*, in which the landscape seen through a window is depicted in a painting on an easel, and "[p]ainting and landscape merge" (2011, 106). In McGuinness's play images and words confirm each other in problematizing the painting's materiality: the two sisters' final words remain almost as enigmatic as the picture's appearance.

> ELEANOR: If you look, you'll see. The bird sanctuary. Believe me, you'll see it. Pretend, pretend. Keep the faith, dear sister.
> MARIANNE: I do, Eleanor.
> ELEANOR: So do I, Marianne. (McGuinness 2002, 342)

Each verb in the dialogue – "believe," "keep the faith," "pretend" – contributes to the indeterminacy. Seeing is believing – but is believing seeing? The words draw attention to the active role of the viewer in the process of reception, inviting the audience to share the vision. The sanctuary entering the house in the painting and/or through the dissolving wall can be read as the interiorization of nature through imagination and/or art. In the image itself but even more in the theatrical moment of the revelation, of the transformation. This transformation becomes one of those moments that Peter Brook talks about that "scorches on to the memory an outline, a taste, a trace, a smell – a picture. It is the play's central image that remains, its silhouette, and if the elements are highly blended this silhouette will be its meaning, this shape will be the essence of what it has to say" (1968, 152).

The possibility of the total *immateriality* of the artwork that the characters and audiences see, of its being solely the magic work of the artistic imagination, conjured up mentally, takes us back to witchcraft. But by now the evil potential of witchcraft has been harnessed into human love and desire to help, make peace, and heal.

Contrary to Fredric Jameson's contention that in the globalized world "no enclaves – aesthetic or other – are left, in which the commodity form does not reign supreme" (qtd. in Achilles 2018, 70), in Irish drama and theatre the protest against that value-system runs high. The artist is urged in vain in *The Bird Sanctuary* that she should paint nice landscapes of Western Ireland because they sell well. By placing the masterpiece on/in/in place of the back wall and keeping its materiality ambiguous, the whole play juxtaposes the emotional-spiritual value of art to its material worth, asserting that art is not a commodity, not even at the time of the play's gestation, in the 1990s, when Irish society was moving fast upward towards the peaks of the Celtic Tiger.

Marie Jones, *Stones in His Pockets*

Marie Jones's *Stones in His Pockets* (1999) presents a much more overtly globalized world, in which Hollywood filmmakers intrude into the Irish countryside and turn life upside down in a small Irish village in county Kerry, Ireland's most picturesque, hence most touristy region. – Another stranger-in-the-house pattern, now in a neo-colonial context. – The film-makers use the locals as extras, with American stars, an English director and "ambitious" upstart Irish assistant directors. Mediatization, one of the weapons of globalization, is shown taking possession of people and countries as dangerously as colonization did earlier.

Stones in His Pockets is an especially potent example of how postmodernist theatrical tools can be used *not* to deconstruct identity, but to expose the disrupting effects of globalization as neo-colonialism with its construction of false identities. That, in turn, may lead back to stabilized identity that is rooted in, and grows from, reality, place, community. However old-fashioned this may sound, it embodies a form of confrontation in the theatre to the established order, which now is not the "master-narratives" (Lyotard 1984) of the nineteenth or twentieth centuries but rather the twenty-first-century's obligatory attack on master-narratives (nation, national culture, faith).

The construction of Irish identity falls into the hands and cameras of the Hollywood film-makers who are powerful enough to tell the locals how to behave, for instance, how to act out Irish peasants. The play exposes the phoniness of the film-to-be, as well as revealing how the locals benefit from it and begin to be corrupted by consumerism.

Like many other American films about Ireland, the one being shot in the play also exploits the romanticizing potential of the country. It presents the Irish through the love story of a poor young peasant and a rich Anglo-Irish landlord's daughter leading to reconciliation between the two classes, national groups, and the promise of happier life to all – full of artificiality and simulacrum. Simulacrum dominates from small details to the whole of the performance. The filmcrew, the story, action, local tragedy – everything is acted out by two Irish actors in the play, stepping in and out of the film-within-the-play, turning from one role to another in seconds. They transgress boundaries of nationality, class, social position, gender, age – and artforms – in a socially oriented examination of the possibilites and potentialities of theatre. Unlike in postmodern drama where the boundaries between actors and their roles, actors and acted, are often blurred and it becomes indeterminable who the figure we see onstage is at any given moment (Kékesi Kun 1998, 141), here the roles are clearly distinguishable. Continuous role-playing, role-changing and medial changing do not denote here the dissemination and malleability of identity. Instead, the multiple masks help to outline the protagonists' identities. And that is where resistance germinates.

This structure foregrounds and questions the authenticity of representation. Simulacrum, "substituting the signs of the real for the real" – as Baudrillard defines it – "an operation of deterring every real process via its operational double, a programmatic [...] perfectly descriptive machine that offers all the signs of the real" (1994, 2), is meant to play on the nostalgia of its viewers. Comic examples abound of creating simulacra of authenticity that may look more convincing than the original, for example, views that the primadonna's false Irish accent will sound authentic since other American films have already popularized it, whereas the cows in the fields nearby don't look "Irish enough." Or, in one of the most amusing scenes the extras are instructed to follow with their eyes the hands of the assistant directors, which stand for the film's absent chief characters approaching each other on horseback:

> AISLING: [...] my hand will be Maeve approaching on the horse ... then you will look up and stare at her ...
> [...] Simon's hand will be Rory approaching Maeve on the horse. [...]
> CHARLIE: So it us lookin' dispossessed at her hand, pretending it's Maeve on a horse lookin' sorry for us. (Jones 1999, 33)

The word "Irish" itself "has become deterritorialized, as Patrick Lonergan contends: "it [...] acts as a brand – a commodified abstraction that gives meaning to its purchaser instead of signifying the physical territory of a nation" (2009, 28) – or its psychological, moral territory. Yet, simultaneously with globalization, a counter-globalizing process begins: a search for a sense of home or place – a re-territorialization. To initiate that process in *Stones in His Pockets*, once again, death becomes necessary. The "dispossessed" protagonists are prompted to resistance by the disaster in the play's "real time" when a local young man, Sean, due to his humiliation by the film-people, walks into the lake and drowns himself with stones in his pockets. His suicide becomes a sacrifice that renews the energy of the "dispossessed" Irish to repossess themselves and prioritize the community's interest. And empowers their efforts to express themselves in creative work – in art.

Bending the weapon of globalizing film-making to their own particularity, the protagonists plan to make their own film, which then will reverse roles. The now extras will move from the periphery to the centre: "the stars become the extras and the extras become the stars. So it becomes Sean's story [...] and all the people in this town" (Jones 1999, 54).

The new film will be called *Stones in His Pockets*. A Möbius-strip kind of turning inside out the film-making that is dramatized in the play which then becomes the play that we watch. Werner Huber describes this *mise-en-abyme* with what Lucien Dällenbach identified as a "*réduplication aporistique*," where

a part or fragment of the work contains the work that contains it (Huber 2002, 20). The two theatre-actors, impersonating everyone, insiders and outsiders, become the ones who, after all, control and authenticate the whole performance in the theatre through the narrative, the transgressive power of satire, parody, imitation, that is, through performance.

In their own story, neo-naturalism will become a form of resistance: in an attempt at cultural re-territorialization, the Irish will be set in their natural physical environment. Somewhat like the "in-yer-face" radical theatre in England, here Irish reality – instead of American simulacra of painted paper-islands – represented by the cows that the hapless young man liked so much will hit the viewers: "all you see is cows, every inch of screen, cows [...] cows, just cows and in the middle of all these trandy designer trainers. [...] sinkin' into a big mound of steaming cow clap [...]. Cows ... big slabbery dribblin' cows. [...] Udders, tailes, arses, in your face. [...] wide shots. Yes, mid shots. Yes. Close ups. Yes" (Jones 1999, 58).

Taking representation into one's own hands promises one way of destabilizing globalization's exploitation and of putting into brackets the whole power-structure. At least on a cultural level. But, as Declan Kiberd encouragingly suggests, in Ireland culture might be "the one domain in which an unfettered kind of sovereignty might yet be enjoyed" (2018, 23).

Enda Walsh, *Ballyturk*

Another two-hander, role-acting play, *Ballyturk* (2014), by the critically acclaimed playwright, Enda Walsh, thematizes death itself most directly and sets it into the centre. A very Beckettian absurd, with strong intertextuality but with Walsh's hallmark of (non-Beckettian) frenetic play-acting, role-changing and self-conscious theatricality. Here even more than in the other plays, all the world is performance. As Estragon and Vladimir try various pastimes while waiting, so Walsh's characters, the nameless 1 and 2, perform. They keep impersonating fictional people whose portraits, drawn by one of them, are visible on the walls thus a many-layered acting and mirroring goes on from images to the invisible fictional characters to the protagonists enacting them as actors.

Once again, curiously enough, the traditional stranger-in-the-house pattern organizes the action in this postmodernist, definitiely non-traditional play: the two figures inside the room keep clowning until, unexpectedly, another figure, called 3, does arrive. Not Godot, but Death in a human form. Or, in Christopher Murray's words: "more a Button-Moulder from a modernized *Peer Gynt*, a collector of souls" (2017, 27). He changes the rules of the game and prompts the characters to enact their own selves, their fears and anxieties. His crossing the

border between the two sides of existence is rather dramatic and spectacular: he walks onto the stage after the back wall tears away from the side walls and crashes down making a loud noise, opening "out into a beautiful blue light – onto a small hill of green perfect grass" (Walsh 2014, 36). A colourful vision of the other world with serenity and sunshine, yet due to its stark surreality, its effect is far from any postmodern ridiculing or ironizing dreams of the other world.

What is intriguing as a form of theatre is that the frantic, sometimes nerve-breaking clowning evoking the "reality" of the village Ballyturk and its inhabitants with no coherent story or plot, gains meaning beyond itself when the actor-figures become humanized and their story begins to take shape. As characteristic of postdramatic theatre, drama's coherence, its developing a narrative is deconstructed, and action is replaced by "*states*" – as defined by Hans-Thies Lehmann. The "particular dynamic within the 'frame' of the state" he calls "a *scenic dynamic*, as opposed to the dramatic dynamic" (2006, 68; emphasis in the original). Indeed, the mad role-playing inside the closed room creates a strong scenic dynamic in *Ballyturk* – but that is not the whole play. Once the back wall opens, the "dramatic dynamic" grows and the postdramatic play begins to acquire coherence. Drama emerges when the actors step out of the "frame" into a theatrical reality. And when they are given emotional and moral dilemmas in the face of death: the Death figure offers them the choice as to which of them will join him. Which, in turn, raises questions, such as what is more difficult, to leave (to die) or to stay alive bereft. Can one save another from suffering by helping him to choose death? Character 2 is at first willing to leave but seeing how No. 1 is frightened at the prospect of being left alone, encourages him to go instead. Self-sacrifice itself obtains a new meaning.

In the last exchanges between the two men birth and death seem to come full circle. Character 2 says: "There was nothing to start with – and out of that me and you pushed words" (Walsh 2014, 50) – a daring claim for creation. "In the beginning was the Word..." in the Bible (John 1:1) – but does Walsh acknowledge that also in the theatre? A rather surprising turn since most of the play communicates not with words but with strong physical theatre. Towards the end of the play the Death-figure gives a long, philosophical monologue about life and death, concluding that "In leaving you're giving shape to life – some design and purpose for being what you are – for this is the order that all life demands [...] it needs a death" (Walsh 2014, 46). "Giving shape to life" also gives shape to art, to theatre, to the performance that in the end goes ways beyond the re-iterations and re-enactments.

Borders between reality and imagination are again crossed over and over. The overlapping levels of "reality" during the greater part of the play: the visible actors in the room, the villagers whom they act out and who are also represented in the drawings on the wall, turn out to be reduced to one: the imagination of the two protagonists. When the death-figure asserts plainly that "none of it's real,"

then figure 1 protests that "[o]nly inside our heads it is" (Walsh 2014, 44). In contrast, the world outside the room is called real life – from Death's perspective *his* world is "real:" "Everything you've imagined – it is. All life. It's out there. Everything" (Walsh 2014, 44). The play seems to suggest that the other world is more real than the one we live in where only performance – that is simulacrum, pretension, make-believe – keeps up the dynamics. And if role-acting, play – art – did not help to face the fear of death, sacrifice does – in accordance with Gary Day's claim that sacrifice helps one to cope with the inevitability of death (2016).

The self-sacrifice of figure 2 brings about a renewal or at least a promise of continuation of life: as he looks around him lost, after his friend has left, a young girl enters through the side wall – a new playmate? Someone to look after? Someone to console him? A figure of hope for life going on. Another unexpected breaking through walls, but this from a horizontal, that is human direction, as opposed to the vertical, metaphysical intrusion of the Death figure.

Brian Friel, *Faith Healer*

The last play I will address, Brian Friel's *Faith Healer* (1979) is the least spectacular, the most pared down. It consists of four monologues of three characters, who appear one after the other, there is no dialogue, no encounter at all. And yet it is most theatrical in its poverty of means.

An ironic postmodern variant of Yeats's heroic Stroller-Poet, triumphing through self-sacrifice, the shabby, alcoholic, beggar-like, failing faith healer, Frank Hardy, became probably the most emblematic artist figure in twentieth-century Irish drama. His agonizing over the contradictions of being gifted and cursed by an unusal talent, communicates the artist's – and the playwright's – urgent dilemma of being a true artist or a trickster, a "con-man;" the difference lying in following a certain "standard of excellence" as opposed to seeking the audience's favour. Real faith healing or performance. This extensively verbal play proves an early and very daring experiment with postdramatic theatre. Curiously, it becomes the most intriguingly dramatic through the words and minimal gestures, the presence and the "present of performance" (Lehmann 2006, 141), evoking the intertwined lives and deaths of the three characters.

The monologues of Frank, his wife and his manager confront the audience with versions of the same events, so we are invited to put together the story as best we can from the sometimes contradictory, other times partly or exactly coinciding parts of narratives. The differences and similarities are important markers of the working of memory – hiding, changing, foregrounding or falsifying what happened. Boundaries are crossed in many ways: physically since we hear about the three travelling from village to village in Wales and Scotland in

attempts at faith-healing (that mostly fail, but then – rarely – do miraculously work) until their final homecoming to Ballybeg, Friel's fictitious emblematic Irish village. Evidently, boundaries between reality and fiction, facts and imagination, truth and falsehood keep being transgressed in the memory-monologues. But the sharpest borderline again is that between life and death. Two of the three characters talking about their own lives, turn out to be dead, and then the dead Frank, the faith healer, comes onto the stage for a second time in the end, to talk about his own death. In a subtle indication of the dissolving borderline between life, death and art, Frank acts out a little gesture that he made on his last night in life: he crumpled up and threw away the only evidence of his miraculous healing, a newspaper-clipping. And he does just that (again), now in front of the audience. Two separate moments in time and two distinct places (the fictional place and the physical stage) are collapsed in this gesture. As well as the two different phases of Frank's life, one on each side of the existential divide.

Thus, *Faith Healer* displays the most metatheatrical complexities since it performs performance: performs theatrical art itself – partly by way of consisting only of monologues. The monologue itself – according to Anthony Roche – is the most consciously theatrical form of communication. Story-telling, considered a postmodern device of self-expression, is a natural constituent of Irish drama, originating in the strong oral story-telling tradition – even if here the audience is expected to put together the fragmented pieces and versions into a coherent narration. The almost bare stage featuring only a poster and rows of chairs in front of which the monologues are delivered also enhances self-reflexivity, which, in turn, makes the audience "a crucial participant in the faith-healing ritual" (Roche 2011, 158).

The most elaborate and challenging death-scene described is Frank's, in his own relating. He tells the audience how in their last evening together, the three made friends with a few wedding-guests in a pub, and Frank successfully cured the crooked finger of one of them. He knew that they would ask him to also cure their crippled friend, which would remain beyond his power and that this failure will be fatal. Frank's description of his last steps approaching those who will kill him, is an extraordinary evocation of self-sacrifice, ritual elevation and transubstantiation. As for the question of sacrifice for what? for whom? Richard Rankin Russell suggests that in its oblique way it serves the community, deprived of spirituality, especially in the Trouble-torn Northern Ireland of the time. A warning against the savagery of sectarianism, yet "its potentially redemptive conclusion […] points towards openness and healing beyond the individual tragedies" (2014, 141).

Frank's closing monologue vividly evokes the surrealistically formal, symmetrical space of the pub's courtyard where he was called out to heal the crippled man. At dawn, he walked "towards the arched entrance, because framed in it, you would think posed symmetrically were the four wedding guests, and in

front of them, in his wheelchair, McGarvey." And although Frank knew he would not be able to cure him, he walked towards them:

> And as I walked I became possessed of a strange and trembling intimation: that […] we had ceased to be physical and existed only in spirit, only in the need we had for each other. […] And as I moved across that yard towards them and offered myself to them, then for the first time I had a simple and genuine sense of home-coming. Then for the first time there was no atrophying terror. And the maddening questions were silent. (Friel 1984, 375–376)

This transformation, the acting out of approaching certain death in a ritualized space and with ritualized movements goes against rational thinking as strongly as did Yeats's Stroller undergoing execution for holding on to his created image and prophecy. *Faith Healer*'s closing scene magically enabling the artist-figure to create an artistic image of his own death elevates the audience to a community of witnesses or almost-participants in a ritual. And becomes a very complex, ambiguous, yet strong re-confirmation of theatre's power in creating community and asserting spiritual values in the non-spiritual age.

Seamus Heaney's poetic summary rings true even today: "*Faith Healer* has the radiance of myth, it carries its protagonist and its audience into a realm beyond expectation, and it carries the drama back to that original point where it once participated in the sacred, where sacrifice was witnessed and the world renewed by that sacrifice" (1993, 237).

Conclusion

Read together, these plays appear to outline one stream of Irish drama tradition up to and into postmodernity: taking art and artist very seriously. And, while being aware of the times and theatrical trends, these playwrights do not find it necessary to deconstruct everything and triumph in destruction. It still is possible to keep some traditional values in very modern guises, responding to the times but not being a slave to them. It is no surprise then that Declan Kiberd can say as late as 2018 that in Ireland the only "ethical language available for use in the public sphere" has been employed in the last decades by artists (2018, 18) and they, unlike other intellectuals or political leaders, never betrayed public trust, therefore people are still willing "to look to artists for pointers [… and] inspiration" (2018, 22).

From Yeats's romantically conceived artist-figure to Friel's self-doubting, run-down, failed faith-healer through McGuinness' painter devoting her art to create a sanctuary for some traditional values: family, home and art, to Jones's hopeless film-extras growing into potential film-makers, the artist still seems to have magic

powers in Ireland. Creators and destroyers, sacrificing themselves and/or their nearest and dearest, or empowered through someone else's sacrifice, they all seem to serve someone or something beyond their own selves: the community, the prestige of art, or, at least a friend in the most recent of them, *Ballyturk*, written at the time when communal concerns have been replaced by individual ones. With their metatheatricality all five plays express a belief in the necessity of facing and addressing the inevitable existential borders between life and death, but also in transcending the boundaries between art and life, stage and auditorium, and including the audience as an active partner in the theatrical experience.

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"This undiscovered country" in Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *Cré na Cille* and George Saunders's *Lincoln in the Bardo*

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Abstract. Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *The Dirty Dust* (1949, trans. 2015) and George Saunders's *Lincoln in the Bardo* (2017) illustrate two very different uses of the literary device of conversations in a cemetery. Ó Cadhain distilled the venom of selfishness and vicious back-biting found in a small rural Irish village then refined it through comedy and satire, while Saunders created a collage of voices by employing a combination of fantastic devices together with fragments of history, newspaper articles and biography to eulogize Abraham Lincoln as grieving parent and to demonstrate that love does indeed transform the world – even the world of the dead.

Keywords: the fantastic, Irish classic, Civil War, Bardo, cemetery.

The longest strongest border dividing all human beings and impinging on all lives is that between life and death. This border effectively blocks all knowledge, all communication between the approximately 600 billion humans who have lived and the 7.6 billion who are now alive. This border also serves to motivate humans to accept their lot in life, for as Hamlet remarked, the border to this "undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns puzzles the will. And makes us rather bear those ills we have" (*Hamlet* III.1). Perhaps. Although we know nothing about "this undiscovered country," that fact has not prevented writers from speculating endlessly about it and/or using some version of it as a means of commenting on what we do know: this human life lived here and now. Often such commentary is given by a revenant, ghost or spectral figure, such as Machado de Assis's Blas Cubas or Gyula Krúdy's Sindbad, who interacts with and comments on the living not from the "other side" but as a revenant who although dead wanders through this world having crossed back over that border to return to human life. A variation of this situation occurs when the revenant assumes not

that he or she is dead but rather mistakenly believes that he or she is still alive, as in the Old Irish tales of those returning from decades spent in Tír na Óg who collapse into dust once they touch the Earth or more recently the Bruce Willis character in the film *The Sixth Sense* (1999, dir. M. Night Shyanden) who learns only a year later that twelve months ago he was shot dead. In contrast, there are imaginative explorations of "this undiscovered country" seen as a continuation albeit a fantastic continuation of this discovered one, an exploration that often takes the form of conversations in a cemetery.

Two such very different instances are the best-selling Irish language novel, *Cré na Cille* by Máirtín Ó Cadhain (1949) and the American Man Booker Prize winner, *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders (2017). Both take place in cemeteries and both are dialogue novels with Saunders also employing numerous quotations from diaries, newspapers, and history records and books.

Originally published in Irish in 1949, Ó Cadhain's novel "heralded a new freedom of expression for Irish language writers, and it has generated more critical commentary internationally than any other single twentieth-century title in the language" (Eóin 2016). Typical of such commentary is that of Declan Kiberd, who judged *Cré na Cille* "the greatest novel in the [Irish] language" (2015, 7), and Colm Tóibin, who agreed that it was "[t]he greatest novel to be written in the Irish language, and among the best books to have come out of Ireland in the twentieth century" (2015, Jacket blurb) – though it had to wait until the twenty-first century to be translated and thus travel beyond the Gaeltacht borders. And, Éilís Ní Dhnibhne not be outdone claimed Ó Cadhain as "the most significant Irish writer of the twentieth century" (2015). In a singularly extravagant and very Irish gesture, Yale University Press brought out not one but two translations from the Irish into English within twelve months of one another as if to make up for the hiatus: *The Dirty Dust* translated by Alan Titley (2015) and *Graveyard Clay* translated by Mac con Iomaire and Tim Robinson (2016).[1] Thanks to those translators, readers of English may have some notion, if only partial, of how this glimpse into the "lives" of the dead became for many years the best-selling book in Irish. Here, I will be referring to Alan Titley's "remarkable elegant" (Brennan 2016) translation of *The Dirty Dust*.

1 The two translations could not be more unlike with Iomaire and Robinson sticking closely to the original to produce what some reviewers call "an academic" translation, whereas Titley's is wildly exuberant in the spirit, if not in the letter of the original. To compare examples of the two translations, see the conclusion of Mauchán Magan's review that ends with several side-by-side excerpts from the two translations and the original which clearly illustrates the distinction between the translations.

The Dead Speak of Hatred, Love and Loss

Samuel Beckett has a poetic passage in *Waiting for Godot* which describes precisely Ó Cadhain's basic premise:

> All the dead voices.
> . . .
> They talk about their lives.
> . . .
> To be dead is not enough for them
> They have to talk about it. (1986, 57)

Both novels' conversation in a cemetery feature voices of the dead who "have to talk about it" with Ó Cadhain emphasizing that his characters are corpses confined to their coffins unable to do anything but talk, while Saunders's are long-dead historical and/or invented characters who appear far more mobile, more fantastical. *The Dirty Dust* features a cast of late vituperative villagers who, while acknowledging their dead state, are clearly unable and – characteristically – unwilling to let go of any jealousy, any hatred or any suspicion of their former "friends," relatives or neighbors. While some of the dead in *Lincoln in the Bardo* rehearse their grudges, most embody a more complex relationship to the living and all describe themselves as only temporarily ill adamantly refusing to admit their death, although they are just as dead as those in Ó Cadhain's novel. While the Bardo denizens do recall being transported to "this place" in a "sickbox" still, they wait for the moment when they will regain their health and return to resume whatever activity death so-rudely interrupted; such as consummating their marriage or simply "standing very still among the beautiful things of this world" (Saunders 2017, 27). Also, although both Ó Cadhain's and Saunders' novels take place in a cemetery, the two sites could not appear farther apart with *The Dirty Dust* set in a small rural turn-of-the-twentieth-century Connemara village cemetery and *Lincoln in the Bardo* in a nineteenth-century urban Georgetown (Washington, DC) cemetery.

The Dirty Dust

The Irish have a long tradition of the dead refusing to stay dead but rising up like Tim Finnegan, to complain that those attending his wake are throwing "whiskey round like blazes" and so he must indignantly challenge his mourners, "Do ya think I'm dead?" Well, yes they did which is why they held the wake. "In plays from [Dion] Bouciault to [Brendan] Behan, a dead body arises and orates"

(Kiberd 2015, 8).[2] And, "when the dead appear in Irish plays […] they do so not as ethereal, other-worldly beings, but as embodied beings in this world" (Morse 1997, 10). In this novel as embodied corpses continuing to settle old scores and to insist on rights, land, and money that was theirs. History, even if local and limited to a small field, is never merely "past" for these characters but appears in their on-going quarrels very much in present. If the Irish have, as one wag commented, "more history than they can efficiently use," that history is kept alive and on the boil through the cultivation of the memory of the dead. As W. B. Yeats so impressively wrote in "Under Ben Bulben:"

> Though grave-diggers' toil is long,
> Sharp their spades, their muscles strong,
> They but thrust their buried men
> Back to the human mind again. (1962, 398)

Thus, in the cheap section; that is the ten shilling as opposed to the more expensive pound or the guinea sections of the Irish village graveyard the corpses in *The Dirty Dust* ring their changes on the familiar complaint, "This is how I would have ended the matter if I ha'dn't died" (Titley 2015, 44). An ancient lament for failing to complete a task, an act, or, even, to give a reply as Death, the Great Interrupter exercises his prerogative to cut the cord of life so that the Dance of Death may go on adding ever new dancers to its infinite procession. Ó Cadhain exploits this motif with an almost endless number and almost infinite variety of such complaints. His aim is satiric as he mocks the Irish reverence for the corpse "as if a tidied corpse achieved that which was withheld from it in life, a place among the revered middle classes" (Kiberd 2015, 8). As Kiberd testifies in his review of Titley's translation, "[i]ts power to disturb all official codes has not abated" (2015, 8). For instance, closely allied to the whining about not having enough time is the dominant motif of revenge which echoes throughout this Irish graveyard as its occupants endlessly repeat to themselves and each other the vengeance they were planning to exact in life and now continue to plan in death for there are some slights not to be tolerated and some wrongs never to be forgotten whether alive or dead. The dominant example in *The Dirty Dust* is two sisters: "One of them was Nell Paudeen. The other was Caitriona. She's here [in the cemetery] now. The two of them hated one another's guts" (Titley 2015, 107) and still do. In the graveyard as in the village, there is, in Yeats's memorable assessment, "Great hatred, little room" (1962, 137). Like all

2 For an extensive discussion of the nature of the Irish fantastic, see Morse, "'Revolutionizing Reality': The Irish Fantastic" (1997) and for the dead on the Irish stage as opposed to the dead on an English stage, see especially, 8–11. For a discussion of "Ghosts in Irish Drama," see Anthony Roche (1991).

the dead in the novel, Caitriona confined to her rotting coffin unable to see or talk to those out of her line of sight or out of her hearing, interrogates every new corpse asking after Nell hoping against hope for bad news about her sister only to be continually disappointed. And, she is not alone in failing to hear bad news about those still alive that she waits eagerly to hear. For instance, the story of her own funeral remained a mystery to her until a new occupant who earlier attended her burial arrived in the graveyard and could share the news. Others hear equally "bad news" of a spouse remarrying happily or of their house being abused by its new owner or of a prize field being wrested away by a long term rival. As Michael Dirda, the book reviewer for the *Washington Post*, wrote: "The cemetery resembles a crowded pub on Saturday night with everybody rabbiting on about their former aches and pains, the local gossip, one pitiful daydream after another […] [and titled his review] Never mind that all the characters are dead, 'The Dirty Dust' is full of life" (2015).

The Dead in the Bardo

The dead in the Bardo may also complain about death abruptly stopping them from completing some important act, such as consummating their marriage, but in contrast to those in *The Dirty Dust*, they adamantly maintain that death is but a momentary interruption and that they are "sick;" therefore, as soon as they get well, they will return and complete the act. Their position, they argue, is not permanent. The name, "Bardo" reflects this temporary condition as the word derives from Sanskrit meaning "transitional state" and the dead in Saunders's novel are truly in a liminal state both according to their belief that they will shortly return to life and according to Buddhist belief that they will eventually leave this state for another.[3] The novel itself is, as the novelist Colson Whitehead contends, "a collage built from a series of testimonies" (2017) or, as Leah Schelback argues, "a cacophony of voices" created through the use of "historical records, newspaper clippings, diary entries, correspondence, and pure fiction into a wall of noise" (2017). The concept of the Bardo itself as a kind of holding area after death and before whatever might come next enables Saunders to create dialogue portraits of people from all levels of society from aristocrats to servants, from free to slave, men and women, rich and poor, educated and illiterate now appropriately metamorphised into various fantastic shapes with often odd tics. Gradually readers realize that the fantastic appearance of these denizens in the Bardo mirrors their all-consuming preoccupation in life, usually one they thought they were about to realize when death struck. This may be

3 The word, *bardo* gained some popularity in the West through the translation of the *Bardo Thodol* as the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*.

Saunders' variation on Dante's rounds and pockets in hell where the damned's bodies are distorted to reflect their sins. Saunders – less judgmental than Dante – peoples the Bardo with eccentrics, such as the suicide Roger Blevins III whose great ambition was to stand "very still […] [looking at] the beautiful things of the world" (2017, 27). In the Bardo he "had grown so many extra eyes […] that his body all but vanished . . . Slashes on every one of his wrists" (2017, 27), while Hans Vollman, who died as he was about to finally consummate his marriage, is encumbered with a "tremendous member" (Saunders 2017, 123). The slave owner who prided himself in exercising his "right of first night" that he modified to include any night he wished whenever he wished, every time in the Bardo that he boasts of raping a slave his body becomes "elongated, vertical […] quite thin, pencil-thin in places, tall as the tallest of our pines" (Saunders 2017, 83). Unlike Dante's sinners in the *Inferno*, most souls in the Bardo are not forever damned since once they admit they are dead and not just sick they may then pass on to whatever the next stage may be through Saunders' invented process of the explosive "matterlightbloomingphenomenon" (2017, 275). In an interview Saunders remarks that he had been chewing on the idea for this novel for "fifteen years" (Saunders 2013, 272). And in another interview he tells of "a friend [who] told him . . . Lincoln had returned to the crypt . . . to hold his son's body. As soon as [he] . . . heard that, this image sprang to mind: a meld of the Lincoln Memorial and the Pietá" (qtd. in Mallon 2017). Those strange never-to-be-explained visits Lincoln made to the cemetery after his late son Willie was interred become the core of the novel. The death of his son was to be a defining event with terrible consequences for the Lincoln family. Mary Todd Lincoln never recovered from this loss and became less and less able to cope with the demands of her position in the White House or with those of being a parent. The President, already prone to depression, was in danger of sinking into the blackness of despair while the country desperately needed him to prosecute vigorously the Civil War.

Saunders paints a portrait of President Lincoln as grieving father as hours after his son Willie's funeral he returns to the cemetery, opens his son's coffin, takes the body out and lovingly holds it. For both Lincoln and the Bardo's inhabitants this scene is transformative. The dead's anguished plight over what was left unfinished gives way to a larger vision of human loss and love. As one of the dead observes, "no one had ever come […] to hold one of us, while speaking so tenderly" (Saunders 2017, 72). Lincoln's grief additionally reverberates beyond the boundary of this cemetery to the common pit outside the cemetery proper where black dead slaves were given a cursory burial. Prefiguring Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation these dead slaves ignore the fence dividing their common pit from the white cemetery and invade crowding round the vestibule of the mausoleum in order to also catch a glimpse of Lincoln with the body of his son, this new Pietá.

Moreover, Saunders daringly gives us Lincoln's "stream of consciousness" (Schelback 2017) as on his second visit he holds his dead son while acknowledging the finality of Willie's death. Having himself experienced the death of his son Lincoln's decision to go on with the Civil War becomes thus grounded in the stark reality of the price to be paid balanced against the good to be achieved. When he leaves the cemetery determined to prosecute the war, he leaves knowing full well that this war will entail the loss of other parents' sons numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Jon Baskin points to the importance of this scene: "Saunders's endeavors to trace the line of Lincoln's thoughts from his sorrow over his son's death to his consideration of how men should live and fight for their commitments, is one of the high points of the novel" (2017). "The consequences [of this scene in the Bardo] are world-shaping" (Mallon 2017). Moreover, they dramatically change the Bardo itself. Without his father to protect him, Willie Lincoln is in great danger as a recently dead child for the Bardo itself may easily become a prison, a final resting place, rather than a way station for such vulnerable children. Saunders creates a fantastic evil agent that attacks and attempts to imprison Willie: a carapace fashioned out of hundreds of tiny tormented souls of people who attacked others violently or who trampled on others in various ways but all of whom embodied hatred. This carapace assails Willie by sending out vine-like tendrils that trap, envelop and then begin to smother him. Those in the Bardo rise to the occasion fighting back as they work together to dramatically rescue him ignoring any danger to themselves. Once freed Willie repays them by shouting, "You are dead!" (Saunders 2017, 296).

"The Gift of Death"

In proclaiming to the cemetery's occupants the truth about their mortality Willie offers them what Jacques Derrida calls "the gift of death" (1995, 3) which does indeed "set them free" – free at last to leave the Bardo for whatever might come next. As the sign of their acceptance of their mortality they metamorphose back to their former human form losing all grotesque and/or distorted aspects of their appearance. This transformation becomes, in turn, an outward and visible sign of their abandoning all pretense of being ill, of their denying their death. Rather, their life is now defined not by what they will do once they are well but by all those events that preceded their death. The acceptance of the truth in Willie's shout, "You are dead!" "We are all dead" (Sanders 2017, 296) occurs in large part because preceded by President Lincoln's demonstration of a love that continues even after the death of the loved one. Colson Whitehead caught this aspect of *Lincoln in the Bardo* succinctly when he rightly called the novel "a luminous feat of generosity and humanism" (2018).

The Dirty Dust and *Lincoln in the Bardo* thus illustrate two very different uses of the literary device of conversations in a cemetery. Máirtín Ó Cadhain distilled the venom of selfishness and vicious back-biting found in a small rural Irish village then refined it through comedy and satire, while George Saunders created a collage of voices by employing a combination of fantastic devices together with fragments of history, newspaper articles and biography to eulogize America's greatest president and to demonstrate that love does indeed transform the world – even the world of the dead.

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Border, Environment, Neighbourhood

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Abstract. In our academic environment, borders are usually treated within the territorial-institutional demarcation or the political resistance against such actions. In his essay "What is a Border?" Étienne Balibar focuses on political examples. What kind of demarcation is at work here? What kind of boundaries integrate everything in the space of social historical relations as if there was nothing else outside us? Politically speaking, we have created the institution of border, but according to the Australian philosopher Jeff Malpas, our being-in-the-world implies all-encompassing places as the material condition for the appearance of things and living creatures. The Hungarian term "*határ*" (border) has a specific meaning referring to the natural environment of a settlement: not a concrete line, but a field with depth around the built habitat of people. Can we apply a border theory based on political issues to our neighbourhood with non-human creatures? To what extent will the concept of border be changed if we consider different spaces of contact making? Through the close reading of some fragments from Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* and Jack London's *White Fang*, my paper shows how literature and the arts help us ask and investigate such questions.

Keywords: territorial-institutional demarcation, the space of social historical relations, non-human, spaces of contact making, literature.

Seminar on a Contextualist Time Projection

If we accept Étienne Balibar's proposal (2002) regarding the border as institutional demarcation and as the place of transgression, we also proclaim that the socio-historical space is endless or at least that there is nothing outside of it. Consequently, we must prove that anything that could function as its alternative (God or nature, for instance) is a socio-historical construction. This may solve the problems within the paradigm, but if a socio-historical construction incorporates its own borders as well, it entails that we distance ourselves from or forget everything that is not a socio-historical construction.

In a paper published in 2016, in which I extended contemporary string theory to temporal directions of practices, I introduced the notion of "complementary rhythmic dimensions" (Berszán 2016).[1] Taking into consideration that time is not only measurable duration, but also rhythm, we have to take into account, besides its passage, its different rhythmic directions as well. In this case, however, direction does not stretch along a straight line but becomes the rhythm of a movement and, consequently, changing direction in time is equal to changing the rhythm. I consider approaches to a happening from different disciplinary directions as *time projections* of that happening according to the complementary rhythmic dimensions of the applied research practices. Every research practice has its special complementary rhythmic dimension. Deconstruction, for instance, is happening in the rhythmic dimension of rhetorical exchange, in a way that we enter its kinetic space by our attention gestures tuned to the rhetorical movement of signifiers. A paradigmatic space has no equivalent neighbours, because every occurrence is projected to the rhythmic dimension of a practice through which we enter that particular paradigmatic space. In the case of a contextualist approach, any practice, including literary writing or reading, is projected to the rhythmic dimension of *construction.*

Let us consider as a case study, the contextualist time projection of nature writing. At an ecocritical seminar, we read an excerpt from Thoreau's *Walden* (2004 [1854], 132–133) about the colour variations of the lake and a chapter from Jack London's *White Fang* (1906, 84–100) on a wolf cub that leaves its native cave for the first time. Students familiarized with contextualist literary criticism were sceptical: a human can be neither a lake nor a wolf cub, it is naive anthropomorphization. Any attempt to find such "passages" is merely an illusion and, of course, the camouflage of a hidden ideology. After all, nature writing is just concealment, masking real social problems.

At this point I asked the students whether such a radical separation of the human from the non-human can be one of the causes of an environmental crisis. Why should attempts at establishing contact with a lake or a wolf cub be fake from the outset? As if it were impossible to get in touch with them, except a distant and mediated relation. I reminded my fellow readers that, if we render absolute the difference between human and animal, we ignore everything that connects us. The wolf cub is also alive, is in fear of its life but finally will die. He sees with his eyes, walks on his feet, breathes… The chapter entitled "The Wall of the World" focuses on how he is scared of the unknown but, at the same time, very curious about it. His attempts, sometimes lucky, sometimes botched, all teach him a lot. Are all these things really alien or unfamiliar to us? Does

1 The practice research or practice-oriented physics proposed by me examines literature not as a corpus of texts and network of contexts, but rather experiments with the attention gestures of writing and reading practices. Actually, reading a novel or a poem means practising, in the time of reading, attention gestures prompted by the respective art of writing.

the small animal really have nothing in common with us? It is true that a wolf cub is different from us in many respects (he sees the entrance of the cave as a bright wall, likes raw meat, does not understand and approach situations with our notions, etc.), still, we can perceive his otherness only by making contact with him – by becoming his neighbour.

In his paper *Place and the Problem of Landscape*, Jeff Malpas reveals how a distant, spectatorial attitude involved in the English term "landscape" entails our separation from the non-human environment (2011). If we suppose that we only have a visual relation to the landscape, it seems that practically we have little to do with it and it has little to do with us, as if it were constructed by our vision in its entirety. Nevertheless, we have to take into consideration the influence of the landscape as well, even in the case of mere contemplation (colours may be our impressions, but they are effects of lights with different wavelengths). We are not only contemplating the landscape, but somehow step into it (at least we arrive at its margin, its border or neighbourhood) and are active there in a way or another. Thus, it not only affects us through the impressions it makes upon us, but it also influences the activity that we carry out there.

Considering all the above, even Lawrence Buell's (2001) or Christa Grewe-Volpp's (2006) approach regarding culture-nature relations as mutual or "constrained construction" become problematic, because in spite of their hint to mutual influence and their willingness to balance these influences, they ignore the concrete ways of contact-making: any kind of getting in touch is considered a construction. The concept of construction focused on the product is as simplistic as the generalization of institutional demarcation in border theory. My point is that ecocriticism should not remain an extension of previous critical paradigms to the non-human environment, such as constrained or mutual constructivism (see Grewe-Volpp 2006), ecofeminism (Plumwood 1993) or a rhetorical analysis of the structural metaphors concerning our imagination about the human–non-human relation (Garrard 2004). All these attempts insist on the determining role of culture.

If we extend the struggle for the rights of women in order to defend the rights of the natural environment, the philosophy of place (Malpas 2004) raises the following questions: Can a socio-historical space encompass the encounter between human and non-human? Can we be sure that culture and nature are connected by political relations or we have to recognize that ecofeminism turns the natural environment into representations of power relations? Is it acceptable to change the rhythms we take on by the art of nature writing in order to pursue a political endeavour or struggle? In such cases we do not read the gestures of attention that make contact with the lake or the wolf cub, but we interpret the text according to the aims and practices of a political movement. In this procedure, the lake becomes the camouflage of the fact that its adored beauty is constructed as the object of desire, and in the meantime we totally forget the colours of the lake.

Unlike these attempts, artistic practices, including those of nature writing, attune themselves to many different rhythms: this time to the colourful reflections of the lake or to the attempts of a young wolf to discover what is outside the cave. Changing the rhythms of our attention practices we cross, back and forth, the borders of kinetic spaces. While attuning our attention gestures to the playful colours of the lake or to the experiments of the grey cub, we cannot remain in the kinetic space of a political orientation. While contextualist criticism tries to unmask nature writing as an ideological construction, it refuses to depart from its ideology-oriented practice: instead of entering the multiple orientation practices offered by art, it projects these practices onto its own rhythmic dimension. In order to orientate ourselves in and between multiple rhythms, we must leave the cave of our familiar kinetic spaces – just as some of the prisoners of Plato's cave do (1963). This is the only way to discover the lively colours of the lake or the experiments of a young animal.

What Colour is a Lake?

"The scenery of Walden is on a humble scale, and, though very beautiful, does not approach to grandeur, nor can it much concern one who has not long frequented it or lived by its shore; yet this pond is so remarkable for its depth and purity as to merit a particular description" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132).

The scale in itself is free of values, but here we are speaking about a scenery on a "humble scale" in contrast to magnitudes that approach the peaks of the scale. Such ranking matters when we advertise places offered as spectacle in order to increase the flux of tourism. Magnitudes included in the world's top ten or the top three of the country are valuable in comparison with the offer of other agencies or regarding the "trophy-sceneries" of "rival" tourists, and are not necessarily connected to a considerable acquaintance with that place. Many times, the experience of a trophy-place is mainly reduced to observing the grandeur at first sight or by a single visit suggested by a certain position in the ranking system of touristic objects.

Walden also reminds us of such a ranking approach, but Thoreau's narration definitely exceeds the kinetic space of this stance. What is revealed in this narration needs a different kind of contact. *This* pond has a considerable influence only on those who have "long frequented or lived by its shore." What matters here is not the scale of the magnitude, but the manner of contact-making, because the intensity of this story stems from the manifold influences the pond makes upon us. Such an attentive turn toward the lake "on a humble scale" makes it at least as "remarkable" as its most distinguished counterpart, but not in the same way: the unforeseeable effects of its depth and purity qualify it for "a particular

description." To describe it accurately can in itself be perceived as a frequent or lasting companionship with the lake, just as a great number of visits or a period of living by its shore. After all, description is akin to the actual visit or stay in that it is another return to a place we have visited many times before or where we have already lived.

Why is Thoreau's description "particular"? We have to consider not only the style or the qualities of a discourse, but everything that is happening in the practice of writing. It is obvious that we cannot attribute all these events in their entirety to the one who is writing; they also belong to the place which triggered the literary interest and the writing activity. This place does not only merit a particular description, but it influences every descriptive gesture. In fact, we have to deal with a "four-handed" art written by a man and a lake, or rather, with an artistic piece performed by both of them for a reader who also has his own role in the performance. Description is thus a many-handed art with many protagonists, but we have to add that "hands" and "roles" themselves imply multiple participants and multiple ways of participation, just as the quality of "writer" or the act of "writing" are shared by man and lake in a joint happening.

It seems that the *particular* description by Thoreau and Walden begins with the same measured quantities we deplored in the case of ranking by magnitude: "The surrounding hills rise abruptly from the water to the height of forty to eighty feet, though on the south-east and east they attain to about one hundred and one hundred and fifty feet respectively, within a quarter and a third of a mile. They are exclusively woodland" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132). But there is a *remarkable* difference: this time measures are not abstract magnitudes taken as the ranking criteria of the offered or acquired touristic trophies, but concrete measures taking into account the shape, placement and the relief of that countryside. And we continue getting acquainted with a particular place. Lakes in the mountain area are usually supported by a brook and at the lowest point of their shore the surplus of their water overflows in a channel. But Walden is rather a huge "well" of pine and oak woods, because even though it has no visible inlet or outlet, it remains exceptionally fresh and clear, and has kept its water on a relatively constant level for thousands of years. In fact, it is a vertical river: a perennial spring was able to fill the deep crater of the pond up to a certain level, where the sixty-one and a half acres of its surface made the evaporation of a quantity of water (approximately) equal to the yield of its spring possible. More precisely, there is a sophisticated balance there, because we have to consider the "regulatory systems" of the local climate as well, such as annual precipitation, daily and seasonal temperature variations influencing the quantity of evaporation or the (changing) humidity of the air of a huge woodland. Thus, this unusual river is rising up and up as a bigger and bigger lake-surface until it joins the sea of air-moisture. Vertical river, crater-like delta and an invisible sea in the air – all these are truly *remarkable*.

We have to recognize that the uniqueness of a lake does not depend only on its grandeur, but on its secret way of being as large as it actually is.

And yet we face an even more enigmatic problem here: why is the lake that particular colour at the moment? The passage chosen for our seminar reveals a series of practical experiments which are not less interesting than the cleverly devised physical experiments. First and foremost, they prove the considerable practical difference between relation creating distance and contact-making by proximity. As the lake assessed according to its abstract magnitude will be changed by an encounter with the actual pond, Walden will also turn the default colour of all lakes into lavish nuances, if long frequented or by choosing its shore as our dwelling place. This happens not only because of getting closer in space, but also due to the way of contact-making. The first experiment makes a distinction between the cartographically standardized blue of distant waters and the "more proper" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132) colours of waters at hand. Especially when agitated, the lake can reflect the sky in the right angle even from a small distance and consequently, it appears blue to our sight. At a great distance, it always reflects the sky alone: if the weather is clear, waters are cerulean, if it is cloudy, they turn into a "dark slate color" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132).

But how is it possible then that the sea is blue one day and green on the next without any visible change in the atmosphere? Or how can it be that the water and ice of a river are "almost as green as grass" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132) even in the winter time, when there is snow around? The colour of liquid and frozen water is usually considered bluish, but one paddling in a boat and looking down into the water can discover multiple colours there. The surface of Walden, for instance, can be blue or green even from the same point of view. One solution for this enigma is offered by finding out that "[l]ying between the earth and the heavens, it partakes of the color of both" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132).

But what does it mean that waters lie between the earth and the sky? Is it not obvious that they run or accumulate on the ground? From a distance they do, but inasmuch as water is running or accumulates on the ground, it gets above the soil and thus it is between earth and heavens. Where shallow, it does not entirely cover the sandy bottom from our eyes, but it already reflects the sky as well. Partaking of the colours of earth and sky means, on the one hand, that we can see the soil in the transparent water, and we can also watch the remote sky in its mirror as a reflected depth. On the other hand, double partaking means that not only the sky, but also the land around and everything on it can be reflected in the water. From a distance from where it becomes impossible to see the soil under the water, the whole surface becomes a mirror of the sky, and thus usually blue. But "near at hand it is of a yellowish tint next the shore where you can see the sand, then a light green, which gradually deepens to a uniform dark green in the body of the pond" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132) – partly because the considerable

"body" of water ceases to be transparent, so the colour of sand disappears, and partly because the less transparent it is, the more visible its own colour becomes.

Yet all these considerations seem to be a rough awareness of the colours of a lake. There are further special experiments that will persuade us about this: "In some lights, viewed even from a hill-top, it is of a vivid green next the shore" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132). According to the explanations above, it should be blue, but it is not. It is useless to say that we see the verdure of the trees growing by the shore, because repeating the experiment "against the railroad sand-bank" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132) or in early springtime before the branches leaf, we will see an equally green inshore belt there. Thus we realize that the waters between earth and sky do not only reflect many different colours but, from a certain distance, they are masters of the colour mixture as well. From a hill-top, not very far from the lake, we can see the reflection of the blue sky and the yellowish sandy bottom at the same time. But because of the distance our eyes cannot discern them anymore, so we will see a certain green which appears as the mixture of blue and yellow.

The encounter of the seeing man with the lake does not happen in optical experiments alone. If we spend enough time getting close to the lake in many different ways, the waters "partaking" of the colours of the earth and sky will also *reflect our eye* not as a mirror, but as a partner. More precisely, we have to deal with a divided vision again, not according to the optics of transparent and reflecting water, but through the projection of seeing and looking upon each other. When Thoreau looks at the vivid green inshore belt around the deep waters of the pond, melted first in the springtime and encircling the frozen middle, he sees it as the colour of the lake's "iris" (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 132). In other words, the whole lake becomes a single big eye. According to this refined looking experiment, the pond does not reflect the viewer's eye optically but by *looking back* at him. Maybe we should rather speak about the reflection of the lake in the writer's eyes "lying between" the visible things and the inner world of the viewer and partaking of – as the lake between earth and sky – the "colours" or visibilities of both realms.

It seems evident to continue with a research on *constructions* of human vision and discourse, and the romantic and transcendentalist view of the world that includes all the previous so-called "experiments" as well. But in the context of such a discerning experiment that we have been following up to this point, this would be a mistake, just as assuming that the vivid green along the shore originates exclusively from the reflection of the surrounding woods. Remember that such assumptions have prevented us from discovering the lake's artistic mixing of colours.

Further experiments will help us decide whether we are dealing with a similar case here or not. Let us repeat the lake's eye experiment by leaving the "sand-bank" of romantic Transcendentalism. I wonder whether the rejection of this

philosophy necessarily prevents us from seeing the iris of the lake. We can change the *shore sequence* by any philosophy or ideology; it is enough to keep our eyes open to see the lake's eye too. Not because of a formal resemblance between the way the vivid field of our iris encircles the pupil and the way the melted channel encircles the frozen middle of the lake; nor through the archetypical connection alone that links the soul and deep waters by the transparency and impenetrable darkness of the eye or by its mysterious inward and outward reflection. In the attention experiments of writing, Walden reflects not only the eye, but also the act of looking. This *eye-contact* called "face to face" by Lévinas (1998) is created by a "proximity" which transforms the other into an irreducible You. The experimenter does not separate the lake from himself anymore as an element of his environment, but he is searching for its company. What else could have triggered such persistent and varied experiments like the ones we are talking about, including the two years, two months and two days spent on the shore of Walden (see Thoreau 2004 [1854], 6)?

In this "particular description" of Walden it is not enough to adjust the right angles and perspectives; we also have to tune the time of the day and/or weather conditions with a certain way of looking, then, the memory of this vision with other refined visual memories:

> Like the rest of our waters, when much agitated, in clear weather, so that the surface of the waves may reflect the sky at the right angle, or because there is more light mixed with it, it appears at a little distance of a darker blue than the sky itself; and at such a time, being on its surface, and looking with divided vision, so as to see the reflection, I have discerned a matchless and indescribable light blue, such as watered or changeable silks and sword blades suggest, more cerulean than the sky itself, alternating with the original dark green on the opposite sides of the waves, which last appeared but muddy in comparison. It is a vitreous greenish blue, as I remember it, like those patches of the winter sky seen through cloud vistas in the west before sundown. (Thoreau 2004 [1854], 133)

Catching *that* blue on the surface of the lake, in the memories or in the *mirror* of this "particular description" makes all these experiences turn into each other as "watered or changeable silks," "sword blades" and "patches of the winter sky seen through cloud vistas in the west before sundown" do by their colours. We are supposed to attune our sight to a multiple vision in order to see all these in the brightness of the same blue. It is a refined and intensive exercise in which senses and attention are working together with the lake, the sky and the always unforeseeable play of light. But no doubt it is and remains a repeatable experiment as long as there are senses, attention, lake, sky and lights. To miss

or give up this experiment in the time of literary reading would be such a great loss like describing all waters at any time as being the same default colour by which we represent them on the maps. The entire "particular description" this lake "merited" is constituted of experiments in which we learn ways of looking, we face the proximity of the other and we find ourselves in its company. This is what goes beyond Romanticism (a commonly accepted view of Thoreau's art of writing) in *Walden.* It is not enough to recognize the style, the philosophy of Transcendentalism or our own ecocritical projects in the concrete literary writing and reading experiments – all these are reflections of our culture. Among and beyond them, we are supposed to take into consideration the pond as well. If we really want to read Thoreau's literary experiment, it is not enough to reveal the author's prejudices, his previously acquired knowledge or its contexts – we are invited to enter his experiments in the course of reading.

Writing in itself is a *mirror* (this is the Hungarian term for the print space of a page as well), so we can create experimental contacts with it as the dweller of the forests did with the lake in the course of two years, two months and two days. Paying attention in different ways or "looking with divided vision," we can see the culturally (epistemologically, disciplinarily or historically) discerned styles, periods or currents together with the places and creatures that surround us: the lake, the sky, our own eyes reflected by them or their eyes looking back at us. The company of the lake breaks through the romantic style as the yellowish sandy bottom breaks through the green of the Walden's body. It is worth learning how to look in the time of reading in order to see more than the historical text or the Transcendentalism of that period – in order to perceive the lake as being there then and now. It is recommendable to read this "particular description" not from the perspective of the history of culture alone, but also as the art of the lake. All these are possible by experiments that we can try to execute during our reading or – why not? – on the shore of a lake as well. Any place can be unique by its amazing richness or versatility, irreducible to a mere material environment. Or, in other words, somebody who has read Thoreau cannot say that a lake is merely water. "Walden" becomes a real proper name because its signified is one of our acquaintances, and *vice versa,* of course.

The Wall of the World as Border-Slit

The first book I read myself at the age of ten was *White Fang*. Before this experiment, adult readers had mediated between me and the books by reading or telling me stories, but then I tried myself to get through the *letter-wall of the world*. I stumbled through the paths of rows. Sometimes, I forgot the first part of a long sentence, so the second part just hung in the air: I could not incorporate

it into the text I was just reading. There were sequences I felt I could understand apart from the whole, but I could not understand how they were connected to the description or the plot-sequence I was reading. I tried to hear the problematic paragraphs in the voice of my primary school teacher or my parents, but the cadence of their sentences as I remembered them did not fit among those I was actually reading. Soon, I got a headache, so I had to stop reading. On the first pages, the awkward pencil marks, sometimes in the middle of a sentence, show how far I managed to get with my attempts. But in spite of my failures, I tried over and over again. I read a paragraph several times until I managed to put the pieces together and to orientate myself in the field of its meaning.

The great discovery came after several weeks, when I realized that in the time of reading I was allowed to forget the sentences. This was my chance to really breach the letter-walls of the world. From that moment on, I stopped feverishly following rows of letters, and instead, I focused on the events that happened to the wolves; these held me spellbound. The wall of letters "suddenly leaped back before [me] to an immeasurable distance" and "[a]lso, its appearance had changed. It was now a variegated wall, composed of the trees that fringed the stream, the opposing mountain that towered above the trees, and the sky that outtowered the mountain" (London 1906, 87–88).

Previously, to me the wolf had been a maleficent beast of fairy tales, but then it became not only a loveable creature, able to form an attachment to men, but together with him, I could also find passages between the mysterious worlds of animals and humans. In the meantime, we had become so attached that after finishing the book I got a dog friend straightaway, and thirty-two years later I named my son by the old Hungarian name *Farkas*, meaning wolf.

All these were possible because this novel is not only a series of fabulous adventures, but also a collection of fascinating attempts to find passages between different kinetic spaces. As the grey cub leaves his native cave for the first time, so does he arrive suddenly among humans and their dogs. As parental authority is replaced by the authority of "gods," he is urged, on the one hand, to adapt himself to new rules, and on the other, to accommodate his instincts, skills, and abilities to the dangers, constraints, temptations, situations, and fellow creatures he meets in the meantime: he has to fight his violent masters and ferocious enemies, to do his job in an Indian village, or work as a sled-dog with gold miners, and finally, to live in the company of the Love-master. London's narrative is not only a story about these themes, but also an attempt to find common kinetic spaces with a wolf through writing. Let us read the chapter entitled "The Wall of the World" and see what kind of border theory it requires, and what kind of border crossing practices are revealed to us.

Institutional demarcation is not an unprecedented cultural achievement. Marking territories or the "border incidents" of fear and curiosity are much earlier, and still

influence our cultural actions as a pre-cultural heritage. It is true that civilization has overgrown the passage-ways linking the two sides, but such connections cannot become totally insurmountable until – similarly to other creatures like wolves – blood runs in our veins. The pressure of a global environmental crisis warns us to reinforce our neighbourhood with the non-human environment, because in spite of separating it many times and in many ways from ourselves, its proximity cannot be devoid of passages. London, as member of a civilization assaulting Alaska, still remembered the experiences of the adventurers going into the wild by dogsleds and already felt the delicate differences between passage-ways: how a dog can return to the wolf-pack in *The Call of the Wild*, how a wolf becomes a dog in *White Fang*, and how people find ways between their civilized world and their onetime home, the surrounding wilderness.

Following the wolf cub getting through the wall of light means the same two-directional movement, because in the meantime we also learn how to cross the border between different kinetic spaces: writing practice discovers the rhythmic dimension of the young wolf's experiments, just as the little wolf discovers the world outside the cave. Even though we have already acquired proficiency in several kinetic spaces, while for the wolf cub, this was the first attempt, we would also face many surprises in his story, just as the wolf cub would not stop experimenting.

What does a new kinetic space mean? Occurrences that are impossible in the previous ones. For instance, you can dip in a wall, which previously seemed impossible:

> The substance of the wall seemed as permeable and yielding as light. And as condition, in his eyes, had the seeming of form, so he entered into what had been wall to him and bathed in the substance that composed it. […] He was sprawling through solidity. […] The wall, inside which he had thought himself, as suddenly leaped back before him to an immeasurable distance. (London 1906, 87)

The wolf cub confronts a rule he has obeyed so far, namely his mother's repeated prohibition. But crossing the border of the cave cannot be reduced to this transgression. The border between instinctual fear and curiosity that he would cross several times back and forth during his first discovery trip is equally important. And there is the wall, previously known as a solid border delimiting space, which unexpectedly has become passable in the form of a wall of light, hence opening a hole on the cub's formerly familiar kinetic space.

During his cave-life, the wolf cub first learned to orient himself with the help of his mother's gestures preventing him from getting close to the light wall, and to conform to the solid rocks that were impeding his tender nose. Even when alone

in the cave, he attuned his gestures to these impulses knowing what to follow and what to avoid. His instinct for concealment "suppressing the whimpering cries that tickled in his throat and strove for noise" (London 1906, 85) was another impulse he obeyed when he heard the foreign sniff of the wolverine at the entrance. From the beginning, he tried to approach the wall of light, because it was shining much brighter than any other wall of the cave. He learned to resist its attraction, because his mother reaffirmed that it was prohibited for him, but the temptation persisted. Practical orientation is unavoidable because of multiple impulses reaching us simultaneously. The grey cub was familiar with his mother's warnings and with the instinctual fear of the unknown, but he also felt the attraction of the light and the urge of curiosity. During his cave-life, he had first learned to orientate himself by following the previous restrictions, and ignore the enticement. Or more precisely, to tune his gestures to the impulses of the former instead of and against the latter. The kinetic space in which he acquired proficiency this way was not merely the scene of the cave: orientation attempts I sketched out above all belonged to it, just as the physical environment.

"Entering the wall of the world" becomes possible when the growing cub dares to follow his increasing curiosity and the thrill of light for the first time, rather than his mother's warning and the rule of fear. But border crossing cannot be reduced to this transgression in the sense of disobeying a rule, because it also represents a practical transit into another kinetic space: learning how to orientate himself according to other impulses and urges. Henceforth, something utterly different happens to him than ever before: he enters the wall formerly strictly precluded by his mother for the first time, and breaches the resistance of the surface previously known as solid. And if entering the wall is possible, that means that the wall is not exclusively wall-like, but it can also be hole-like. The cub changes his practical orientation among the same variety of impulses and urges he has already been exposed to, and this leads him to the discovery of a new kinetic space in which different occurrences are unfolding.

By comparison, the down-hill experience when the cub, only familiar with a horizontal ground, rolls down the slope cannot be considered a new way of orientation. He was merely swept away by the current of a happening in which he failed to orientate himself. "The unknown had caught him at last. It had gripped savagely hold of him and was about to wreak upon him some terrific hurt" (London 1906, 89). But inasmuch as the drift in the unknown current had not taken a disastrous turn, it offered a chance for a new way of orientation, accurately followed by the narrative:

> He traveled very clumsily. He ran into sticks and things. A twig that he thought a long way off would the next instant hit him on the nose or rake along his ribs. There were inequalities of surface. Sometimes he overstepped

> and stubbed his nose. Quite as often he under-stepped and stubbed his feet. Then there were pebbles and stones that turned under him when he trod upon them; and from them he came to know that the things not alive were not all in the same state of stable equilibrium as was his cave; also, that small things not alive were more liable than large things to fall down or turn over. But with every mishap he was learning. The longer he walked, the better he walked. He was adjusting himself. He was learning to calculate his own muscular movements, to know his physical limitations, to measure distances between objects, and between objects and himself. (London 1906, 91)

Consequently, the cub learned to walk on unlevel terrain. Later on, he acquired experience in swimming. At first the river had also "gripped savagely hold of him," but he learned something new again. He realized that by moving his legs under the water and stretching his neck, he could maintain himself on the surface of the smooth sequences of the river. And this was enough for the moment to escape from the unknown flow (or the flow of the unknown). As if his legs had known what they had to do in the water. Also, when he stopped rolling down the slope, "as a matter of course, as though in his life he had already made a thousand toilets, he proceeded to lick away that dry clay that soiled him" (London 1906, 89). Outside the cave, everything was fearfully or amazingly unknown, but in the same time, it seemed that he was cut out for this kind of unknown and the unknown was cut out for such creatures dropped here through the "wall of the world." Every machination of the unknown made him unsure of this, but every discovery and learned motion confirmed his feeling that, after all, he was fit to meet the surprises. Once, he chanced upon a ptarmigan nest, where he could eat live meat for the first time and could try out fighting as a predator; and once, his misfortune led him to a weasel, which could have easily turned into disaster, had his mother not arrived just in time.

How does narration guide us in all these happenings? It offers attention exercises through which we learn how to orientate ourselves in the kinetic spaces of the wolf cub. It is important, but not enough to be familiar with the place where the cub is wandering. We need to get in the rhythm of his orientation attempts as well. London's narrative offers a series of such experiments. Of course, it is always difficult to combat the tendencies of our own ways of orientation. At the beginning we may repeatedly return to our previous kinetic spaces, just as the wolf cub was kept from entering the wall of the world. The only solution is the same both for man and wolf: to turn toward impulses that get them out from their familiar ways of orientation. How did the wolf cub learn that it was forbidden to approach the entrance? Based on our contact-makings with animals, including hunting, livestock raising, ethology or animal psychology, we can identify two kinds of incentives: educative impulses from his mother and the instinct of fear

that came from thousands of previous generations, but in one way or another, he needed to incorporate it into his own life. "Possibly he accepted it as one of the restrictions of life" (London 1906, 84), such as hunger or his mother's warnings. This "possibly" is not only a logical deduction, but also a search, sometimes doubtful, sometimes hopeful, for the other's kinetic space.

We can follow the mother's instructions, the limitation by solid walls and hunger, and the unknown legacy of fear, because similar impulsions are experienced by us too. However, we have to be cautious not to bestow the wolf cub in a kinetic space unreachable for him. "He did not reason the question out in this man-fashion. He merely classified the things that hurt and the things that did not hurt. And after such classification he avoided the things that hurt, the restrictions and restraints, in order to enjoy the satisfactions and the remunerations of life" (London 1906, 85). After these logical explanations of fear and curiosity, narration trends towards the practical experiments of the cub in order to learn (and teach us) new ways of orientation by gestural resonances.

What happens to the little animal when he tries to touch the wall of light "with the tender little nose he thrust out tentatively before him" (London 1906, 87) the same way he touched the other walls of the cave many times before? Approaching the strange wall from the point of view of his earlier cave experiments is already attuning our orientation to his attempt, and hence, we are also surprised by the upcoming events that happen in the wall and with the wall. Border crossing between our human kinetic space and the wolf cub's kinetic space occurs by writing and reading such *surprises*. Our entering the unexpectedly soft wall or the wall suddenly leaping back are not happening in the kinetic space of a banal, unimpeded exit through the entrance of the cave, but in the kinetic space of something impossible that miraculously becomes possible. It is happening neither to a human, nor to a wolf cub alone, but to both: as an encounter between the human and the wolf cub in a common kinetic space. This time we do not meet the cub on a trail in the forest, but we are following the trail of his attempts and everything that is happening to him as a result of these practical choices. Being with and at him does not only mean a common scenery, nor a position that makes possible observing what is happening to him, but intensive attention exercises which follow the temporality or rhythm of his gestures.

Acquiring proficiency in a kinetic space is not equal to certain functions in action, such as advancing on an unlevel terrain or avoiding collisions with impediments. It is also the experimentation or practical resonance with the gestures which facilitate us in advancing forward and avoiding obstacles. We do not merely observe whether the wolf cub succeeds in getting out of cave or not; we also follow the shock of entering the substance of a wall, and that of the wall leaping back to an undetermined distance. In the kinetic space of observation, one can neither follow the cub entering the wall, nor the wall leaping back. For such

happenings we have to cross the border of observation by entering the kinetic space of the cub's experiments. Anything that happens beyond a familiar kinetic space, *practically* equal to Plato's cave (1963), proves to be as surprising to us as the outer world is to the grey cub: writer and reader are both fascinated by seeing the entrance as a wall of light, by dipping in its bright substance or noticing that it suddenly leaps back to an undetermined distance.

It is just as exciting as patting an adult wolf berserk of being closed in a cage and beaten repeatedly by humans, or as for a wolf being touched for the first time by a human hand without biting or snarling (see London 1906, 249–254). When Matt, the dogmusher saw this, he almost dropped the pan of dirty dish-water. It was not a coincidence that on the only coloured illustration of the 1974 Hungarian edition on the first page of the novel, he was seen dropping it. And it was not a mistake of the illustration that the wolf harkening to any noise and motion, at that time did not instantly react to the opening of the cabin's door, or to the voice of the dogmusher. Matt is, in fact, an illustration of the reader in this picture. If somebody had seen how Weedon Scott, the Love-Master was patting White Fang, without noticing the wolf's incredible border crossing between the space of violence and the space of amicable proximity, he would not have been so astonished. Border crossing here is a fascinating change of intensity. A wolf that considers people his fiercest enemies is being so enthralled by such intensive friendly gestures that he forgets to snarl and bite. And the new master, once already bitten by White Fang, is now reaching out his bare hand again without defending himself against the teeth. Even the wolf is astonished. He notices that this is not a sophisticated human trickery by which the new master wants to bear down on him, nor the acquiescence of a weaker pack member making himself vulnerable in front of the alpha-male. This unknown gesture of the Love-master means a gentle self-devotion of the stronger party, urging for an equally gentle requital. Yes, an animal can definitely recognize this. And for the first time, the berserk wolf follows, yet half-willing, something totally different than his defending and aggressive innervations. And the same way the wolf forgets to snarl and bite, albeit being in the proximity of a man, Matt also forgets that he is balancing a pan filled with dish-water. The exciting happening between the wolf, inapproachable yesterday, and Love-master shifts Matt from the careful balancing of the pan. An intensive rhythm draws all his attention and he attunes his gestures to it. The reader is invited to follow London's narration in the same manner, not in order to read a series of fabulous adventures, but to transit into new kinetic spaces in the time of reading. Akin to the pan dropped from Matt's hands, the reader is dropped from his everyday routines, because his attention is attuned to the intensive contact-making between a human and an animal.

Both Thoreau's and London's writings resonate to refined and strong gestures, this is why these are very intensive happenings themselves. Even though as their

readers, we are not the new Love-masters of White Fang, we might enter the rhythm of happening the way Matt does. This is enough to learn how to orientate ourselves in the time of these gestures and this knowledge creates holes on our familiar kinetic spaces in a very similar way the wall of light did on the wolf cub's cave. It is true that the border distinguishes and separates fields, but according to the above examples, it can also be a hole towards a different kinetic space. It seems to be an impassable wall until we keep a distance or approach it through our skills provided in the *cave* of the socio-historical space. As we manage to find a way out (in the time of reading, for instance), the transgression of an institutional demarcation line appears as only one possible way of transition through border-slits. There are many other ways too, in accordance with the rhythms our attention is attuned to. Those gestures of attention by which we get acquainted with the colours of the lake, pat the wolf or follow these practices in the time of reading are able to cross the border of alienation between us and our non-human company, to shape our practical orientation in a way that we learn to transit between kinetic spaces distinguished and separated along their rhythmic dimensions.

Conclusions

Both Thoreau and London implement frequent and/or durable experiments in order to get in touch with the non-human other. Living more than two years on the shore of the lake, mushing by dogsled in Alaska or domesticating a wolf are not ideological patterns, but experiments to get acquainted with the projections of the lake's body and with the behaviour of an animal, influencing us and being influenced by our own behaviour. How do such acquaintances change our relation and responsiveness to the natural environment? They help us, for instance, to realize that neighbourhood is not only demarcation, but closeness as well. Or proximity in Lévinas' sense (Lévinas 1998) – not always the same responsibility, but various experiments of contact making.

The literary description of the lake or the literary narration about a wolf can draw the reader's attention to the events of the non-human environment, because these writing practices are themselves very intensive labour of attention. After examining the way nature writing is engaged in a symbolic construction of nature, we have to deal with the ways a lake or a wolf cub participates in the art of writing. How do the writer, the reader, and the non-human environment become each other's company as neighbours? Consider that if there were no lakes and no animals on our planet, it would be absolutely impossible to invent such a description or such a narration we have enjoyed here. The lake engages our gaze into very demanding experiments. The wolf cub is himself a very skilful experimenter and as such, very close to the refined and intensive literary reading and writing experiments.

A possible final conclusion could be this: if border does not only refer to an institutional demarcation, but to neighbourhood and to the company of the other, we have to extend Balibar's theory in two ways: 1. towards the spaciousness of the ecosystem (beyond the socio-historical space) and 2. towards the spaciousness of parallel kinetic spaces in contact-making. By doing the first, we can find out that there are places and creatures beside us and our culture. And through the company of these places and creatures, the second can help us find alternative ways of orientation in addition to the socio-historical one.

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Dracula – Hybridity and Metafiction

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Abstract. Due to his supernatural nature, but also to his place of origin, Bram Stoker's well-known character, Dracula, is the embodiment of Otherness. He is an image of an alterity that refuses a clear definition and a strict geographical or ontological placement and thus becomes terrifying. This refusal has determined critics from across the spectrum to place the novel in various categories from a psychoanalytical novel to a Gothic one, from a class novel to a postcolonial one, yet the discussion is far from being over. My article aims to examine this multitude of interpretations and investigate their possible convergence. It will also explore the ambivalence or even plurivalence of the character who is situated between the limit of life and death, myth and reality, historical character and demon, stereotype and fear of Otherness and attraction to the intriguing stranger, colonized and colonizer, sensationalism and palpable *fin-de-siècle* desperation, victim and victimizer, host and parasite, etc. In addition, it will investigate the mythical perspective that results from the confrontation between good and evil, which can be interpreted not only in the postcolonial terms mentioned above, but also in terms of the metatextual narrative technique, which converts into a meditation on how history and myth interact. Finally, it will demonstrate that, instead of being a representation of history, Bram Stoker's novel represents a masterpiece of intergeneric hybridity that combines, among others, elements of history, myth, folktale and historical novel.[1]

Keywords: metafiction, historical writing, hybridity, plurivalence.

The myth of Dracula has undoubtedly become one of the most prolific and interesting legends of the modern age. Since Bram Stoker published his famous novel in 1897, the theme of the vampire and of his Transylvanian castle has been over-circulated and recycled in various areas of pop culture – from movies to graphic novels, from music videos to anime, from Halloween costumes to toy

1 This article is part of a thesis entitled *Writing into Existence: Rethinking History through Literature in* Beowulf*,* Dracula *by Bram Stoker, and* The Enchantress of Florence *by Salman Rushdie* submitted at Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia, USA, in December 2017.

figurines. However, the myth's popularity has also translated into an array of critical readings whose often conflicting variation has led to controversy. As Jarlath Killeen observes, "*Dracula* has provoked a plethora of different critical readings from literary critics, who have seen him as everything from a Jew, to an Irish landlord, to an Irish rebel, to an incarnation of sexual perversity, to a primordial savage: [and] he is all these things and more" (2009, 87). Nevertheless, this variation risks deconstructing its own premise because, as Carolyn Hartford notes, quoting Maud Ellmann, the multiplicity of meanings associated with the character of Count Dracula might eventually make that character lose his significance. Moreover, Hartford continues,

> in a sort of Occam's Razor of literary criticism, for some critics it may seem preferable for a literary figure or work to have a single meaning, or a small, manageable set of meanings, with other interpretations readily identifiable as wrong. A wild proliferation of meanings, without obvious boundaries, may seem to make a mockery of the entire exercise of literary analysis. If something can be made to stand for anything, then ultimately, it stands for nothing. (2012, 49)

Indeed, if earlier critics have interpreted Stoker's novel in terms of psychoanalysis or have considered it an example of the clash between monopoly capitalism and the proletariat, among the multiplicity of the more recent interpretations, one important category is represented by those who talk about *Dracula* as a mythopoeic text exploiting mythical patterns that are, as Matthew Beresford notes, well-documented throughout the history of many European cultures, from the Greek, Balkan, Central European, and Norse mythologies to the Western Christian beliefs in which Judas becomes the embodiment of the first vampire (2008, 19). Hartford herself concludes that the novel "reinscribes an archetypal mythologem" also present in the abduction and rape of Persephone in the Greek mythology (2012, 50). The critic believes that Dracula is a modern image of Hades, and Lucy's violation is reminiscent of Persephone's rape eventually agreed upon by Demeter, because it is performed with Mrs. Westenra's unknowing consent. Iulius Hondrila, on the other hand, examines the very concept of "myth," following Mircea Eliade's 1959 definition of the myth as a "paradigmatic model that tells the sacred history of a primordial event which took place at the beginning of time" and argues that, even though, at a more general level, the myth of the un-dead vampire, a variant of the myth of immortality, "goes centuries back in Eastern European folklore," the Dracula myth in particular only came to life in the novel, and it was consecrated by the power of its polymorphism (2009, 89). Also quoting Mircea Eliade, this time his 1961 study *The Sacred and the Profane*, Beth E. McDonald believes that Transylvania and Dracula's

castle represent profane spaces, and "Dracula's invasion of England becomes a de-creation of the sacred, extending chaos to the religious institutions and habitations of the British population" (2010, 99). As she concludes, the legend of Dracula is a "numinous fiction, […] a story of salvation, of initiation into the sacred," in which humans "evaluate their own evil potential and their longing for reaffirmation of a spiritual future because the chaos of the unknown, the chaos of living death, is too frightening" (McDonald 2010, 136).

Other critics have pointed out the Gothic features of the novel. In *The Cambridge History of the English Novel* edited by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes, Richard A. Kaye affirms that *Dracula* belongs to the category of the *fin-de-siècle* texts heavily influenced by Darwin's theories, and that the vampire is the embodiment of the bestiality that overshadows human nature representing an underworld of perversity (2012, 446), while Peter K. Garrett considers *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* expressions of extreme sensations, and regards Stoker's novel as the most lurid of the monster stories in the nineteenth century, one that proves how sensationalized Gothic fantasy can use realistic techniques such as the diary or journal to convey the preternatural (2012, 469). Catherine Wynne, in her turn, connects this sensational dimension to Stoker's passion for the theatre, more specifically, for the plays of the eighteenth century, which, like the Gothic novel that had a "rich machinery of spectacular potential," also placed their action in ruinous castles and depicted gloomy forests or stormy seashores (2013, 13). For Killeen, in his comprehensive study *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914*, *Dracula* is another example of what he calls "the horror of childhood," Victorian texts in which the characters are orphans "who have relapsed into versions of their own childhood, and who are desperately searching for substitute parents to comfort them in the face of a terrible new father" (2009, 84). Killeen continues by affirming that "Dracula is a monstrous translation of the God the Father Almighty, whose desire is to make all the characters his 'children of the night,' […] an ultramasculine threat to his hysterically effeminate enemies, […] [and] a child-abusing patriarch" (2009, 86). In addition, Killeen explains, Van Helsing becomes the Count's double in the plot, "a bereaved parent whose own son died," and who "goes on to convert all the Crew of Light into his children" (2009, 88). Finally, Ross G. Forman postulates that Stoker's novel contains the fear of malaria associated with racial fears, and that malaria offers the key explanation of "how the text functions as a body of writing to be acted on by agents that are ostensibly both internal and external to it – agents that actively blur the distinction between different narrative forms (the novel, the newspaper, the medical report, the diary, etc.) and in doing so actively performs vampirism on these genres so as to co-opt them" (2016, 927).

Nonetheless, the most substantial number of critical analyses of *Dracula* in recent years has been dedicated to the postcolonial implications of the novel. To a certain

extent, the references and metaphors of racial anxieties are present in many of the previous texts cited – for instance, Hondrila, Killeen, and Forman also allude to problems of race and otherness mainly because these problems are familiar themes of Victorian literature in general and Gothic novels in particular. As William Hughes and Andrew Smith observe in their introduction to the collection of *Gothic Studies*, the Gothic "has historically maintained an intimacy with colonial issues, and in consequence with the potential for disruption and redefinition vested in the relationships Self and Other, controlling and repressed, subaltern milieu and dominant outsider culture" (2003, 1). Moreover, the two critics assert:

> Gothic fiction in this respect proclaims the basic contesting powers – intellectual, physical, spiritual – that are all too easily lost behind the specificities of Empire writing, both fictional and theoretical. Empire, in Gothic writings, is frequently conducted at a personal level, where the invasive urge and its frequently negative consequences hold a synecdochal relationship to excesses committed under numerous names and in diverse theatres of culture. Gothic fiction arguably opens up to view the power relationships that the fictions of politics strive to conceal. (2003, 2)

In the case of *Dracula*, however, there are two types of postcolonial critical interpretations: one that interprets the novel in the wider postcoloniality of the world, and one that is more strictly interested in the Anglo-Irish postcolonial dimension. The two of them are, nevertheless, related as the issues of British postcolonialism transgress the borders of Ireland and become metaphors of universal racial struggles.

In probably one of the most important articles dedicated to the Irish postcolonial perspective, Joseph Valente speaks of what he calls the "metrocolonial Gothic." This type of Gothic, Valente asserts, emerged in Irish literature after the Act of Union in 1800, an act through which "the Irish people found themselves at once agent and object, participants-victims, of Britain's far-flung imperial mission – in short, a 'metrocolonial' people" (2008, 46). Being a racially mixed author, with a father of Anglo-Saxon descent and a Celtic mother, Stoker "was a member of a conquered and a vanquished race, a ruling and a subject people, an imperial and an occupied nation" (Valente 2008, 47). Therefore, he installs in his writing what Valente calls a 'double-born' device built on "a structurally determined ambivalence, even skepticism, toward the racial distinctions, social hierarchies and political assumptions that inform the Anglo-Protestant literary heritage" (2008, 48). Consequently, in Valente's terms, the novel becomes "a far less reflexive 'Victorian' elaboration of ethno-national anxiety and a far more vivisective, incipiently Modernist, engagement with the identitarian mindset" (2008, 48). Valente's observations are continued by Calvin W. Keogh, who in

his article "The Critic's Count: Revisions of *Dracula* and the Postcolonial Irish Gothic," includes them in the larger category of Irish postcolonial investigations together with the ideas of critics such as Luke Gibbon and Joe Cleary. Keogh in his turn contends, however, that "the novel also lends itself to revisionism in the direction of postmodernism. Systemically multilayered and thoroughly fragmented, it relentlessly recycles earlier fictions and proconnects with alternative versions in newer media and with the kindred and ever-proliferating 'semi-demons' of the twentieth century popular culture" (2014, 206).

Contrary to Keogh's progressive view, critics such as Robert A. Smart, Michael Hutcheson, or Raphaël Ingelbien consider Stoker's text a metaphor for a conflicting or painful Irish past. If Ingelbien compares it with Elizabeth Bowen's family memoir *Bowen's Court* and concludes that both of them contain the themes and descriptive strategies of the Anglo-Irish tradition, and that the Count resembles an Ascendancy landlord (2003, 1089), Smart and Hutcheson argue in their 2007 article that the historical stories in *Dracula* are a camouflage story for the "one tale they cannot or will not tell," a tale that is "hidden in cultural memory" – the tale of the Great Hunger or Famine in Ireland between 1845 and 1851 (2007, 2). In a similar fashion, Smart asserts a few years later in another article included in a 2013 volume edited by Tabish Khair and Johan Höglund that:

> In addition, these postcolonial elements of the Irish vampire tale have most to do with the fraught relationship between the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy and the Catholic majority of the colony; this troubled divide between the two cultures of colonial Ireland produced a monstrous semiotics in which Protestant fears about the Catholic majority were refracted through a register of terror in which Catholics and Catholicism became monstrous, vampiric, as well as desirable, in another misalignment typical of this Gothic tradition. (2013, 13)

Critics that go beyond the discussion around Anglo-Irish postcolonialism place the novel in the more general light of cultural issues involving race. In his 1990 seminal article, "The Occidental Tourist: *Dracula* and the Anxiety of Reversed Colonization," Stephen D. Arata observes that through *Dracula*, Stoker brings the terror of reverse colonization, typical for a *fin-de-siècle* Britain whose world power was declining, very close to home (1990, 623). In Arata's terms, Jonathan Harker's journal expresses Orientalist stereotypes, while in reverse the Count's actions in London mirror the British imperial activities in the colonies. Moreover, the terror that the Transylvanian character inspires is generated by the fact that he can "pass" as a Westerner; this impersonation, this talent for mimicry, was always represented in Victorian texts as unidirectional – it was always Westerners who could pass as natives, and never the other way around.

Similarly to Arata, Mario Vrbančić also notes the fear of reversed colonization: the vampires are an expression of what the British at the time used to call the "Eastern Question," an example, Vrbančić explains, of the horrifying possibilities they envisioned after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire – after all, another empire similar to their own. Stoker's character, concludes Vrbančić, "is not just a Byronic, wandering aristocrat but an industrious, global menace" capable of conquering and colonizing "the territories, bodies, thoughts, [and] knowledges" of the Londoners (2007, 4). Andrew Smith believes that the novel also elicits a fear of Americans seen as a conquering race – hence the death of Quincey Morris who becomes an alter ego of the vampire in the novel (2003, 20), while Patrick Brantlinger in his article "Taming Cannibals: Race and the Victorians" accredits the idea that "*Dracula* incorporates a complex range of modern mass fetishes and phobias including occultism, anti-Semitism, anti-feminism, xenophobia, fears about sexual perversions, and anxieties about imperial and racial degenerations" (2011, 201). Finally, Eric Kwan-Wai Yu following Max Weber speaks of the novel as an expression of the Protestant ethic, and observes what he calls the Count's "incredible mimic power," which points to Homi Bhabha's notion of mimicry (2006, 147). The critic concludes that "while the menace of colonial mimicry comes from the unexpected recognition of difference and otherness, Dracula's shock tinges on the imperial subject's surprise discovery of the King-vampire's modernity and Englishness" (Yu 2006, 164).

Of course, one may infer that all of these critical perspectives have little in common. However, there is always a tendency in Stoker's text for ambivalence or even plurivalence as the vampire himself is a character that refuses to remain one-sided; he is situated between the limit of life and death, myth and reality, historical character and demon, stereotype and fear of Otherness and attraction to the intriguing stranger, colonized and colonizer, sensationalism and palpable *fin-de-siècle* desperation, victim and victimizer, host and parasite, etc. Each of these elements and others appear concomitantly with their antithetical equivalents in the novel, which is built in essence at the confluence of their features, in the ambivalent or even plurivalent space where they manifest their *hybridity*, their multiple inflections. It is this very hybridity that brings them together and gives meaning to the discordant interpretations. It is partially a hybridity as Homi Bhabha defined it, one that rejects the abrupt delineations of West vs. East, but mostly a hybridity in the sense of rejection of one-sidedness, of creative contamination between narrative forms, types of characters, and plots normally belonging to different genres. It is the hybridity noted by John Paul Riquelme in the case of the characters in *Dracula* that provides a model for the ones "of the future and of modern experience," but it is more than that (2008, 8). It covers *everything*. As this article will demonstrate, the plurivalence and hybridity in Stoker's text is illustrated by tropes that establish a mythical world, one created by

the confrontation between good and evil, which can be interpreted to some extent in postcolonial terms, but also in terms of a metatextual narrative technique which converts the novel into a meditation on how history and myth interact. In other words, my study will only tangentially focus on the postcoloniality of the novel; instead, its aim is to discuss the intergeneric hybridity present in the text – history, novel, myth – and how this hybridity is built on a multitude of elements varying from postcolonial fears, folktale frames, Gothic inventory, historical events, etc.

Textual Analysis

A. A Hybrid Myth

Many critics have investigated the elements that help establish the powerful myth of Dracula. As Hondrila observes, following Mircea Eliade, the myth as a genre has to do with a sacred story and a primordial event which have taken place *in illo tempore*, in the time of the origins, "a re-enacted sacred time of the cosmogony" (2009, 89). Although Hondrila does not elaborate this idea, it is obvious from the very beginning of the novel that the text emphasizes, under the disguise of a travel narrative, precisely the problem of time, which progressively loses the contours of its reality as Jonathan Harker moves from the West to the East:

> *3 May. Bistritz.* – Left Munich at 8:35 P.M. on 1st May, arriving at Vienna *early next morning; should have arrived at 6:46, but train was an hour late.* Buda-Pesth seems a wonderful place, from the glimpse which I got of it from the train and the little I could walk through the streets. I feared to go very far from the station, as *we arrived late* and would start as *near* the correct time as possible. The impression I had was that we were leaving the West and entering East […]. (Stoker 1978, 5; some emphasis mine)

In fact, the trope of time is combined here with spatial references, some of which have generated the postcolonial interpretations mentioned above. However, the distortion of what Mikhail Bakhtin called the *chronotope*, the combined trope of space and time, is completely unusual in a personal journal and a travel narrative. It suggests that the myth contaminates these two genres, transforming the text into a *hybrid* territory. The distortions continue throughout the entire first part of the novel, with Harker progressively recording time and space metaphors which might seem realistic, but which have in fact no real reference: they become signifiers devoid of their signified, allowing the preternatural to creep in: "it was *on the dark side of twilight* when we got to Bistritz," "hillsides *like the tongues of flame*," "an *endless perspective* of jagged rock and pointed crags, till they were

themselves *lost in the distance*," "*serpentine* way," "*shadow*s of the evening," "as the evening fell it began to get very cold, and *the growing twilight seemed to merge into one dark mistiness the gloom* of the trees," etc. (Stoker 1978, 7–13; emphasis mine). At some point, the difference between the two temporal registers that merge into each other is made even clearer:

> When I told her that I must go at once, and that I was engaged on important business, she asked again:
> "Do you know what day it is?" I answered that it was *the fourth of May*. She shook her head as she said again:
> "Oh, yes! I know that! *I know that*, but *do you know what day it is*?" On my saying that I did not understand, she went on:
> "It is *the eve of St. George's Day*. Do you know that to-night, when the clock strikes midnight, all the evil things in the world will have full sway? Do you know *where you are going, and what you are going to do*?" (Stoker 1978, 9; emphasis mine)

Such references abound not only throughout the journey to the Count's castle, but also after it; the chronological and the mythical time, the real space of Transylvania and the space of the myth (the underworld, the world of the undead, the territory of Hades, as it has been observed by critics), go together, hand in hand, in an ambivalent stance in which they no longer exclude each other. Even the Count's castle, which becomes the *axis mundi* of this underworld, is affected by chronology: "a vast ruined castle, from whose tall black windows came no ray of light, and whose broken battlements showed a jagged line against the moonlit sky" (Stoker 1978, 19).

Although many of these elements belong to the usual Gothic inventory, and they contribute to the complex feeling of fascination and repulsion the place elicits, the novel never truly abandons the realistic pretenses. In fact, there is a permanent sensation that the oddity of the place might represent only an English tourist's inadequacy in Transylvania. As the Count himself declares, "Transylvania is not England. Our ways are not your ways, and there shall be to you strange things," which implies that he knows that Jonathan Harker might not be accustomed to some of his habits (Stoker 1978, 27). Moreover, Dracula himself can pass most of the time, even in Transylvania, as a plausible person, coming from a very old and historically recorded family, who is only trying to keep his guest safe. For instance, when Jonathan feels entrapped in the castle, the Count explains to him candidly that there are many dangers awaiting him outside. A proof of his honesty can be the fact that the wolves, very present in the text, force Jonathan at some point to prefer to remain indoors. At another time, he warns his guest not to enter other parts of the castle because "it is old, and has many

memories" (Stoker 1978, 40). This continuous oscillation between supernatural and a reasonable explanation of events, similar to the hesitation generated by the fantastic that Tzvetan Todorov once noted, creates a continuous ambivalence of the tropes in the story. In addition, Jonathan Harker himself is not Orpheus; he is by no means a heroic figure who travels to the underworld for initiation, and he typically does not understand or does not react properly to situations. In fact, even his exit from Transylvania takes place in a coma: a sign that he has learned very little throughout the journey. Killeen is right, from his arrival at the castle, Jonathan seems emasculated and weak, in other words, *hybrid*, in a clear contrast with the Count's vigor:

> When the calèche stopped, the driver jumped down and held out his hand to assist me to alight. Again I could not but notice his prodigious strength. His hand actually seemed like a steel vice that could have crushed mine if he had chosen. […] He insisted on carrying my traps along the passage, and then up a great winding stair, and along another great passage, on whose stone floor our steps rang heavily. (Stoker 1978, 20, 22)

Later, when in one of the most dramatic scenes of the novel, Harker accidentally cuts himself, and the Count aggressively takes away his mirror, the Englishman does not fight back, and exhibits instead an attitude of resignation. His dry comment suggests that he considers the Count's reaction banal: "it is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watchcase or the bottom of the shaving-pot, which is fortunately of metal" (Stoker 1978, 32).

Such scenes, together with the one in which the Count defends Harker against the attack of the three female vampires when he exclaims, "This man belongs to me!" (Stoker 1978, 47) configure a character who cannot defend himself; a character far from the vampire hunter he will become at some point back in Britain. However, one could wonder how such a character configuration supports the long-lasting power of the myth? How can an action that, although placed at the beginning in a quasi-legendary place like Transylvania, eventually moves to London, become a "sacred story" in Eliade's terms? John Bender believes that the answer does not reside in the novelistic theme, but rather in what he calls "lack of stylistic polish" (2012, 226). In an article in which he discusses three of the most important English novels which in his opinion have become myths – *Robinson Crusoe*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula* – Bender follows Claude Lévi-Strauss and Vladimir Propp and concludes that common style is very important in the transmission of a myth because, the critic believes, "the mythic or archetypal is somehow antithetic to literature" as it is more vivid and more immediate, while the focus of literature is the individuality and the creative style of the writer (2012, 229). Moreover, continues Bender, this "plainness of style enables

the illusory, even apparitional effects of realism," a procedure that enables the naturalization of myth as ideology and the blocking of our "critical faculty in the same way that our ordinary use of language requires us to pass over profound etymological or metaphorical resonances and contradictions" (2012, 231).

Undeniably, Stoker's novel uses the plain style Bender observes, and this style, combined with the verisimilitude of some of the time, space, and character references, makes it realistic and easily transmissible. However, it also contains a structure anticipated by Bender, who mentions it briefly in connection to the easiness that characterizes the translation of this mythogenetic plain style – the structure of the folktale. This structure maintains the unity of the novel after Jonathan Harker returns to Britain. Moreover, it also demonstrates the theme of Otherness and makes the transition towards postcolonialism in the novel because folktales always support stories that set heroes and villains in binary opposition, with the latter commonly depicted as foreigners.

According to Propp in his 1958 study *Morphology of the Folktale*, although a folktale classification based on plots is impossible, such texts can be categorized according to motifs or "functions," as Propp calls them, which are recurrent, constant, and stable elements of their structure. Propp, therefore, distinguishes thirty-one successive folktale functions which appear in folktales regardless of changes operated by characters – in Propp's terms "*dramatic personae*" – or plot (1958, 20). Stoker's text contains the majority of these functions; nevertheless, some of them migrate from one character to another due to the more pronounced complexity of the novelistic genre. Such an incorporation in the seemingly historical and travel novel of the folktale structure, which in its turn helps develop the myth, represents, nevertheless, another proof of its intergeneric flexibility.

Thus, a first function is the "absence:" in a folktale the initial situation usually implies that the parents are absent or dead (Propp 1958, 24). *Dracula* multiplies this function at the level of the majority of the characters, as Killeen rightfully notes, Jonathan, Mina, Lucy, Dr. Seward, Arthur Holmwood, and Quincey Morris are all orphans, partial orphans, or those about to be orphaned. In any case, by the end of the novel, they are all in search of a father figure. The second and third functions also present in the novel would be the "interdiction" and "the violation of it" – Jonathan Harker disrupts the order of things in Transylvania at least twice: first as he travels to the Count's castle in spite of all the warnings on the way, and second as he wanders through the castle ignoring Dracula's interdiction (Propp 1958, 26). The fourth and fifth functions identified by Propp are even more interesting than the previous ones; Propp calls them "reconnaissance," and "delivery" (1958, 26–27). In Propp's terms, they represent the moment when the villain asks questions and attempts to find more information about his victims or "reconnaissance," followed by the moment when he receives a usually spontaneous answer, "delivery" (1958, 27):

> "Come," he said at last, "tell me of London and of the house which you have procured for me." With an apology for my remissness, I went into my room to get the papers from my bag. […] He was interested in everything, and asked me myriad questions about the place and its surroundings. He clearly had studied beforehand all he could get on the subject of the neighborhood, for he evidently at the end knew very much more than I did. […] When I had told him the facts and got his signature to the necessary papers, and had written a letter with them ready to post to Mr. Hawkins, he began to ask me how I had come across so suitable a place. I read to him the notes which I had made at the time. (Stoker 1978, 28–29)

This function is followed closely by "fraud" and "complicity," or the villain's attempt to take into possession his victim and the victim submitting to his deception (Propp 1958, 28) – a function covered in the novel by the part in which Harker, a prisoner in the castle, only feebly tries to fight back or even willingly decides not to leave the castle for fear of the wolves during his last night there.

The functions become less clearly delineated once the novel moves the plot back to Britain, probably due to the impression of authenticity and modernity the text acquires after it leaves the exotic land of Transylvania, but their succession is indisputable. The moment the Count, the villain, moves to the city, he starts causing harm or injury to Lucy – the function of "villainy" in Propp's study – and this prompts the "mediation," the moment when the misfortune is made known and the hero is asked to intervene (1958, 32). This time the heroism is shared as Arthur Holmwood asks Dr. Seward to come to Lucy's rescue, but Dr. Seward also brings with him his friend, Professor Van Helsing, specialist in obscure diseases, "a philosopher and a metaphysician, and one of the most advanced scientists of his day" who becomes both a hero and a helper or a "donor," as Propp calls this type of character (1958, 126).

The subsequent functions in Propp's succession such as the "receipt of a magical agent," translated in Stoker's novel in the garlic or the Catholic paraphernalia, the "translocation" to Transylvania, and the "struggle" which takes place first in London against Lucy metamorphosed into a vampire, and then in Transylvania against the Count himself, cover a larger portion of the text than they would do in a folktale, as they have to abide to novelistic norms (1958, 36 and 46). These functions contain constant re-runs of the same actions and involve a larger number of heroes (the Crew of Light), but the skeleton of the folktale is still discernible. In a very interesting twist, however, the "branding" of the hero is done evenly (Propp 1958, 46); both Mina and the Count are branded, as they are the only legitimately strong personalities in the text, the main characters: the villain and the woman with a "man's brain" – a complement of her effeminate husband – who puts the entire text together (Stoker 1978, 261). The end of the

novel marks the "victory" over the villain, the "liquidation of the misfortune" and a "return" to Britain combined with what critics call the survival of the vampire – the baby born on the anniversary of the villain's death. This strange outcome could represent in fact a substitute for the function of the "wedding" which is usually, as Propp observes, the culmination of a tale (1958, 57). The novel only briefly mentions that two of the members of the Crew of Light are happily married, but does not actually end with their weddings:

> Seven years ago we all went through the flames; and the happiness of some of us since then is, we think, well worth the pain we endured. It is an added joy to Mina and to me that our boy's birthday is the same day as that on which Quincey Morris died. His mother holds, I know, the secret belief that some of our brave friend's spirit has passed into him. His bundle of names links all our little band of men together, but we call him Quincey. (…) When we got home we were talking of the old time – which we could all look back on without despair, for Godalming and Seward are both happily married. (Stoker 1978, 421)

Ultimately, the mythical construction is anchored in the verisimilitude of real spaces, even though one of them is less known, in the reality of a historical character transformed into an undead villain, and in the structure of a folktale written in a plain and realistic style, which makes it easier to transmit and translate into other forms of art; these elements explain the fascination it still elicits in pop culture.

B. Orientalism and Hybridity

In his 1978 *Orientalism*, Edward Said writes emphatically:

> The most readily accepted designation for Orientalism is an academic one, and indeed the label still serves in a number of academic institutions. Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient – and this applies whether the person is an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, or philologist – either in its specific or its general aspects, is an Orientalist, and what he or she does is Orientalism. (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 88)

Many critics who have investigated Stoker's novel have pointed out that he never traveled to Transylvania, the land he attempts to depict so vividly. Some have tried to catalogue his sources: from the stories of his friend, Ármin Vámbéry, a Hungarian Turkologist and traveler, Emily Gerard's Transylvanian folklore collection *The Land Beyond the Forest* (1888), or Major Edmund Cecil

Johnson's observations in *On the Track of the Crescent*, the latter being, as Santiago Lucendo (2009) notes, profoundly racist, especially against Gypsies, whom Johnson perceives as dangerous and animalist. Others have pointed out that placing the plot in Transylvania represented a last-minute decision: Stoker initially intended to locate it in Styria, the scene of Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872). Still others contend that the land Stoker actually had in mind all along for the action of the novel was Ireland, his home country. These observations confirm a metatextual hypothesis in the making of the novel, and possibly explain Jonathan Harker's striking Orientalism while in Transylvania. After all, it mirrors the Orientalism of his creator.

Indeed, from the very beginning of the text, the "imperial scout," as Robert A. Smart calls Jonathan Harker, keeps a diary in which the "East," which, as discussed above, becomes a land he only ponders upon meagerly (2007, 3). Although Harker carefully documents his observations and declares that he keeps his "diary for repose" as the habit of writing soothes him, he never scratches beyond the surface of things (Stoker 1978, 44). In fact, his entire journey resembles an expedition meant to confirm his assumptions about the Orient: for example, since he read that "every known superstition in the world is gathered into the horseshoe of the Carpathians, as if it were the centre of some sort of imaginative whirlpool," he has no reaction when people talk about the possibility of evil; he never tries to find out more about the reasons why they fear the Count (Stoker 1978, 6). Most times, he allows everyone around to monologue because he refuses to take part in the conversation: he says nothing when someone in the coach taking him to the castle touches his hand and gives him interesting details about the place; he asks nothing when the Count, "warmed up to the subject wonderfully," speaks about the history of his people; and he does nothing to help the woman who is devoured by wolves even though he witnesses the whole event (Stoker 1978, 35). As Arata observes, his "textual knowledge gathered before the fact, the same knowledge that any casual reader of contemporary travel narrative would also possess – structures Harker's subsequent experiences" (1990, 636). In the terms of Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, when they speak of Edward Said's *Orientalism*, the discourse of the diary here establishes its own category of truth and simultaneously encourages "the production of certain kinds of statements or texts" (1997, 99). We are situated in a truth both the novelist and his readers *expect*, and so they *produce*, of a *textualized* historical reality agreed upon by Stoker and his readers.

Harker's diary never abandons this perspective of the Transylvanian reality. The Count is depicted as a pale mask marked by cruelty, with strange hairs in the center of his palms, and a rank breath which makes Harker nauseous. For him, Dracula represents alterity, someone he can only classify from a point of view of difference because he feels they share nothing in common – and that is why in one of the monumental scenes of the novel, Harker looks in the mirror while the Count

is next to him, but he can only see himself. The Occidental can only acknowledge his own existence. The Count is for Harker, therefore, someone who looks human but is unquestionably not. He is only a parasite ready to destroy Britain:

> There lay the Count, but looking as if his youth had been half renewed, for the white hair and his moustache were changed to dark iron-grey; the cheeks were fuller, and the white skin seemed ruby-red underneath; the mouth was redder than ever, for on the lips were gouts of fresh blood, which trickled from the corners of the mouth and ran over the chin and neck. […] He lay like a filthy leech, exhausted with his repletion. […] There was a mocking smile on the bloated face which seemed to drive me mad. This was the being I was helping to transfer to London, where, perhaps, for centuries to come he might, amongst its teeming millions, satiate his lust for blood, and create a new and ever-widening cycle of semi-demons to batten on the helpless. (Stoker 1978, 60–61)

The same one-sided blindness characterizes the entire "Crew of Light," the crew of "Occidentals" in the novel, especially the men, who all represent the greatest colonizing powers of the West at the time: Britain, America, and the Netherlands. Dr. Seward is prejudiced against the occult for most of the novel, trying desperately to convey an easy, scientific explanation to the vampire phenomenon. Quincey Morris, who had seen vampire bats before, shows his incapacity to understand them when he fails repeatedly to shoot Dracula. Arthur Holmwood / Lord Godalming represents, as Killeen observes, an incompetent and mentally unbalanced "Lord God-alm(ighty)ing" who cries in Mina's arms like a child, while Van Helsing, in spite of his extensive knowledge of anti-vampire magic agents and rituals, cannot find a way to defeat the Count until Mina becomes the medium of communication with the demonic Other (2009, 86). As in the case of Jonathan Harker, all the male characters in the Crew of Light are hybrid only in the sense of their weakness and of an almost "feminine" behavior that they all evince during repeated episodes of hysteria. The women, on the other hand, are hybrid because they manifest such traditionally "male" features as Mina's "man brain" or Lucy's secret desire for polyandry, which makes her exclaim at some point: "Why can't a girl marry three men, or as many as want her, and save all this trouble?" (Stoker 1978, 69).

Dracula himself, however, is more than a bare image of the Orient. Arata notes that "Stoker's disruption of Harker's tourist perspective at castle Dracula also calls into question the entire Orientalist outlook. Stoker thus expresses a telling critique of the Orientalist enterprise through the very structure of his novel" (1990, 635). A *hybrid* creature, a beast with semi-human appearance, as he is described by Harker, Dracula resembles at first, as the critics rightfully pointed

out, a mimic man who shocks his guest with his impressive collection of English books in the middle of Transylvania:

> In the library I found, to my great delight, a vast number of English books, whole shelves full of them, and bound volumes of magazines and newspapers. A table in the centre was littered with English magazines and newspapers, *though none of them were of very recent date*. The books were of the most varied kind – history, geography, politics, political economy, botany, geology, law – all related to the England and English life and customs and manners. (Stoker 1978, 25–26; emphasis mine)

In fact, Harker's inadequacy at the Count's castle might have to do precisely with the menace he feels when he realizes Dracula's progressive Englishness. The Count seems to have traveled to England before, although not recently, as the paragraph above suggests, and he knows well its language and its culture. However, the moment Harker becomes uneasy with Dracula is the one in which the Count appears ready to acquire more knowledge, knowledge that at some point, Harker admits, can eclipse the knowledge of the Englishman himself. It is also the moment when Dracula transgresses the mimicry condition which, Bhabha affirms, "conceals no presence or identity behind its mask" (1994, 88) and becomes a *hybrid* self with a clear English personality, yet still anchored in Transylvania as well, hence the sacred earth which he will take with him to London. Although his new identity manifests fully later in England, it develops in front of his guest's eyes back in Transylvania, and it forces a terrified Harker to face the possibility of reversed colonization. Moreover, Harker witnesses the fact that the Count can pass as an Englishman to his own people, as happens after the episode when Dracula wears his clothes and impersonates him, and a woman comes to the puzzled Englishman demanding the child Dracula has taken:

> When she saw my face at the window she threw herself forward, and shouted in a voice laden with menace:–
> "Monster, give me my child!"
> She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung my heart. (Stoker, 1978, 54)

When Harker records his belief that the woman is "better dead" after Dracula throws her to the wolves, he unknowingly expresses his vengeance at someone who dared equate him to his mimic man. Dracula is a Grendel who can play by the rules of the society because he *knows* them. He has passed the limits of what Bhabha once called "almost the same, but not quite" (1994, 89). With him, "hybridity shifts power, questions discursive authority, and suggests, contrary

to the implications of Said's concept of Orientalism, that colonial discourse is never wholly in the control of the colonizer" (Childs and Williams 1997, 136). As Yu notes, "in *Dracula*, none of the Western characters expect the count to be like them, and the shocking effect relies more on the perception of sameness rather than difference" (2006, 164). It is specifically at this point that Arata's "reverse colonization" can take place – "the racial threat embodied by the Count is thus intensified: not only is he more vigorous, more fecund, more 'primitive' than his Western antagonists, he is also becoming more 'advanced.' As Van Helsing notes, Dracula's swift development will soon make him invincible" (1990, 639–640). It eventually does, because the end of the novel marks the birth of the Harker child on the anniversary of Quincey Morris's death, but not the day of the vampire's demise, an indicator of the fact that the Count is never defeated.

In a way, Stoker is obliged to surmount the limits of mimicry with Dracula because mimicry usually generates tragic outcomes, as is the case with Renfield, the only true mimic man in the novel. Caught in his human condition of a lunatic, he feels compelled to traverse the entire food chain in an attempt to try to transgress this state. However, he becomes trapped from the beginning in an intermediary condition, which makes Dr. Seward invent a new category for him – "zoöphagus (life-eating) maniac" (Stoker 1978, 81). In spite of his attempts to become more human, he cannot overcome his primitiveness in the presence of the doctor, who always perceives him as different: "Am I to take it that I have anything in common with him, so that we are, as it were, to stand together?" (Stoker 1978, 121). With the Count's presence approaching, Renfield appears increasingly sane, but his desire to achieve immortality through the ingestion of other lives and blood still places him in the category of mimic men, resembling the people around and the Count, but never truly assimilated by either side. He thus becomes in Dr. Seward's mind not an equal, but "a sort of index to the coming and going of the Count," at best a way to get to know the vampire better (Stoker 1978, 250). He remains, however, up till the end, a mimic man, trapped in an asylum, as Dr. Seward's journal records:

> You, gentlemen, who by nationality, by heredity, or by possession of natural gifts, are fitted to hold your respective places in the moving world, I take to witness that I am as sane as at least the majority of men who are in full possession of their liberties. […] Will you never learn? Don't you know that I am sane and earnest now; that I am no lunatic in a mad fit, but a sane man fighting for his soul? Oh, hear me! hear me! Let me go! let me go! let me go! I thought the longer this went on the wilder he would get, and so would bring on a fit; so I took him by the hand and raised him up.
> "Come," I said sternly, "no more of this; we have had quite enough already. Get to your bed and try to behave discreetly." (Stoker 1978, 274)

The mimic man dies, crushed by the vampire's colonizing appetite, with his spine broken – a metaphor of his malleability to Dracula's influence. In this point his death does not have anything to do with a refusal of salvation, as McDonald contends, because his salvation would be "only physical if he received the immortality the vampire is prepared to give," but rather with Renfield's willingness to give himself up and copy a creature whose power he cannot even approximate (2010, 117). Ultimately, the Count seems to have found other resources that ensure his legacy.

C. Hybridity and History

In spite of the structural implications that the intergeneric hybridity and the monstrous protagonist manifest in the larger context of the novel, the sense of realism that Bender observes above, of authenticity, still persists. All the elements analyzed contribute to this sensation – from the ambivalence of the *chronotope* and the construction of the tale-myth in the subtext of the novel, to the hybrid characters, the fear of reversed colonization, and a culturally amphibian Transylvanian Count who can pass as British. Almost everywhere in the novel, we have the sensation like Dr. Seward, that things might still have a rational explanation, and that the vampire is only the projection of our anxiety about strangers. This desire for a logical explanation marks the absence of historical authenticity because the novel denaturalizes the relationship between past and present. It would not be reasonable to go as far as to call *Dracula* a historiographic metafictional piece, or to declare it, as Brantlinger does, "the first postmodernist novel rather than the first modernist one" and a text in which vampires become post-human examples of simulacra (2011, 200). However, a certain distortion of reality definitely exists, and it starts with the sense that the past has contaminated the present and the other way around.

Of course, the main reason for this sensation has to do with the fact that Stoker used a real historical character to name his vampire and placed him in the same area where this character, Vlad Ţepeş, had previously lived. In addition, Ţepeş had already established himself an ambivalent image in history – a heroic but bloodthirsty ruler. This gives verisimilitude to the mix, exacerbating the threat that the novel's effect relies on, and so descriptions such as the following become possible:

> 'We Szekelys have a right to be proud, for in our veins flows the blood of many brave races who fought as the lion fights for lordship. Here, in the whirlpool of European races, the Ugric tribe bore down from Iceland the fighting spirit which Thor and Wodin gave them, which their Berserkers displayed to such fell intent on the seaboards of Europe, ay, and of Asia and Africa too, till the peoples thought that the werewolves themselves had come. Here, too, when

> they came, they found the living flame, till the dying peoples held that in their veins ran the blood of those old witches, who, expelled from Scythia, had mated with the devils in the desert.' (Stoker 1978, 36)

The Count's list goes on and on, and suggests among other things that he participated in the events, but the essence is the same – anyone, from any part of Europe or elsewhere, could find something related to their own history or mythology in these phrases. History in Stoker's novel does not have to find its *signified*; it creates it in a movement that reflects the narrative back to itself. The myth built on the structure of the folktale contributes to the connection with a shared cultural memory, be it Irish, British, or otherwise, hence the pervasive references to the Transylvanian "memory" in the text. It inflicts its own structure on the historical account. After all, Maureen A. Ramsden notes, "any attempt to recapture and understand the past must always entail an imaginative leap to achieve a sense of identity with the past, and also a process of selection and construction" (2015, 54). In other words, we build the past in order to identify with it.

It is interesting to observe at the same time that the myth carries with it postcolonial implications, in part because, as Derek Walcott points out, postcolonial writers in general "reject the idea of history as time, for its original concept as myth, the partial recall of the race. For them, history is fiction, subject to a fitful muse, *memory*" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 370; emphasis mine). After all, continues Walcott, "in time, every event becomes an exertion of memory and is subject to invention. The farther the facts, the more history petrifies into myth" (qtd. in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1995, 370–371). Although Bram Stoker probably did not have in mind a postcolonial novel *sensu stricto*, his hybrid main character and the allusions to memory certainly reinforce such an interpretation: the novel becomes an illusionary memory of history that builds and rebuilds itself as the Count attempts to colonize the Empire. In any case, the problem of memory did preoccupy Stoker, as is obvious from an apparently marginal episode in the text, the moment when Mr. Swales and Mina talk about how the tombstones in the cemetery would tell "lies" to a stranger:

> 'The whole thing be only lies. Now look here; you come here a stranger an' you see this kirkgarth. I nodded, for I thought it better to assent, though I did not quite understand his dialect. I knew it had to do with the church. He went on: "And you consate that these steans be aboon folk that be happened here, snod an' snog?' I assented again. 'Then that be just where the lies comes in. […] Look at that one, the aftest abaft the bier-bak: read it!' I went over and read:–
> 'Edward Spencelagh, master mariner, murdered by pirates off the coast of Andres, April, 1854, aet.30.' When I came back Mr. Swales went on:–

> 'Who brought him home, I wonder, to hap him here? Murdered off the coast of Andres! an' you consated his body lay under! Why, I could name you a dozen whose bones lie in Greenland seas above.' (Stoker 1978, 75–76)

Like the mariner's body who died elsewhere, the truth can lie anywhere in a historical account, and we deal here with the anxieties of the British *fin-de-siècle*. Stoker is aware of his possibilities, uses them deliberately, and avoids, subtly, the criticism usually surrounding such a partially made-up story. Ultimately, history itself has proved that Stoker was right: the majority of the people in the world today associate the image of Dracula, not with the medieval Romanian leader, but with the image of the vampire. The novel itself becomes one huge parasite on what constitutes "official history," in the sense attributed once by J. Hillis Miller, as a "fellow guest" to a host, that deconstructs it, but at the same expands its meanings (1979, 220).

However, as with any self-reflective narrative, this hybrid construction reinforced by myth demonstrates at the same time insecurity and playfulness. While Jonathan Harker has the impression that the Count's historical account reflected in his diary is consubstantial with the Arabian Nights, and that everything will disappear and "break off at cockcrow," Mina constantly works throughout the novel to put together the narratives in what she calls chronological order (Stoker 1978, 37). This opposition is obviously another metatextual device, but the result is quite ingenious: this represents another way to make the illusion of history – chronology – possible. In addition, the dialogue of the journals, diaries, newspaper clips, etc., that results in the process confers the necessary polyphonic novelistic structure, camouflaging the folktale frame and offering the text a depth that the singular travel narrative would not have been capable to render. Many of the events are thus seen through the eyes of multiple characters, making them more plausible, and more authentic.

Nonetheless, this attention for detail and plausibility in the deliberate construction of history explains what was considered surprising by critics – the so-called double-ending of the novel:

> *Dracula*, however, is finally *divided* against itself; it strives to contain the threat posed by the Count but cannot do so entirely. The novel in fact ends twice. The narrative properly closes with a fantasy of revitalized English supremacy: his invasion repulsed, the Count is driven back to Transylvania, and destroyed there. […] But the satisfaction of closure brought by Dracula's diminishment and death is immediately disrupted by Harker's "Note," which constitutes *Dracula's second ending*. (Arata 1990, 641; some emphasis mine)

Apart from the fact that this second ending was to a point unavoidable from the perspective of the folktale frame because, as I mentioned above, it contains the "wedding" function that usually represents its closure, it also contains a reference to a return of the Harkers to Transylvania after "seven years," a magical number. Moreover, the suggestion that the family commemorates Quincey Morris's death rather than the death of the vampire, also represents an oddity in the context. Such a return to the Oriental place of superstitions and this particular choice for the memory of events would make no sense from the perspective of the rational Westerner. However, the Harkers, and not the rest of the members of the Crew of Light, have once been marked by the Count and thus belong to him. They are, consequently, part of his history. Revisiting Transylvania implies not only a revisit of this history, but also a ritualistic practice that reinstates the myth: the two of them divided all along in the novel, but also complementing each other in a productive way. The note also indicates, in an interesting self-reflective passage, that there is "hardly one *authentic* document; nothing but a mass of typewriting" among the papers that compose it (Stoker 1978, 421; emphasis mine), meaning that the author was conscious all along of its artifice and ultimate hybridity.

Dracula thus demonstrates that a metatextual novel, supported by myth, can be a generator and not just an emulator of history. In the multivalent space that it thus creates, it can attract elements from many registers that no longer exclude each other. Thus, on the frame of the folktale that creates a myth, under the disguise of a travel and detective narrative, playing with postcolonial fears and using techniques that normally belong to the Gothic, Stoker introduces the modern vampire to the world, makes him real, and generates a multitude of interpretations which, if not for his hybridity, would seem contradictory, and almost meaningless.

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The Frost in Faulkner: Walls and Borders of Modern Metaphor

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Abstract: My paper discusses the dialogue between Robert Frost's verse and William Faulkner's works: from the first poems he published as a young writer, especially in his debut volume *The Marble Faun* (1924), to *The Hamlet* (1940), an acknowledged novel of maturity. Three world-famous poems: "Birches," "Mending Wall," "Nothing Gold Can Stay" will represent here Frost's metaphorical counterpart. The allegorical borders thus crossed are those between Frost's lyrical New England setting and the Old South of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha diegesis; between (conventional patterns of) Romanticism and Modernism – in both writers' cases; between poetry and prose; between "live metaphor" and "emplotment" (applying Paul Ricoeur's theory of "semantic innovation"); between (other conventional patterns of) regionalism and (actual) universality. Frost's uniqueness among the American modern poets owes much of its vital energy to his mock-bucolic lyrical settings, with their dark dramatic suggestiveness. In my paper I hope to prove that Frost's lesson was a decisive inspiration for Faulkner, himself an atypical modern writer. If Faulkner's fiction is pervaded by poetry, this is so because he saw himself as a "poet among novelists." Faulkner actually started his career under the spell of Frost's verse – at least to the same extent to which he had once emulated the spirit of older and remoter poets, such as Keats or Swinburne.

Keywords: walls – borders, Romanticism – Modernism, regionalism – universality.

The Poetic Beginnings of Modernism

Whether in verse or in prose, poetry may seem obsolete today. But plenty of comfort should come from the fact that to some extent the kind of poetry we are here concerned with already seemed obsolete when it got first published. Robert Frost was an atypical modernist in 1913 and then in 1914, when his first two verse volumes – *A Boy's Will* and respectively *North of Boston* – were published in London. Ezra Pound saluted Frost with his typical enthusiasm – yet

also eagerly advised him to give up his verse musicality – if he was to become genuinely modern.[1]

But it is precisely this verse musicality that makes Robert Lee Frost's genuine trade mark. In his wonderful essay "Robert Frost and the Poetry of Survival," literary critic Jay Parini – himself a distinguished American poet of today and also the author of several exquisite biographies of great writers, one of these being that of William Faulkner – highlights exactly this musical quality of Frost's poems:

> The idea behind Frost's "*sound of sense*" theory is fascinating. "The best place to get the abstract sound of sense is from voices behind door that cuts off the words," Frost explains. "It is the abstract vitality of our speech." In other words, the specific denotation of the words, what we usually think of as "content," is less important than the way the language moves something akin to the "*mind's ear*." (1993, 263; emphasis mine)

Therefore, Frost's "*sound of sense*" may provide a link between his (notion of) poetry and that of a French symbolist like Stéphane Mallarmé, to whom modern poetry and literary theory on both shores of the Atlantic owe so much. On the other hand, at the time of his literary debut, Faulkner was keenly aware of this: the first thing he ever published was a poem entitled just like that, "L'Après-midi d'un Faune," as an evident echo to Mallarmé's original poem, in an American literary magazine, on August 6, 1919. Therefore, as Parini states in his above-mentioned essay:

> *Frost, then, is not a naïve chronicler of farm life in rural New England*. He is a poet fully aware of every influence, from the ancient writers of Greek and Roman eclogues through the Romantics right up to his immediate contemporaries. Furthermore, he was a "Modernist" in his own way, which is why Ezra Pound – the ringmaster of literary Modernism – found him interesting. (1993, 263; emphasis mine)

The same can safely (and wisely) be affirmed about Faulkner: mock-pastoral rural Yoknapatawpha County, for all its capital Jefferson, is hardly the Old South Arcadia it may deceptively seem to be. If such poems as Frost's here remembered – "Birches," "Mending Wall," "Nothing Gold Can Stay" – are as representative of his art as to be included in any anthology of American literature, no matter how "short"[2]

1 The details can be found in William H. Pritchard's Introduction to the Signet Classic *Centennial Edition of Poems by Robert Frost,* 2001, pp. 1–14.

2 Such is the second volume of *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Shorter Seventh Edition,* to which we will refer in this essay for illustration in point of Frost's poems, and which is usually present in all our American Literature courses bibliographies.

– Faulkner's poems are hardly ever recalled today. No matter how controversial his personality as a mortal, Frost remains America's *poet laureate*, at least for the best part of the twentieth century. No matter how debatable and fluctuating his rank as a fiction writer, Faulkner remains America's most distinguished *poet in prose*, for the same best part of the same twentieth century. This was also the way in which he liked to recommend himself, as a "*poet among novelists*," according to a celebrated interview that Faulkner gave to Jean Stein:

> *Interviewer*: And your contemporaries?
> *Faulkner*: All of us failed to match our dream of perfection. So I rate us on the basis of our splendid failure to do the impossible. In my opinion, if I could write all my work again, I am convinced that I would do it better, which is the healthiest condition for an artist. That's why he keeps on working, trying again; he believes each time that this time he will do it, bring it off. Of course he won't, which is why this condition is healthy. Once he did it, once he matched the work to the image, the dream, nothing would remain but to cut his throat, jump off the other side of that pinnacle of perfection into suicide. *I'm a failed poet.* Maybe every novelist wants to write poetry first, finds he can't, and then tries the short story, which is the most demanding form after poetry. And failing at that, only then does he take up novel writing. (Faulkner 1956, 2; emphasis mine)

Quite often have literary critics and biographers remarked on young Faulkner's affinities with the romantic poets of old England, like Keats or Shelley, and especially the decadent Victorian Swinburne. Yet at the time of his 1924 debut as a poet with a full book of his own verse, by the volume *The Marble Faun*, Faulkner may have already found much closer sources (and "anxieties") of influence from such a compatriot poet as Frost, in whose destiny (the spirit of New) England had also played a decisive role. Moreover, the temptation to read this first Faulknerian volume as a tribute to older American masters of world literature is enhanced by the intertextual echo of the title itself, evoking Nathaniel Hawthorne's last romance of 1860, entitled *The Marble Fawn*.[3]

3 Hawthorne's impact upon young Faulkner's mind is evident from other aspects, likewise. Much like Hawthorne, who could never accept his Puritan forefathers' persecuting Quakers and therefore had changed his own name by adding a personal letter *w* to make a difference from the original Hathorne of his ancestors, Faulkner added his own letter *u* to his last name, in order to distinguish himself from old Confederate Colonel Falkner's, his great grandfather, who had sired a double family: the official one plus an illegitimate family, based on his love for an African American slave-woman. Yet more significant is Faulkner's intertextual masterpiece, *As I Lay Dying* (1930), a modern hybrid of all three classic genres: narrative, poetry and drama. This special book is Faulkner's ultimate tribute to Hawthorne's 1850 classic romance, *The Scarlet Letter*.

There seem to be no absolute borders between Hawthorne's and then Frost's New England – on the one hand – and Faulkner's Old South – on the other hand. Regionalism as an approach here is bound to take us down the wrong path: regionalism is the game both Frost and Faulkner played masterfully to allure readers deeper into their metaphorical/plot labyrinths. The same deep darkness gives these writers an unmistakable aura of the national spirit they share, beyond even the cultural frontier between Romanticism and Modernism.

Let us just remember Frost's 1916 poem "Birches" here:

> When I see birches bend to left and right
> Across the lines of straighter darker trees,
> I like to think some boy's been swinging them.
> [. . .]
> You may see their trunks arching in the woods
> Years afterwards, trailing their leaves on the ground
> Like girls on hands and knees that throw their hair
> Before them over their heads to dry in the sun. (2008, 785)

And now let us consider Faulkner's "Prologue" to his 1924 verse volume, *The Marble Faun*:

> The poplar trees sway to and fro
> That through this gray old garden go
> Like slender girls with nodding heads,
> Whispering above the beds
> Of tall tufted hollyhocks,
> Of purple asters and of phlox;
> Caught in the daisies' dreaming gold
> Recklessly scattered wealth untold
> About their slender graceful feet
> Like poised dancers, lithe and fleet. (1960, 11)

Not only in point of lyrical imagery – that is, from Frost's metaphor of *birches* to that of Faulkner's *poplars* – do these two poems communicate, but also in their musicality, especially in their rhythm. The same "*sound of sense*" – as Frost would put it. Girlish grace in Frost's birches-imagery becomes dryad-like loveliness to young Faulkner's faun – alas, here cast in marble! For the poplars in Faulkner's "old garden" are surrounded by zestful homely flowers reminding one of Emily Dickinson's (poetic) gardening skills (see especially her poem 285, "The Robin's my Criterion for Tune" [Dickinson 2001, 131]).

The one regret in Faulkner's marble faun as a first person lyrical voice is missing (mortal) freedom. Faulkner's faun is made of marble, to adorn the ancient garden of a terrestrial Eden: ironically standing for carnal desire, the statue is doomed to remain for ever cold to life's temptations:

> Why am I sad? I?
> Why am I not content? The sky
> Warms me and yet I cannot break
> My marble bonds. That quick keen snake
> Is free to come and go, while I
> Am prisoner to dream and sigh
> For things I know, yet cannot know,
> *'Twixt sky above and earth below.*
> *The spreading earth calls to my feet*
> Of orchards bright with fruits to eat,
> Of hills and streams on either hand;
> Of sleep at night on moon-blanched sand:
> The whole world breathes and calls to me
> Who marble-bound must ever be. (Faulkner 1960, 12; emphasis mine)

As in an echo of Dickinson's poem 986 "A Narrow Fellow in the Grass" (2001, 459) – Faulkner's "quick keen snake" is regarded with awestruck esteem (and even envy) for its *freedom*. Yet the marble faun can paradoxically just "dream and sigh" for the *earthly* world it intuits with no hope of ever getting to *know*.

For "*Earth's the right place for love*" – as the lyrical voice in Frost's poem proclaims in the memorable conclusion of the poem starting from a recollection of birches:

> I'd like *to get away from earth* awhile
> And then come back to it and begin over.
> May no fate willfully misunderstand me
> And half grant what I wish and snatch me away
> Not to return. *Earth's the right place for love:*
> I don't know where it's likely to go better.
> I'd like to go by climbing a birch tree,
> And climb black branches up a snow-white trunk
> *Toward* heaven, till the tree could bear no more,
> But dipped its top and set me down again.
> That would be good both going and coming back.
> One could do worse than be a swinger of birches.
>
> (2008, 785–786; emphasis mine; emphasis in the original: "*toward*")

The Frost in Faulkner first awoke the poet in the novelist soon to become. That first thrill of *The Marble Faun* would still vibrate between the lines of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha diegesis, even as late in his career as *The Hamlet*.

Et in Arcadia Ego – A Shared Nostalgia for Classicism

With both Frost and Faulkner, the fictive American rural setting is (mock)Arcadian and a-temporal – or rather an impossible return to Romanticism, to that romantic vein of mid-nineteenth century Transcendentalism, out and away from the ineluctable urbanization and industrialization of the two writers' native country, growing rapidly ever bigger and ever more estranged from its (fatally) idealized original values. Ironically, with both the poet and the novelist to-be, the same impulse to a romantic (or intellectual) idealization of a (not so much older) rural America *in illo tempore* should express innermost despair at this process of alienation – i.e. the Faulknerian *Snopes-ization* – of a fictive homeland soon to be lost for ever.

The Snopeses are mature Faulkner's modern masks of classic Pan: from Ike Snopes, wooing the cow on Jack Houston's land, to Mink Snopes – Houston's remorseless and Flem's vengeful killer; further on to Wallstreet Panic Snopes. The satyr with the magic pipes (and no Mozartian flute) is Flem Snopes himself, the nucleus of a hallucinatory network of kinfolks, of older and younger upstarts, invading Flem's dystopian Arcadia – or what is left of a Yoknapatawpha lost to ruthless rural gangsters, whose basic survival law is (everlasting) nepotism.

According to consecrated American literary criticism, *The Hamlet* (1940), the first volume of the Snopeses' Trilogy, is also the last one of Faulkner's absolute achievements in his Yoknapatwpha diegesis – if we ignore *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). From this moment on, all through the three volumes of *The Hamlet*, *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959), the Snopeses would assert themselves as the consummate invaders (or trespassers), leaving no Snopes-free village or town. The raw newcomers, the ferocious upstarts would soon claim the best of everything. We simply cannot fail to see the prophetic message of the Snopeses' saga – here and now, in our globalized everyday world. Thus Faulkner's Frenchman's Bend appears as all the more important for today's readers: it feels like home, wherever on earth we may read its hallucinatory stories.

The Faulkner in Frost

If Frost were to become a writer of fiction – for a gifted story-teller in verse he obviously was – he may have turned out into someone quite like Faulkner. And likewise, if Faulkner had pursued his poetic career, he may have developed into

someone quite like Frost. Even their impact upon a contemporary readership is a fine argument for that: Faulkner had to prove a lot of patience (obstinacy?) until he was eventually accepted by the American publishing houses of his day. Illustrious French professional readers and thinkers – such as Sartre, Malraux – had discovered the merits of Faulkner's art long before Americans did. On the other hand, Great Britain was the country of Frost's first two volumes of (mature) poetry – *A Boy's Will* (1913) and *North of Boston* (1914) – before American publishing houses found any profit in his books.

Faulkner won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950. Frost was nominated to it thirty-one times and never got it. Both Frost and Faulkner have remained what they call "controversial writers," because of their conservative political views – while still alive and afterwards, in life as well as in fiction. Their dark side in poetry and fiction has been politely covered by labels with frail borders, in both cases: Frost, the poet "in the American grain," Faulkner, the Old South storyteller. In Frost's verse tales there is plenty of drama – and likewise can drama be enjoyed in Faulkner's fiction, enlivened by secret soliloquy, as if only available to the reader's mind. In both writers' works there is a deep current of humor, from tender (self)irony to implacable sarcasm aiming at human nature as such. Let alone their biographers, who have come with plenty of juicy "memories" to prove that neither Frost, nor Faulkner could have been really "nice persons" to those who knew them better – whether family or friends; or just *neighbors* for a while. (Authors') misanthropy has a high price when it informs such pages of high literature that are so hard to ignore.

Therefore, what remains to be said here – not as an apology but rather as a kind of approach in good faith – is just another theoretical argument, in favor of our attempt at discerning the Frost in Faulkner, offered by Paul Ricoeur's notion of "semantic innovation" in his book *Time and Narrative*. The French thinker's masterpiece came out in the 1980s, two decades after both Frost and Faulkner had died. Although there is no mention of the Americans in either *The Rule of Metaphor* (1984a) or *Time and Narrative* (1984b) – the French philosopher's abstract demonstration that *semantic innovation* is the source of both poetry and literary narrative could only too well refer to Frost and then to Faulkner:

> *The Rule of Metaphor* and *Time and Narrative* form a pair: published one after the other, these works were conceived together. Although metaphor has traditionally belonged to the theory of "tropes" (or figures of discourse) and narrative to the theory of literary "genres," the meaning-effects produced by each of them belong to the same *basic phenomenon of semantic innovation*. In both cases this innovation is produced entirely *on the level of discourse*, that is, the level of acts of language equal to or greater than the sentence. *With metaphor*, the innovation lies in *the producing of a new semantic*

> *pertinence* by means of *an impertinent attribution*: "Nature is a temple where living pillars . . ." The metaphor is *alive* as long as we can perceive, through the new semantic – and so to speak in its denseness – the resistance of the words in their ordinary use and therefore their incompatibility at the level of a literal interpretation of the sentence. *The displacement in meaning* the words undergo in the metaphorical utterance, a displacement to which ancient rhetoric reduced metaphor, is *not* the whole of metaphor. It is just one means serving the process that takes place on the level of the entire sentence, whose function it is to save the new pertinence of the "odd" predication threatened by the literal incongruity of the attribution. *With narrative*, the semantic innovation lies in the inventing of another work of synthesis – *a plot*. By means of a plot, goals, causes, and chance are brought together within the temporal unity of a whole and complete action. *It is the synthesis of the heterogeneous that brings narrative close to metaphor*. In both cases, the new thing – *the as yet unsaid, the unwritten* – springs up in language. *Here a living metaphor, that is, a new pertinence in the predication, there a feigned plot, that is, a new congruence in the organization of events*. In both cases *the semantic innovation* can be carried back to the *productive imagination* and, more precisely, to the schematism that is its signifying matrix. In new metaphors the birth of a new semantic pertinence marvelously demonstrates what an imagination can be that produces things according to rules: "being good at making metaphors," said Aristotle, "is equivalent to being perceptive of resemblances." But what is it to be perceptive of resemblance if not to inaugurate the similarity by bringing together terms that at first seem "distant" then suddenly "close"? *It is this change of distance in logical space that is the work of the productive imagination*. (Ricoeur 1984b, ix – x; emphasis mine)

If Faulkner's novel *The Hamlet* (1940) represents the best choice for our hypothesis here, then Frost's poem "Mending Wall" (1914) should be its best correspondent – since both poem and novel have for a nucleus an ambiguous (and characteristically cynical) proverb from Benjamin Franklin's collection in *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Frost's version of the old proverb – itself a mean(ingful) adagio to an adage stemming from an essential biblical commandment ("Love your neighbor, yet don't pull down your hedge" – proverb 339 [Franklin 1914, 36]) – says just: "Good fences make good neighbors." It becomes a key to an unforgettable modern poem, and then to a memorable modern novel – both American and dealing with the old (pre-American) theme of *border crossings*. Since the proverb represents a mock-Franklinesque heirloom, it will function within the confinements (or delusive frontiers) of the American Dream – apparently shared by freedom-dreamers, actually serving map-makers with a decisive power.

In Frost's poem there is a classic sense of symmetry: the line "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" delimitates and establishes two specific sections in the poem, which also benefits by what Ricoeur may call "*emplotment.*" Therefore there is a narrative dimension to it, and also a dramatic one – as in most of Frost's best-known poems. The first person lyrical voice recounts a spring story, the "mending wall" moment of two countryside neighbors. The poem is thus cleverly made to illustrate by its leitmotifs – the above-quoted line plus the dry conventional proverb – two sections in its structure.

The voice telling the story is at once melancholy, skeptical, lucid:

> Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
> *What I was walling in or walling out*,
> And to whom I was like to give offense. (Frost 2008, 778; emphasis mine)

Yet just before that the poem's inner monologue had evoked the neighbor's proverb-cliché and then the narrator's perplexing issue of a hypothetical *cow* in this (far from) bucolic picture:

> He only says, "Good fences make good neighbors."
> Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
> If I could put a notion in his head:
> *Why* do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
> Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
> (Frost 2008, 777–778; emphasis in the original text)

Still in Faulkner's Frenchman's Bend there is a cow – and a crucial cow it is, too.[4] Tragicomic, grotesque, outrageous – the issue of the cow highlights the Snopeses' turpitude. It is the cow of Mink Snopes, grazing on Jack Houston's pasture. No more than a yearling, a heifer – at first, the cow grows up into (more than) a healthy animal. Not in the least bothered by the illegal trespassing, Mink claims the cow to feed his family on its meat. But Jack Houston sues his shameless neighbor and wins the trial. Rather than paying fairly what he owes his neighbor, Mink Snopes shoots Jack Houston dead with just one shell, as less than necessary to kill a small animal. Mink's infamy is of Dostoevskian extraction in its dense shades of black.

But before that, the same cow becomes the object of Ike Snopes's amorous attention. Ike is the Snopes clan's idiot. Consequently, another member of the

4 Faulkner would soon produce his own parody of this notorious cow-issue of his novel *The Hamlet*: the short-story "Afternoon of a Cow" – which can be studied now either as part of the volume *Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner* (1979) or as part of the volume *The Best of Bad Faulkner* (1991b). Again, the hint at his literary debut as a poet under the spell of Mallarmé's notorious poem "L'après-midi d'un faune" is tale-telling.

same clan, Launcelot Snopes (Lump – for family and friends) not only removes a plank from the cow's barn, but also sets a price for lookers-on (or rather lookers-in?). Voyeurism functions here as another way of crossing borders.

Ike's romance with the cow – once claimed by both Mink Snopes and Jack Houston – may have been prompted itself as a parody of that old Faulknerian poem, mentioned at the beginning of this essay, with the classic faun revisited by Mallarmé, Faulkner's symbolist precursor in his obsession with the turbulent ancient god Pan. Or it may be read as a salute to Bottom with his donkey head, seducing Titania the Queen of Fairies in Shakespeare's play "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Then why could it not have been prompted (also) by Frost's celebrated poem "Mending Wall"? Intertextuality brings together all these masters of "semantic innovation" – according to Ricoeur's still pertinent theory. But then intertextuality itself has been an inexhaustible instance of border crossings between the best minds of our world's writers.

Anyway, the feud around (and then the trial upon) the cow in Faulkner's Frenchman's Bend starts from a tense dialogue between Jack Houston – who would pay his commonsensical victory by his own life – and Mink Snopes – Houston's murderer, who would return from Parchman, the terrible prison for the life-convicts of legendary Yoknapatawpha, thirty-eight years later, to also kill his cousin Flem, who had not lifted a finger to save Mink, his kinsman. But Mink's vengeful comeback would only occur in *The Mansion* (1959) – the final volume of the Snopeses' Trilogy.

The ominous dialogue previously referred to occurs on the very last pages of "Book One: Flem," in the novel *The Hamlet*:

> "I reckon you know where that yearling is," Houston said.
> "I can guess," Snopes said.
> "All right," Houston said. He was not shaking, trembling, anymore than a stick of dynamite does. He didn't even raise his voice. "I warned you. You know the law in this country. A man must keep his stock up after ground's planted, or take the consequences."
> "I would have expected you *to have fences* that would keep a yearling up," Snopes said. Then they cursed each other, hard and brief and without emphasis, like blows or pistol-shots, both speaking at the same time and neither moving, the one still standing in the middle of the steps, the other still squatting the gallery post. "Try a shot-gun," Snopes said. "That might keep it up." (Faulkner 1991a, 100; emphasis mine)

Mink Snopes may have been a villain, but he certainly knew some proverbs by Franklin – the founding father figure of (believers in) the American Dream all around the world. Moreover, the upstart clan of the scruple-less Snopeses also

included I.O. Snopes, a schoolteacher and also a notorious collector of proverbs. The border between genuine wisdom (or 'live metaphor'?) and cliché (or popular quip?) is too frail to resist the Snopeses' blunt crossings.

"Nothing Gold Can Stay" in Yoknapatawpha

Before he dies, shot with just one shell like (less than) an animal, Jack Houston remembers the best of his life. This was his romance with Lucy Pate, his wife, absurdly (and symbolically) killed by his own stallion. The selective omniscient narrator's voice reads in a deliberately self-contained key, safely away from cheap sentimentalism, thus giving in its stream-of-consciousness the full measure of Houston's grief.

After years of wandering, Jack Houston had returned to Frenchman's Bend only for the sake of his school-days' sweetheart. His yearning for her lay deeper than consciousness and defied any conventional way of expression. Jack Houston's final visions in Chapter Two of "Book Three: The Long Summer" is devoid of perfunctory "romance" – evoking the fierce fidelity of the girl who had helped him with his precarious studies and then waited for him:

> The woman Houston married was not beautiful. She had neither wit nor money. An orphan, a plain girl, almost homely and not even very young (she was twenty-four) she came to him out of the home of a remote kinswoman who had raised her, with the domestic skill of her country heritage and blood and training and a small trunk of neat, plain, dove-colored clothes and the hand-stitched sheets and towels and table-linen which she had made herself and an infinite capacity for constancy and devotion, and no more. And they were married and six months later she died and he grieved for her for four years in black, savage, indomitable fidelity, and that was all. (Faulkner 1991a, 227)

Lucy Pate – Jack Houston's worshipped wife – may anticipate feminine portraits in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* – such as the beautiful Remedios, perhaps: both girls were orphans, yet their absences were just as powerful as their tentative instances of presence. Lucy Pate's picture here in Jack Houston's final stream-of-consciousness recollection of their unromantic love-story is remarkable by its melancholy conciseness and sobriety of style.

Elegy is compressed between the above-quoted prose lines as it is in the following poetry lines from Frost:

Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay. (Frost 2008, 787)

Frost's 1923 poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" quoted above may or may not have been at the back of Faulkner's mind when he wrote such life-stories in a paragraph. But the classic intensity of the elegiac tone in both instances eludes any borders between *poetry in verse* and *poetry in fiction*; between New England and the Old South; between (conventional) Romanticism and (provisional) Modernism.

"Words, Words, Words" – or the (Almost Lost) Art of Reading

Not very much later – actually in 1955, just fifteen years after *The Hamlet* yet four years before *The Mansion*, the final volume of the Snopeses' saga – Flannery O'Connor, a merciless brilliant writer of the same Old South as Faulkner's and one of his outstanding and outspoken admirers, would publish a particular short story about the cliché-ridden discourse of a dull southern lady, whose daughter was a genuine and helpless philosopher. The story is called – sarcastically – "Good Country People" and pertains to the volume entitled – even more sarcastically, after another one of its own short-stories – *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*.

Not even the would-be didactic (and fatefully unconvincing) claim to "local color" can paint pink the mind limitations – whether "natural" or deliberate (i.e. dictated by hypocrisy) – of such literary characters as the above mentioned. The sharp contrast between the safe emptiness of an old popular "witty saying" and the disturbingly revelatory meaning of a defying new metaphor – remember Ricoeur – still remains a matter of debate in literature, whether written or read.

At least one decade before M. M. Bakhtin's theories of *voicing* and *polyphony* in fiction – as affirmed especially in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1929) – and somehow even anticipating Bakhtin's concept of the *dyphonic* (i.e. self-contradictory) word in *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) – Frost believed in the sensuous power of words, which can be confirmed by a famous fragment from one of the poet's letters to one of his friends: "*Words exist in the mouth, not in books*. You can't fix them and you don't want to fix them." Literary critic William H.

Pritchard used this statement as an insightful argument in his introductory study to the *Signet Classics Centennial Edition* of Frost's two earliest poetry volumes (Pritchard 2001: 9; emphasis mine). Faulkner wanted desperately to still believe in words, as a poet, hence he challenged their incantatory power even when having such an overwhelming character as Addie Bundren (in *As I Lay Dying*) say bitterly: "[…] *that words are no good*; *that words don't ever fit even what they're trying to say at*" (Faulkner 2000, 171; emphasis mine).

Therefore, to all those who have already started doubting (and even mourning) literature today, here is the disquieting answer of such unforgettable writings – whether as poetry or fiction, or drama – that should go to prove a basic aesthetic truth: that intelligent readers will still need their favorite art, although its artists have no better tools than poor words.

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Inability of Crossing Borders: Csaba Székely's *Bányavidék* [Mine District] Trilogy

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Abstract. There are countless ways of crossing borders, be they physical, geographic, social, economic, cultural or psychological. When coming up against a border, one has two options: either to cross it or to remain within. This essay investigates Csaba Székely's *Bányavidék* [Mine District] trilogy primarily from the perspective of such concepts of imagology as region, center-periphery dichotomy, identity, image, representation, as well as stereotypes and clichés, and examines whether the playwright truly deconstructs such stereotyped representations of the specific geographical and cultural space and its people the trilogy focuses on.

Keywords. Csaba Székely, *Bányavidék* [Mine District], Szeklerland, stereotypes.

1. Introduction

Csaba Székely made his name in literary circles first with his short fiction published in various journals and magazines. However, his big breakthrough came in the field of drama when he won the 2009 BBC World Service/British Council's International Playwriting Competition with his English-language radio play *Do You Like Banana, Comrades?.* The Hungarian speaking public though only really got acquainted with the young playwright in 2011 when *Bányavirág* [Mine Flower] – one of the award-winning plays of a student playwriting competition – was first performed and then published in the literary magazine *Látó*. And upon the immediate success of the play, both with audiences and

critics, Székely continued writing about the same group of characters, the same region and the same topics till the work grew into the trilogy *Bányavidék* [Mine District] – encompassing also *Bányavakság* [Mine Blindness] (2012) and *Bányavíz* [Mine Water] (2013).[1] Asked whether initially he had in mind writing a trilogy, the playwright said that at the time it seemed a singular exercise, but that during the creative process of writing [Mine Flower] he realized that he had a lot more to say about the topic (Csicsely 2012).

Reviewers and theatre critics seem also to have had a lot to say about Székely's trilogy; much less so the academics in the sense that up to the present we have no knowledge of any scholarly articles or studies having been published about the plays. Our aim, however, is not primarily to fill that gap; much rather, in the context of the wider topic of crossing borders and transgressing boundaries, we argue that, similarly to the characters of the trilogy unable to cross any borders, the playwright himself proves unable to cross certain borders, despite his desire to break taboos and deconstruct stereotyped images and representations of Transylvania and its inhabitants, and specifically Szeklerland and the Szeklers.[2] We argue that his attempt at contouring a specific geographic, social, economic, cultural and psychological space results in not only his characters being trapped in this environment, but the playwright himself remaining stuck with stereotypes and clichés, offering a different though still unilateral representation of a complex milieu.[3] Thus, his goal of deconstructing the stereotyped image of Szeklerland remains – at least, partially – unfulfilled; what is more, he offers a representation that itself reproduces and perpetuates stereotypes.

In our investigation we rely on concepts of imagology and have employed the analytic tools offered by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen and their useful definitions of terms such as territory, region, center and periphery, identity, image, representation, as well as prejudice, stereotype and cliché.

1 To our knowledge, at present there exists no official translation into English of the plays. All titles used in the essay are our translations. Similarly, quotations from texts not available in English – from the plays, reviews, interviews, or specialized literature – are our own. For the sake of fluency from here on we use only the English titles of the plays.

2 Szeklerland is a particular historical and cultural region of Romania, formerly part of Hungary, populated in majority by Hungarians. Szeklers ("székely" in Hungarian) are considered and consider themselves a particular ethnic group among Hungarians, the biggest part of the largest minority in Romania (Horváth 2010, 147).

3 Different in the sense that so far dramatic representations of the Szeklerland and of Transylvania have been built on the positive image of this space. Such classical Szekler-Hungarian writers as Áron Tamási, András Sütő, Géza Páskándi, János Székely or more recently András Visky have created nuanced images of human fate and political, economic and cultural circumstances in this region in a carefully elaborated dramatic form. For a selection of Hungarian plays from Transylvania in English translation, see *Silenced Voices. Hungarian Plays from Transylvania* selected and translated by Csilla Bertha and Donald E. Morse.

2. The Trilogy and Its Reception

The [Mine District] trilogy takes audiences and readers to a rural milieu, an unidentified village somewhere in Szeklerland – unnamed, thus in a sense universalized, or rather generalized for the whole Szekler region – with all its inhabitants trapped in the despair of alcoholism, theft and sexual perversion, of lies and suicide. This is a world defined by its limits and limitations. In [Mine Flower] a dying (off-stage) father has been doing nothing for the last two years but ordering his two grown-up children – Iván and Ilonka – around. People come and go in the house, mostly coming for a free drink, and they talk about nothing but the misery of their lives, their inability to leave or the impossibility of leaving and the only solution they see is hanging themselves. [Mine Blindness] focuses on the confrontation between Ince and Izsák, both of them candidates for the village mayor's office. Ince, who has been mayor for many years now, calls in a Romanian policeman (Florin) to have his opponent arrested, despite himself being the biggest thief in what concerns the forests of the village. While the first play of the trilogy addresses familial and interpersonal relations, the second attempts a depiction of interethnic relations as well. The third, [Mine Water] reaches the depths of perversion, its protagonist being the homosexual pedophile Catholic priest of the village, whose house seems a representation of a second Gomorrah on Earth. And there is no respite and repose, all three plays are structured with a fast-pace dialogue in a language (all of the characters speaking in the same manner and with the same vocabulary) that – many would consider – unprintable.[4]

Székely's trilogy in fact grew out of an MA workshop where students were asked to rewrite a classic play and Székely's choice fell on Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya*. In an interview given to the theatrical blog vanyabacsi.blog.hu, among further literary models that inspired and influenced him, Székely also lists Martin McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan*. Reading the plays one also necessarily thinks of Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* with its characters trapped in Harry Hope's bar, as if stuck in time and place with their illusions and delusions of leaving and leading successful lives somewhere else; something that also turns up in the minds of Székely's similarly trapped characters. And, of course, the multiple dialogues where characters seem to talk next to each other rather than to each other, the multiple instances where – though they are constantly talking – the characters' interactions are nothing but examples of the breakdown of meaningful communication, the total stasis of the village with nothing and no one ever changing nod towards existentialism and the theatre of the absurd, including Beckett, Ionesco, Pinter, or from the Hungarian theatrical tradition Örkény.

4 Among the multiple reviews, articles and interviews, one of the very few critical ones is Lajos Szakolczay's (2014) book review upon the publication of the trilogy that also addresses the trilogy from the perspective of dramaturgy, diction and character-treatment.

[Mine Flower], and later the other two plays of the trilogy have gained resounding success for their author. They have been put on numerous times by both professional and amateur theatre groups, including the Hungarian National Theatre. And they have brought the playwright a number of prizes and acclaim, and – surprisingly – a lot of success not only with critics and other professionals of the theatrical world, but also audiences, including those from Szeklerland. The explanation of such success could rely in the antithesis between the image of Szeklerland and the Szeklers promoted in Hungary and also in Transylvania and the one created by Székely. There exists a stereotypical representation of Szeklerland created and propagated by the Other – in this case primarily Hungarians from Hungary, a representation that largely influences and often stands as the basis of the Szeklers' self-image. And Székely's aim was to destroy this idealized image, arguing that he merely mirrored reality at is was. In an interview, asked whether the depicted world was a typical Transylvanian one, he specified: "We are also like that, these stories are a slice of what we witness in our environment," stating that this was the way he saw people from Transylvania, and in larger terms from Eastern Europe, stipulating that there were regions in Europe where people lived similar lives to those led by the characters of the trilogy and that his goal was to draw attention to this fact as well (Szilléry 2013).

According to sociologist Margit Feischmidt, there exist two images of Transylvania in Hungary which are not only different, but more than that, they contradict each other. There exists, on the one hand, a Transylvania that "resembles us, what is more, it is identical with us, Hungarians"[5] (2005, 7), maybe even "more Hungarian" than any region of Hungary. Thus, it is a cultic space where ancient, authentic Hungarian culture is maintained. On the other hand, Transylvania is also seen as a distant, different, other, foreign land that is backward, less modernized, moreover, uncivilized; still, a positive image in the sense that Transylvania here becomes a synonym for the idealized rural setting, close-to-nature lifestyle and community-based society (2005, 7). Of course, Feischmidt states, both of these images are constructs, and far from experienced reality (2005, 7). Their legitimacy consists in the spaces they themselves create through discourse.

With reference to the Szeklers' self-image and autostereotypes sociologists state that they have arisen through the natural course of transition across political borders of heterostereotypes existing in Hungary. Similarly to Feischmidt, researchers Alpár Horváth and Gábor Michalkó also maintain that the Szeklers have adopted the image formed in Hungary about themselves. They add that Hungarians from Hungary – and, consequently, also the Szeklers themselves – consider that the Szeklers have the sacred responsibility to resist any assimilatory politics or globalizing pressure, any urge to leave, and must remain in the space

5 The translations from Hungarian specialist literature are our own throughout the article.

they were born in (2014, 154). Just like the representation of Szeklerland as a fundamentally rural, close-to-nature realm, unspoiled and uncorrupted by global trends, this image of the Szeklers as the guardians of this space and of authentic Hungarian culture has by now become a cliché.

3. Imagological Concepts and the Trilogy

3.1. Identity, Image, Representation

"Identity […] involves the meaning of 'being identifiable,' and it is closely linked to the idea of permanence through time. […] [H]owever, this older and deeper, diachronic meaning of the notion of identity has become overshadowed by the more current, synchronic meaning of a 'separate and autonomous individuality,'" Leerssen argues (2007, 335). Accordingly, the diachronic dimension of identity means that someone or something remains identical with itself/him/herself, that there exists something static and unchanging in us, and it also involves the belief that the past ceases to become the past, it persists through time and constitutes the core of our image about ourselves – be it individual or group identity we are speaking about. The synchronic meaning, however, implies a self-definition on the basis of contrast and comparison with the Other and the notions of the autonomy and self-awareness of the subject. In this sense, then, identity is not a fixed entity, despite its diachronic dimension; much rather, it may be perceived as a position shifting due to one's relations to the non-I, something that we construct. As Leerssen further states, alterity, the other, the foreign is constitutive of identity, which itself is not a given, but much rather it is in constant becoming in the course of conceptualization and articulation.

Group identity is also a process rather than a state, "a balancing process where the internal cohesion and external distinctness of the group overweigh the group's internal diversity and its external similarities" (Leerssen 2007, 337). Group identity's foundation lies then on the presumption that – though multivocal and diverse – the group has a homogenous core. This undifferentiated core is presupposed to be detectable mostly in small-scale rural communities. To use Leerssen's words, such atom-units are nothing but fata morgana (2007, 338), mental constructs in the form of images.

Similarly, our opinion of others and, implicitly, of ourselves is based on images. Images are the discursive representations of the self and of the group, and thus they change and shift depending on the context, age, intention, communicative situation, etc. The verbalization of these images – of the self, of others, of our environment – has always been the main preoccupation of the arts, of literature conceiving its task as the "representation" of some external or internal reality.

As Ann Rigney argues, representation "[a]s a category of cultural analysis, […] has become the preferred term to designate the ways in which texts […] provide images of the world" (2007, 415). This "mirror" function of the arts and of literature, however, has always been a problematic issue both ontologically and epistemologically, and has by the early twentieth century become refuted, if it has ever been truly and universally accepted. Representations construct the world rather than reflecting it; according to Rigney "they are ways of constructing and directing our view of the world with the help of language" (2007, 415).

3.2. Territory, Region, Periphery

We construct, conceive and verbalize our identities relying on and with the use of multiple concepts and in contrast to the image we have formed about the Other. One of these constitutive elements is space, or territory, specifically the concept or image of the homeland. Social sciences and cultural studies, though, have pointed out that recently space and position have tended to lose their defining quality in what concerns identity construction and that there have been detectable beginnings of an ongoing global deterritorialization process.[6] However, it has also been shown that there is now a conscious counter-action towards reterritorialization. Due to political, economic, social, etc. reasons (mainly political) efforts have been made to refill the space emptied of its symbolic significance with symbolic valences of value. We witness a ritual reoccupation of space in the hope that renewed territorial attachment would counterbalance emigration and would offer a new sense of an anchored, thus stable identity.[7]

Such reterritorialization is often attempted at the regional or local level, in such small-scale micro-regions as villages, mainly because these micro-regions

6 See, for example, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari *Anti-Oedipus* (1977); Anthony Giddens *The Consequences of Modernity* (1990); Arjun Appadurai "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" (1990); John Tomlinson *Globalization and Culture* (1999); Gil-Manuel Hernàndez i Martí "The Deterritorialization of Cultural Heritage in a Globalized Modernity" (2006); Noel B. Salazar and Alan Smart "Anthropological Takes on (Im)Mobility" (2011), etc.

7 Investigating specific aspects of interethnic relations and their media-representation in Szeklerland, Bíborka Ádám writes: "As a result of historical and social changes of the last decades, ethnicity research, the study of ethnic and/or cultural identity and of categories of interethnic relations, the exploration of their representation have become central issues of sociological discourse. Primarily as an effect of theories coming from Western Europe and the overseas, the study of phenomena denoted through the above mentioned terms has unfolded with special intensity in Central- and Eastern Europe. All these can, of course, be correlated with the fall of political systems with decades-long traditions, of socialism and communism, whose fall has initiated the process of self-definition, identity articulation of ethnic groups living in these countries, as well as the processes of redistribution of border territories, symbolic spaces and goods. Thus, a new process has officially started in the lives of Central-Eastern-European nations, through which these given nations and groups redefine themselves, their past, their present and their relations to their neighbor or co-existing nationalities" (2016, 9).

are generally viewed as ideal for such reloading of space as these are thought to be the locations of sustained traditions and an "unspoiled" and "uncorrupted" pastoral connection to nature and to stereotyped images of rural wisdom and authenticity. Relying on Sengle's arguments Leerssen states:

> Following Romanticism, the rustic tale became a cult all over Europe. Urbanization and industrialization provoked as a counterreaction a nostalgic celebration of the simplicity, traditions and artless spontaneity of the pre-industrial, pre-modern countryside. In the climate of the modernizing state, a need was obviously felt for a more affective focus of loyalty, one involving childhood memories, family history and communitarian ties rather than citizenship and institutional bonds. The rustic community had become peripheral to the modern state, but in affective terms retained an important status: even if one did not have direct, personal connections with the rustic countryside, with a 'homeland,' one vicariously projected oneself into it. (2007, 412)

This nostalgic image of the village is built on representations of it that single out and emphasize such aspects of small-scale community life as stasis, both in the sense of staying and in the sense of social immobility, intimate relations among members of the community who, though they may have little education, possess an innate or inherited wisdom and common sense that urban society seems to have lost, and "a high degree of solidarity and no loneliness" (Leerssen 2007, 413).

In this context the village becomes the counterpart of the state or of larger cities in the center-periphery dichotomy. Despite the fact that they may be differently valorized, either one or the other being seen as the positive pole, the center is always perceived as the locus of power, while the periphery as outside of the network of power. Similarly, the center is in constant movement, development and change, while the periphery is fundamentally static. Leerssen also identifies a temporal dissociation between them: the periphery always figures as backward, stuck in some past era – of either barbarism or a noble and innocent but still savage state, "bound up in timeless traditions" (2007, 208).

The idealized, pastoral image and representation of the periphery/village echoes what Michel Foucault calls a heterotopia, a space endowed with special features representing utopias, authenticity, where even our perception of time is altered. As Zsolt Szíjártó phrases it, "as spaces of continuity in the continuously – and extremely rapidly – changing social and cultural environment, they [heterotopias] suggest a certain type of timelessness, of them being out of time, and they follow and offer the models of permanence, reliability and the validity of traditions" (2000, 10).

3.3. Prejudice, Stereotype, Cliché

Similarly to the way representations shape and construct our perceptions of the world and of ourselves and others, prejudices are at the foundation of our perceptions. As Hans-Georg Gadamer, defending prejudice, argues, people construct their perception of reality on the basis of prejudices, much rather than facts, reason, judgment (1989). From the perspective of imagology, however, Beller understands prejudice as a "key concept for any preconceived and unsupported opinion and attitude that influence[s] our perception, description and judgement of others" (2007, 404). Accordingly, prejudice is always already in "information deficit" (Leerssen 2007), given that it is built through the process of singling out certain characteristics from a relatively infinite cluster and excluding/totally neglecting and disregarding others. These singled out characteristics then will be amplified and emphasized, usually with the purpose of criticizing others, and thus heightening our own value.

And though the terms stereotype and cliché are often used as perfect synonyms of the term prejudice, Beller offers a clear definition of all three and differentiates them as follows: "'prejudice' […] [is] a moral judgement or attitude, stereotype […] [is] that attitude's fixed expression, and cliché […] [is] a stylistic turn of phrase" (2007, 404). In other words, stereotypes verbalize prejudices, and as discursive practices they themselves will also necessarily distort reality. According to Aronson's definition: "[a] stereotype is a generalization about a group of people in which incidental characteristics are assigned to virtually all members of the group/regardless of actual variation among the members. Once formed, stereotypes are resistant to change on the basis of new information" (2005, 434). Stereotypes, then, are overgeneralizing statements that are also static and rigid, and their relationship to reality constitutes a problematic issue. Clichés have an even more controversial relation to the experienced world given that they have practically no relation to reality, but are rhetorical forms. As Beller argues, unlike stereotypes that contain valorizing aspects be they positive or negative, clichés are "formulaic generalizations which have no basis in empirical experience, not any serious purpose as a moral judgement" (2007, 297).

4. The Trilogy – Stereotypes Deconstructed or Reiterated?

As previously argued, there exists a stereotyped image about Transylvania, and specifically Szeklerland as a location that – though a periphery, thus to a certain extent backward and outside of the network of power/or maybe exactly because of this – holds and sustains authentic, ancient Hungarian culture, an idyllic

space of intimacy, comradery, ancient wisdom and close-to-nature lifestyle, a predominantly rural area populated by people aware of their role as the preservers of traditions. Referring to such an idyllic image of Szeklerland and responding to the accusation that the trilogy destroys this image, Székely contends that:

> I do not have an idyllic or a non-idyllic image of Transylvania, I present what I see. In spite of the fact that these are very local stories, Transylvanian people, Transylvanian places, and I like being a Transylvanian writer, after a while this aspect will vanish and in these texts the Transylvanian-ness of people is going to lose its importance, leaving behind only people, as the country separates itself from the characters of the Chekhov plays. To have a universal message, this is my goal. (2013)

The overwhelming majority of reviews emphasize that Székely is a breath of fresh air precisely due to the fact that he discards the idealized image of Szeklerland by addressing taboo topics such as unemployment, Hungarian-Romanian relations, pedophilia, corruption, etc.[8] As the dramatist Zsuzsa Radnóti argues, his works negate traditions to such an extent that he becomes a "tradition-maker" himself, putting an end to the image of the Sweet Transylvania in dramatic literature (qtd. in Kovács 2013). She sustains her argument with a citation from [Mine Flower]: "The only tradition we keep here is that of drinking […] we drink ourselves to the ground, we jump at each other's throats, and afterwards we go steel some wood from the forest. This is our big fucking tradition" (qtd. in Kovács 2013). And Székely himself, when asked about the reaction of audiences who live in the region where the trilogy is set, has stated: "Last year, after a performance, an elderly man […], who found the play very entertaining and significant, said: 'unfortunately, *this is how we live*'" (Szilléri 2013, emphasis added).

Deconstruction of stereotypes is only possible by either pushing them to the extreme and thus tipping the representation over to the absurd, or by eliminating them through nuancing the image. Replacing them with others does not resolve the initial problem; what is more, such replacement carries the risk of sustaining stereotypical thinking and representation. In our reading, Székely's trilogy does exactly that, namely it replaces a set of (relatively) positive stereotypes with a cluster of negative ones.

In the [Mine District] trilogy Székely then intends to create a representation of Szeklerland and its inhabitants that would replace or at least shade the idealized stereotypical heterostereotypia created in Hungary about this region that has also become an autostereotypical image adopted, internalized and now propagated by Szeklers themselves. All three plays are set in the same unidentified, thus generalized village somewhere in Szeklerland. And though it retains some of

8 See, for example, reviews by Gábor Ménesi (2013) or Bálint Kovács (2013).

the characteristics of the Romantic image of Leerssen's argument quoted above, it becomes a counter-image of the positively valorized rural location: it is static, even time seems to stand still here, with absolutely no social mobility, where everyone knows everyone else intimately but this intimacy offers grounds for mocking, using and misusing each other rather than functioning as a remedy for loneliness. This is the periphery par excellence, stuck in time, backward, passive, violent, almost barbaric. Its symbolic valences that would link people to this place and would offer them grounds for identity-construction on the basis of connection to the homeland are ridiculed; it is a space emptied of real value other than the forests that can be stolen. In this sense, then, the plays illustrate a process of deterritorialization: the characters have lost their attachment to the land of their forefathers. Efforts of reterritorialization are also mocked: for example, at the end of [Mine Flower] the camera crew that has come to the village tries in vein to highlight the natural and cultural values of the region, the interviewees respond in mere clichés. They perceive the village as a prison, a space that robs them of their free will and traps them in its inertia.

In these plays the center in the center-periphery dichotomy is also negatively valorized. Though some of the characters dream and talk about leaving the village, they have no reliable knowledge of the outside world. Still, they want to escape this stasis and go somewhere else – to work in Italy, or to Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), to a city where they would be praised and loved, as the doctor from [Mine Flower] hopes. For here, in the village the only way to fit in is either through drinking heavily or through hanging oneself, which in his drunken stupor the doctor contemplates doing. These hopes and dreams, however, have no foundation: villagers do not even possess a constructed image of the center, they just know that it must be different, other than what they experience in their own environment.

The city, when it appears, becomes a place of corruption, decline and death as well. Florin, the city policeman's wife in [Mine Blindness] died a grotesque death when her head was cut off by a tram (reminiscent of Bulgakov), while in the same play Izabella, the mayor's daughter gets into trouble in the city because her roommates grow cannabis on their balcony. Her fate also shows how the center does not necessarily guarantee the fulfillment of dreams: she has been there for the last decade and though her father keeps financing her "studies" at the university – where one has to pay off professors to make it to graduation and, as she promises, become mayor herself one day – we learn that she left the university three years earlier and has been since working as a cleaning lady in a supermarket.

The cliché of the American dream is also parodied: in [Mine Water] Irén's daughter is supposed to be in America, where no one drinks and a housekeeper or a teacher earns one million dollars. But in fact she did not go any further than the neighboring village where she eventually committed suicide; thus Irén waits in vain for her to return. And in case anyone returns from some center due

to some familial obligation, like Ilonka, Iván's sister does in [Mine Flower], the village immediately turns into a prison where she becomes invisible and inert.

If the setting of the plays is totally static, so are the characters populating it. We meet drunken villagers, a disillusioned and burned-out doctor, a corrupt mayor, a perverse pedophile Catholic priest, a narrow-minded teacher outraged not because a man made his sixteen-year-old daughter touch him in exchange for candy but because he was a protestant, and so on. Female characters are also trapped in this world of drinking, disillusionment and brutality, where they are either rendered invisible (Ilonka in [Mine Flower] complains that nobody sees her), or considered nothing but prey that has to be hunted down. And women themselves tend to submit to this image: in [Mine Flower] Iván's neighbor, Irma wished for nothing more than to be Iván's trophy. She is certain that she would be able to dig beyond Iván's rough surface and find there the "hidden mine flowers." But, of course, despite the unexpected opportunity their relationship gets once Irma's husband hangs himself, they remain stuck in their condition and the "mine flowers" buried under brutality, violence and despair.

In the trilogy we encounter no dynamic character, which is not surprising taking into consideration that all of them are constructed out of stereotypes and clichés: every Szekler has a knife or an ax/chainsaw used primarily for fighting, every priest has a lover, everyone has a tendency to commit suicide and all of them drink. The only sober grown-up is Iván's neighbor, Illés in [Mine Flower], who eventually hangs himself, towards whom the villagers' attitude is best phrased by Iván: "If only you would drink, like any normal person!" (2013, 157). They visit each other in hopes of a free drink, they gather at funerals for the same reason where even the priest is so drunk that he does not even remember who the deceased person is. The Romanian policeman, Florin from [Mine Blindness] also drinks heavily and still jokes about the Szeklers' drinking habits: "Two Szeklers pass the tavern" he says and when Ince asks him to carry on, he responds: "There's no more. That's the joke" (2013, 231).

Religion, profession and ethnicity serve only as grounds for further stereotyping and clichés. The only Romanian character in the trilogy is Florin the policeman brought in from town by Ince to investigate and discredit his counter-candidate in the local elections. And similar to the Szeklers, this character is also constructed from a cluster of characteristics stereotypically associated with authority figures: shrewd and manipulative, he uses the locals' naivety and narrow-mindedness to hide his own extreme nationalism. As for the diachronic dimension of group identity construction, the persistence of the past and traditions, all three plays abound in irony and sarcasm. [Mine Flower] ends with a television crew having come to the house to interview Iván who, dressed partially in Szekler folk costume and partly in the several-sizes-too-small pullover he has received as a present from Ilonka, his step-sister, says:

> I'm Iván Vajda, fourty-two-year-old citizen. I've lived here for … more than fourty-two years. My father also lives here […] My grandfather also lived here, and his grandfather also, though I haven't met him yet. We live. Yes. We are living. We are living, working, and preserving the traditions. […] We have everything we need as we lead a traditional life, and we are content with the little we have. This is how we live here. We are living. Should I sing? Not yet? Fine then. […] We love the traditions and the Holy Catholic Church. […] It's nice to live here because there are these beautiful mountains, and the pine forests, and that shitty little brooklet gurgles so nicely like a stream. […] Here everything is so nice as a dream. As a dream. This is what we live in. Yes. This. (2013, 192)

In [Mine Blindness] maintaining traditions means having a map of the once-existent historical Hungary on the wall and being a member of a traditional Szekler regiment which has absolutely no practical purpose in the twenty-first century but its gatherings serve as occasions for drinking and reminiscing about some idealized past lifestyle. However, Izsák, the candidate for mayor, an ardent protector of traditions who fills in even official forms with the traditional Szekler alphabet, eventually leaves the regiment because the group has become too "liberal" to appropriately represent their ethnic and historical belonging to the place. In [Mine Water] the dramatic climax seems to be the point when the teacher's house burns down and the priest hints at it being rebuilt by the close-knit community of the village to which Márton, his foster-son ironically remarks: "One can see a strong sense of community when it comes to drinking others' pálinka"[9] (2013, 254).

5. Conclusions

If stereotypes are verbalizations of prejudices, articulations of our mental images and opinions about others and about ourselves, that means that they constitute a certain type of discourse and can be used to structure narratives. The nature of discourse, however, is that it is structured, while our world, our experiences are chaotic and lack coherence. Thus experience always evades and escapes representation and it cannot be verbalized through stereotypes, considering the rupture between reality and signification.

Székely's attempt to subvert the promoted idealized images fails because reality is, in fact, much more complex than that. Though the playwright claims to have created a representation of another, a/the real mining district, of people populating this region, and claims to deconstruct the false stereotypes of the

9 Pálinka is a home-made fruit brandy, the traditional drink of the Szeklers.

Transylvanian village of pastoral peace, unity of nature and human beings, ancient wisdom and traditions, etc., what the trilogy does is merely to replace one stereotypical representation with another – a negative autostereotype that is just as deficient and false as the one replaced. Despite creating a shocking image and addressing taboo topics, the trilogy remains one-dimensional, built on stereotypes and clichés. In our reading, Székely proves incapable of stepping beyond the usual stereotypical discourse, but simply shows the other side of the same coin. As if a counterimage of the Foucauldian heterotopia, the world of the [Mine District] trilogy is a distressing anti-heterotopia.

A further aspect that shatters the "lifelikeness" and "reality" of the plays is again connected to stereotypical representations. Ton Hoenselaars states when discussing dramatic characters from the perspective of imagology: "assumed traits of stereotypical nature, however minor, seriously tend to problematize the overall texture of established complex, three-dimensional literary character[s]" (2007, 284). As demonstrated, all the characters of the trilogy are more or less stock characters, static and one dimensional, from the drunken and disillusioned middle-aged Iván to the corrupt rural doctor, the shrewd policemen, the homosexual Catholic priest to the flighty and irresponsible youth.

And most importantly, as Leerssen argues in his introductory study to *Imagology*, "the use of national characterizations has undergone an 'ironic turn'" (2007, 74). At the same time, in line with Linda Hutcheon's concept of parody as not only and not primarily mocking, but much rather repeating with a difference and thus honoring and perpetuating the past (1988), Leerssen also warns:

> [S]tereotypes and clichés […] are often invoked ironically […] with a knowing wink from author to reader. […] [T]his is part of the multi-leveled playfulness: national characters and stereotypes are not used seriously (as they would have been a century before), but metafictionally, as a game of conventions. By the same token, however, the old stereotypes are perpetuated and given a new lease of life, albeit under the ironic proviso: if they are used half-jokingly, they are also used half-seriously; meant to be recognized, albeit playfully, they nevertheless invoke and perpetuate the currency of the stereotype they avoid taking seriously. (2007, 74–75)

Maybe this "knowing wink" aspect makes Székely's trilogy appealing for some, but for others it remains appalling for it brings into play and perpetuates stereotypes, not idealized images, but the other extreme opposite. And stereotypes, be they positively or negatively valorizing, carry the risk of being taken seriously and accepted and assimilated as truthful representations of the Other or of the self. Unfortunately, this is what we see happening in the case of the [Mine District] trilogy, proven also by the fact that – among many others – for example Noémi

Herczog states: the Mine Trilogy puts an end to the idealized image of Transylvania and it represents *people resembling us* (2013, emphasis ours).

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The Integration of the Armenian Immigrants in István Lakatos's *Siculia*

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Abstract. The relatively short history of the Transylvanian Principality (one hundred and fifty years or so) was full of unexpected changes. From the tragic Battle of Mohács, fought against the Ottoman invasion (1526), until the Diploma Leopoldinum, which integrated the Principality in the huge Habsburg Empire, events like the rise of Lutheran, Calvinian or Unitarian reforms, the Catholic Reformation or Counter-Reformation – despite the Edict of Torda in 1568, which declared religious tolerance and freedom of conscience – brought forth more disagreements. In the 1670s a new population coming from Moldova appeared in the Principality: the Armenians. The history of the establishment of this population was mentioned by the Catholic priest István Lakatos in his work *Siculia* (1702). Through the analysis of this work, we search for answers to the question regarding the relatively short integration period of this ethnic group.

Keywords: Armenians, integration, immigrants, *Siculia*, István Lakatos, Transylvanian Principality.

The political weight of the Transylvanian Principality growing weaker and, at the same time, the pressure from the Habsburg Empire getting stronger made it more and more obvious that the Principality, which had preserved its independence for one hundred and fifty years by means of successful political maneuvres and appropriate international diplomacy, could no longer maintain its independent status. The Diploma Leopoldinum, issued in 1690, which in spite of having again put into force the old Transylvanian laws, recognizing the system of three nations and four denominations codified by the legislation, once and for all determined the fate of the independent Principality. After the death of Michael I Apafi, Prince of Transylvania, in December 1691, Leopold I issued the reformulated version of the Diploma, in which, however, the confirmation of the elected Prince Michael II Apafi was not included. He charged the Gubernium, constituted in Hermannstadt (Sibiu, Nagyszeben) in 1691, with the administration of Transylvania, while

later, in 1693, in Vienna, the Court Chancery for Transylvania was set up, and thus the Principality gradually got under Habsburg authority losing its former independence. At the Court of Vienna the shape which the status of Hungary and the Principality of Transylvania was to take within the bounds of the Monarchy had been a serious matter even in the years before the Diploma. The policy that the Habsburg administration applied in the new territories was mainly determined by a document entitled *Einrichtungswerk des Königreichs Hungarn*, drawn up by the committee whose head was count Lipót Kollonich (Varga J. and Kalmár 2010). The major interest of the Court of Vienna was that the economy of each newly annexed land should rise to the level of the Austrian lands and be able to support itself in this respect. A possible solution to make the economy prosper was considered to be the repopulation of deserted territories. The migration from the marginal regions of the Hungarian Kingdom towards the territories of the Hungarian Plain and South-Transdanubia opened the possibility for ethnic groups from the border regions of the Carpathian Basin (Slovenians, Croatians, Slovaks, Serbians, Ruthenians, Romanians) to immigrate to the country. The spontaneous immigration and movements of population were not a solution to the demographic problems (Varga J. 1999, 42–43). The Court intended to deal with this problem in its own manner: by deliberately settling Germans from the Holy Roman Empire to the territories of the Hungarian Kingdom. However, every settling process had in sight one very important consideration: regarding the division of denominations, it aimed to increase the proportion of the Catholic population. This could partly be achieved by the settlement of Catholic ethnic groups (Swabians), or by obligatorily converting people of other denominations – first of all, Romanians, Ruthenians and Serbians of Orthodox Rite – to Catholicism (Nagy 2013a, 58–74).[1] Although these principles were, above all, valid for the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom, since in Transylvania the system of three nations and four religions recognized by law had been preserved, even here the religious policy was shaped according to this law. At Monarchy level, the importance of the pursuit of such religious policy was especially enhanced by the fact that the Catholic population, loyal both to Rome and to the Habsburg Court, was much easier to govern. Since, at that time, no notable Armenian community lived on the territory of the Hungarian Kingdom (unlike in Transylvania), the Habsburg administration did not deal with their situation in particular.

From the territory of the Armenian kingdoms that lost their independence in the eleventh century due to the invasion of the Seljuk Turks and the Mongolians, an exodus of population started, and it continued in the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. At that time the larger part of the emigrating population found refuge in Poland and Moldavia (Lukácsy 1859, 63–65; Nistor 1912, 55–57; Kovács

1 The Habsburg administration recognized the freedom of worship of the Lutherans and the Reformed, but also urged their assimilation into the Catholic church.

2012, 22–23). Armenians came to Transylvania as early as the fourteenth century, they were mostly spice traders coming from the Balkans.[2] The Saxons of Transylvania, holding monopoly over the greatest part of the commercial and craft market, did not like the Armenian traders being present in growing numbers in the Principality; therefore, they got the Diet to apply negative discrimination against the traders from the Levant. Despite all these measures, more and more Armenian traders came to Transylvania on the commercial route from the Levant as well as from Moldavia. These traders brought their merchandise mostly to the markets of Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureş) and Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni) (Nagy 2013a, 81–88). New, larger groups of Armenian immigrants arrived in Transylvania, in Szeklerland, in 1668 and later in 1672. They had two reasons for choosing Transylvania as the destination of their flight: on the one hand, they were familiar with the market conditions in the Principality, on the other hand, they had knowledge about the pluralistic policy of religion in Transylvania (Nagy 2013a, 81).[3] The Armenians arriving to Transylvania showed up in larger masses in the Principality at a time that can be called fortunate, for Prince Michael I Apafi was attempting to break the trade monopoly of the Transylvanian Saxons and the Greeks precisely with the help of the Armenians' trading activity. This is proven by the fact that, in order to prevent the resettling of the Armenians in Moldavia, on 25 October 1680, he granted them free trade and settlement right hoping that in this way he would contribute to the boosting of the home economy of the Principality (Nagy 2013a, 84; cf. Pál 1997). The Armenians as an immigrating ethnic group are present in historiography as early as the end of the seventeenth century. Concerning them, we are provided with relevant data from the historical work entitled *Siculia*, written in Latin by the Szekler historiographer István Lakatos (Pap 2017).[4]

István Lakatos (1635?–1706) was an educated Catholic priest and dean of Alcsík, born in Székelyudvarhely (Odorheiu Secuiesc), one of the illustrious representatives of the Catholic ecclesiastical renewal movement in Csík district. He was educated at the Jesuit College in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and, as we presume, in Nagyszombat (Trnava) and Vienna, where he studied theology and was ordained. He recorded in writing the events of Thököly's invasion that took place in Alcsík, as well as the constitutions of the parish church of Csíkkozmás (Cozmeni), which had earlier been published in the *Szekler Archives* (1897, 424–

2 We also know about their church or a smaller congregation. In Tolmács community near the town of Nagyszeben (Sibiu) the inscription of a seal dating from 1355, on which we can read the name of a certain Armenian bishop called Márton as well as the name of a local parish, was discovered: "Martini Episcopi Armenorum de Tolmachy, sigillum parochiae Armenorum" (Zimmerman, Werner and Müller 1902, 106–107).

3 The new, immigrating Armenian ethnic groups avoided Poland for the very reason of the unionist endeavours carried out by force.

4 For the nineteenth-twentieth century relations see Ajtony (2013).

445). Among his historical works by far the best is *Siculia*, which he himself dated to 1702, but which, according to evidence, had been accessible for reading earlier, before the year 1699 (Pap 2017, 163).

The Hungarian academic historiography surely had an impact on our author, since the outstanding professor of the institution where he had presumably studied, Gábor Hevenesi, was an important representative of the Catholic renewal movement and the modern source-collecting school. Despite that, the work was originally written with the intention of giving a description of Szeklerland, and it also became, we could rather say, an early Catholic prototype of the history of Transylvanian reformation.

Right at the beginning of his work, Lakatos – according to the tradition of historiography – presents the region the history of which he would later discuss, and it is here that he talks about the different ethnic groups inhabiting this land in his time, as well as about those populations which had formerly lived here. He also makes mention of the Romanians, the Dacians and the Getae, highlighting the following:

> It is only the Szekler nation that has remained pure throughout history, not mixing with other ethnic groups, although, for the most part, these have their settlements close to the Szeklers, the Transylvanian Saxons are their neighbours on their own settlements, while, on the other side, the Romanians, in the east the Moldavians and in certain parts the Wallachians, all these Romanians being the descendants of the Romans. Openly, however, they have never mixed with these in religion, marriages and morality. Among them it is the Romanians only that do, for a living, shepherding, their villages, just like the villages of the Transylvanian Saxons, are situated separately from theirs. They consider the Armenians, who arrived in this region not long ago, mostly with the intention of trading, foreigners. (Lakatos qtd. in Pap 2017, 19)[5]

What is interesting about the fragment quoted above is that the author does not only mention the three nations recognized by law, but beside the Romanians, he writes about the Armenians as well. Lakatos is very reticent in relating about the Transylvanian Saxons, the reason for him to do so is the obstinacy of the Saxons to continue to hold firm to Protestantism. Thus the author could not have presented them, in any way, as positive participants, and in the given historical situation speaking ill of the population with a German native tongue was not entirely a wise thing. The author does not give a detailed account of the Hungarians either. After the decline of the reign of the protestant Princes of Transylvania, as a

5 Fragments from István Lakatos's *Siculia* quoted in this article were translated from Latin by the author of this article.

consequence of the increase of the Baroque Habsburg influence, the Catholics could benefit from an ever greater political support:

> the star of the Roman Catholic Church has risen and has started to shine more and more brightly over Transylvania together with Szeklerland. The native inhabitants did not dare to boast too much about this matter for the reason that, during the reign of the Transylvanian Princes, who had succeeded each other on the throne for almost a whole century, everywhere in the towns and villages of Transylvania it was Calvinism, most of all, that had prospered, while in the towns of the Transylvanian Saxons Lutheranism had struck root. (Lakatos qtd. in Pap 2017, 81–82)

The above statements prove that the Armenians were considered immigrating foreign elements. Despite this, however, in comparison with the other ethnic groups, the author devotes long paragraphs to the presentation of the history of Armenians in Transylvania.

Lakatos, who himself was an eyewitness of the Armenians' settlement in Szeklerland, emphasizes, above all, church-related matters. He mentions that

> [d]uring the year 1670 the Armenians from Moldavia established settlements in Transylvania, most of them settling in Szeklerland, in Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni) and Csíkszépvíz (Frumoasa) and beside these, in the following villages: Görgény (Gurghiu), Petele (Petelea), Felfalu (Suseni) and Remete (Remetea), which count as important Szekler territories, and further, in Beszterce (Bistrița), headed by bishop Minas, together with the members of the clergy, they set up their seat achieving from the Principality the right of free movement with the purpose of trading. The Armenians were obliged to pay taxes, as a consequence, the Principality appointed from among the Armenians a mayor who had the same rights as a mayor in his own country, Armenia. However, he was submitted to the chief government official in charge of the Szekler districts. (Lakatos qtd. in Pap 2017, 83)

Lakatos could have had access to sources pertaining to the history of Armenians in Transylvania thanks to the connections with his contemporaries as well as his own life and work experience as a priest in Csík district – first in Csíksomlyó (Şumuleu Ciuc) (?–1684) and then in Csíkkozmás (Cozmeni) (1684–1706) – for many decades having worked in the same deaconry, on the land where the Armenians of Csíkszépvíz (Frumoasa) had settled. At that time there were only very few written sources in connection with the history of the Armenians. One of the earliest and, at the same time, most reliable sources was written

by the unionist bishop Stefano Stefanowicz Roszka,[6] Armenian of Poland, an ecclesiastical history yearbook that did not yet exist in Lakatos's time.[7]

In Hungarian historiography the conditions for critical history were formed in the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries. The appearance of the Jesuit source-collecting schools counted as a milestone both in Hungarian (Transylvanian) and European historiography. The Hungarian branching off of the European school can be linked to the University of Nagyszombat (Trnava) founded by Péter Pázmány (Szögi 1985). In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Rector of this University, Gábor Hevenesi (and the Jesuit Sámuel Timon) started a program to collect documents, diplomas, correspondence and other sources that were relevant for the history of the Catholic Church. Hevenesi built a real network of people who helped in the work of source-collecting in the whole country, including Transylvania. Many of these were his former disciples, alumni of the institution of Nagyszombat. Among them was Rudolf Bzensky (Molnár 2007), a Jesuit priest who had been to Transylvania many times and had even done source collecting work on Hevenesi's instruction. Besides collecting sources, the Jesuit pater had his own domains of interest, namely the bishopric of Milkó (Milcov) and, as a special interest, the nations and denominations of Transylvania. In 1694 he compiled a mission report in which he presented the nations and denominations of Transylvania, among which we find the Armenians, too, Bzensky dealing with this subject in other works as well. He makes use of authentic first-hand information about the Armenians that he had probably received from Oxendius Virziraski.[8]

Lakatos and Bzensky were personally acquainted and were familiar with each other's work; this is something that Bzensky himself mentioned in his writing

6 "Stefan (Stefano) Stefanowicz Roszka, titular bishop of Hymeria, an Armenian historian of Poland. Roszka also had very strong connections in Transylvania: in 1672, together with his parents, he fled from Poland (from Kameniec Podolski) to Beszterce (Bistrița), Transylvania, and it is there that he, at a young age, began his church activity as a Christian of Apostolic Creed, under the protection of bishop Minas Zilifdarean. At the turn of the years 1720–30 he went on several visitations to the Armenian parishes in Transylvania on the instructions of the Holy See. During his visitations in Transylvania, in order to reinforce the religious life of the local Armenian communities, he founded so-called religious bodies. He established such bodies (fellowships, confraternities, for which the Armenian word is *elbayrut'iwnk*) in the towns of Szamosújvár (Gherla) and Gyergyószentmiklós (Gheorgheni)" (Nagy 2013a, 19, translated by me, L. P.).

7 This work speaks about the events up to the year 1730.

8 "Oxendio Virziresco was born in the town of Botoşani, Moldavia, in 1654. In 1676, influenced by the missionaries working in Moldavia, he converted to Catholicism following which he started his theological studies at Collegio Armeno in Lemberg. On the recommendation of Francesco Martelli, nuncio of Warsaw, he went to Rome, where he pursued his studies in theology at Collegio Urbano. In 1678 he was ordained and, in the same year, he went from Rome to Lemberg to continue his studies, and then there he obtained a degree in theology (*vardapetut'iwn*). After this he returned to Rome, where he was engaged at Propaganda Fide. The letter Nersesowicz wrote to him in September 1684 found him already in the Eternal City, from where, the next year, at the request of the bishop, the Holy See posted him to Transylvania on a mission among the Armenians living there" (Nagy 2013a, 108, translated by me, L. P.; cf. Nagy 2013b).

entitled *Syllogimaea sive Collectanea Ecclesiae Transylvanae Libri Septem*, dated 1699,[9] the manuscript of which has survived to our days. The author does not simply refer to Lakatos, but he cites from the *Siculia*, word by word, the part concerning the description of the Szeklers. There is sure evidence for the professional contacts of the two; presumably, Lakatos might have written the part about the Armenians based on the information he had received from Bzensky. To support the probability of this statement it is important for us to mention that the report written to Hevenesi outlines the religious conditions of the Armenians of Transylvania starting from their settlement up to the time when Oxendius was ordained bishop (Nagy 2013a, 18). In Lakatos's work, too, the part concerning the Armenians ends with the description of Oxendius being ordained bishop by popular request (Pap 2017, 86).

As for Lakatos, we can presume the existence of another possible source regarding bishop Oxendius and the confessional conditions of the Transylvanian Armenians. The fact that the Edict of Torda (Turda) of 1568, which proclaimed the freedom of conscience but, beside the equality of religions, forbade that the papists should have a bishop, drew attention to the awkward situation of the Principality of Transylvania, which had granted pluralism of religion. In order to solve the ever threatening problems of a Catholic Church without a bishop, starting with Prince Gabriel Bethlen, the Catholic Church was headed by priests and vicars invested with the authority of a bishop, appointed by the Prince (Szekfű 1983, 177–178). During the reign of Prince Michael I Apafi, Bertalan Szebelébi, a Franciscan friar was presented vicar of Transylvania. Bertalan Szebelébi was on good terms with Lakatos and the appreciative statements in *Siculia* are evidence of this, while it is of no minor importance that it was Szebelébi who, as a witness, had confirmed the deed issued by Lakatos.

Lakatos paid special attention to Oxendius's personality and work of unification:

> But in 1684, on his return from Rome, Oxendius Virziraski, who had come from the Armenian episcopate of Moldavia and had been, previously, impregnated with the deviations of those and who in the meantime leaving his parents, since 1670, for fourteen years had devoted his life to do studies at Collegium Urbanum in Rome, the educational institution belonging to the Missionary Congregation, and who, in the building of the Holy Office, having rejected his own errors, was ordained and sent back to the same diocese, as Apostolic missionary, by the Missionary Congregation, that is the holy congregation of the cardinals who were at the head of the faith

9 "Incidi opportune Mense Julio Anni 1696 in familiarem conversationem A. R. P. Stephani Lakatos, in Csik, Siculiae Parochi, Doctrina tum sacra, tum profana multum illustris, cujus scripta Historica perlegens reperi quoque mirabilia aliqua ad fecunditatem Transylvaniae Terrae pertinentia, eademque his meis Prolegomenis inferre non dubitavi ejusdem nomine" (Bzensky 1699, fol 26).

> spreading mission. Here Oxendius, or spelled Auxentius, shed light upon the misconceptions in the faith of the Armenians, for it was him who had received the chapels ceded from them, and in those he conducted the Catholic service of his own mission, according to the Armenian rituals, and he did this work in such a manner that, as a result of his efforts, in four years, there were sixty families who having rejected their false beliefs, converted to the obedience of the Apostolic See. Moreover, he persuaded bishop Minas to confess his faith before Honourable Cardinal Pallavicini, archbishop of Warsaw, and he did so, upon his return to Transylvania, absolved from his sins, and there he passed away in God. His priests and the people of his diocese unanimously asked for the union with the Roman Catholic Church, hence, for that purpose, they sent Reverend Illés, archbishop and Armenian priest, together with eight more people, to Lemberg (Lviv), where they, on behalf of the entire diocese, swore obedience to the Pope. All those who had been absolved from their sins requested that the previously mentioned Oxendius should be ordained bishop for them. This was accomplished and since then God has sustained, in peculiar ways, his devout work done for the development of his church, whenever he publicly did and still does, in the town of Beszterce (Bistrița) and other places, his holy activity of a bishop, whenever needed, and, according to unanimous opinions, in a praiseworthy manner, for the consolation of many, both Armenians and others. (Lakatos qtd. in Pap 2017, 84–86)

Even if not always the most accurate,[10] biographical information sheds favourable light on the Armenian bishop. The Catholic community of Transylvania could also be grateful to Oxendius, for he himself also took part in giving religious assistance to the Szeklers. Lakatos indicates this fact dimly in the last line of the quotation above, when he mentions that the unionist Armenian bishop is conducting a most blissful activity "for the consolation of many, both Armenians and others."

A question remains interesting further on, namely the reason why the author pays so much attention to the community of Armenians. We find the answer in the opus below:

> for almost a whole century, during the reign of the Calvinist Princes of Transylvania, who succeeded each other on the throne, in the towns and villages of Transylvania it was Calvinism that prospered, while in the towns of the Transylvanian Saxons the Lutheranism struck root, in Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca) and Szeklerland Arianism, while through the foreigners, it was the Holy Roman Catholic Church that developed. (Lakatos qtd. in Pap 2017, 82)

10 Oxendius only arrived in Transylvania in 1685, and he had had discussions with cardinal Pallavicini much earlier (Nagy 2013a, 92).

As we have seen before, at the end of the seventeenth century radical political changes took place in Transylvania, as the Principality was slowly losing its independence. This also created a new religious situation, because the new administration fully supported the interests of the Catholics, as this was true for the Hungarian Kingdom as well. Although the conditions of the Catholics had improved, these were far from being bright, as it was obvious from Oxendius's reports. In the new situation, the Catholic party was in a schizophrenic state: partly, it would have liked to take the most advantage from the change of administration and overcome the Protestants, who otherwise outnumbered them. This direction also fully corresponded with the general aspirations of the Court of Vienna, the hallmark of which was the missionary work of the Jesuits by the unification of smaller Christian ethnic groups (e. g. the Romanians). On the other hand, the clergy assisting the Catholic Szeklers living in one block was not happy to participate in this work, the newly presented bishop who was actually residing here could not accept others to interfere in his jurisdiction. Despite this, *Siculia*, a historical work probably intended to be read by a large public, would have liked to meet the requirements of the current political situation and thus to highlight the imperishable merits of the Szeklers, who were loyal to the Catholic Church, as they had taken stand for their Catholic faith even in dangerous times – and, of course, then, in the new political system, they deserved to be given preference. But all this did not happen according to their calculations, namely, the Habsburg Court did not totally import the Hungarian recipe, but preserving the previous system, played off the nationalities and religions against one another and tried to gain more and more influence in the new province, in which the leading class was still the Protestant nobility, while the Protestant congregation outnumbered the other denominations.

However, as Lakatos himself stated, the Szeklers considered the Armenians newcomers, yet they did not view them as people to be excluded from society. The reason for this, on the one hand, was the fact which we mentioned previously, namely that the Armenians managed to fill an economic gap in the Szeklers' social system. On the other hand, the constraint of the possibility of union or unification made the Armenian community interesting in the eyes of the Catholic Church. Despite the fact that the Catholic clergy of Szeklerland did not consider the conversion of the different communities, among them the Romanians, to Catholicism to be a major task, bishop Martonfi was not pleased with the fact that the Armenian bishopric was included in the plan of Rome to unify the Armenians. According to this plan, he was supposed to oversee this process of unification. The realistic policy still suggested that the Armenian community that had moved to the country only a few decades earlier could be used to increase the number of the Catholics in Transylvania, thus enhancing the possibility that the interests of the Szeklers should be better asserted at the Habsburg Court. Lakatos himself was

characterized by a certain duality: he did not support, in practice, the unification of the different nationalities, but still, in his official discourse he declared opinions that made him famous and which fully corresponded with the official endeavours of the Habsburg court, and by which he could present the Transylvanian Catholic Church and the Szeklers in a suitable light to the new administration.

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Book Reviews

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Gabriella Pusztai and Zsuzsanna Márkus, eds. 2017. *Hungarian in the Motherland: Schools and Students beyond the Borders*

Debrecen: Debrecen University Press. 334 pp.[1]

Review by

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Hungarian in the Motherland: *Schools and Students beyond the Borders* is the second volume in the series *Education in the 21st Century*. The collection of studies contains nineteen extensive writings by twenty-three authors; the focus is, as the title indicates very informatively, schools beyond the borders, Hungarian language and education. Eight institutions beyond the borders of Hungary (the Emanuel University of Oradea, the Sapientia Hungarian University of Transylvania, the University of Novi Sad, the Romanian Ministry of Education, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Ferenc Rákóczi II. Transcarpathian Hungarian Institute, the Babeş–Bolyai University, the Regional Scientific Society of Subotica) are represented by twelve authors, while the work of eleven researchers from four Hungarian institutions (the University of Debrecen, the Eötvös Loránd University, the Eszterházy Károly University, and the Center for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences) are welcome additions to the list of authors.

In the four big regions beyond the border (Transcarpathia, Transylvania, Upper Hungary and Vojvodina) it is well known that the matter of Hungarian-language education is an extremely complex issue. *Hungarian in the Motherland* highlights this complexity of Hungarian language usage and education. Naturally, the issue is always embedded in the entire (majority) educational system of the studied Carpathian Basin countries. As we learn from the *Preface*, the result of the struggle of minority Hungarian communities for *Hungarian* educational institutions, in the past two and a half decades, has been a vertical and horizontal expansion of those institutional systems. This process is not only a "minority social aspiration

1 This review was published in Hungarian in *Debreceni Szemle* vol. 26, no. 1 (2018): 96–102.

motivated by internal driving forces" (7),[2] but also reflects the possibilities of the current educational policies of the studied countries. The latter can help in some educational policy situations, while in some other educational environments it may hinder the right to be educated in the minority's native language.

The expansion of the educational systems started in the relevant countries with the tremendous social changes of 1989-90, almost simultaneously and dynamically. The results, however, differ in the examined regions, depending on the current educational policy of the majority culture, i.e. on how it relates to minority rights. The author-researchers of the volume attempted to paint a complete, multi-faceted picture. The four countries with significant Hungarian minorities (Ukraine, Romania, Slovakia, Serbia) have different educational policies and minority rights management, but all schools beyond the borders agree that the four majority societies prefer the coercive method of assimilation and differ only in the manner in which they apply the method. These coercive methods are particularly effective within schools.

The volume consists of three main parts ("chapters"), and in each, the issues are addressed according to three different criteria:

(1) the child is the most important for education (and there is a drastic reduction in this field);

(2) the mother tongue has a prominent role; ecclesiastical engagement is particularly important;

(3) identity preservation is a priority as the identity-forming function of the school is crucial in minority existence.

These goals are not simply declarations in the book. We get a cross-sectional view of the present, and beyond – the authors also try to explore the historical roots of these complex interrelationships and to imagine the future consequences as well. Most of the studies are based on empirical surveys or statistical analysis, but some approach the subject of mother tongue education from an educational policy (socio-political) perspective.

The three major parts of the volume – *On the Balance Sheet*; *Talent and Responsibility*; *New Paths* – indicate the evolution of thought in the book as a whole. The first large unit (*On the Balance Sheet*) provides a comprehensive assessment of the educational situation of Hungarian communities across the borders, and focuses primarily on the interrelationship between the availability of, versus demand for, those institutions. The *Talent and Responsibility* section contains studies based typically on empirical analysis, focusing on the roles and possibilities of the studied Carpathian-Basin institutions of higher education. The third part (*New Paths*) puts under a magnifying glass the current challenges of the region's dynamically changing educational systems.

2 All page numbers with no further bibliographical information refer to the work reviewed.

The strengths of the volume are the absence of disturbing overlaps, a multifaceted approach, and a multitude of viewpoints which make the flow of thoughts dynamic. The book provides a comprehensive picture of Hungarian education in the four regions. The present review will proceed from region to region. Nine studies are dedicated to the Partium (a region in Romania right beyond the Hungarian border) and the Transylvanian situation. Regrettably, Vojvodina and Upper Hungary are represented by only one (true, highly valuable and informative) contribution. It is good to see the emphatic presence of Transcarpathia with five studies, discussing the educational situation on a broad scale, as Transcarpathian Hungarians may be the smallest in number in relation to the total figure of Hungarians beyond the borders of Hungary. (A 2001 census informs us that Hungarians number 156,000 in Ukraine, most of them in Transcarpathia.) It is a welcome fact because the number of studies devoted to a region cannot be expected to be proportionate to the numbers of minority presence there. In the case of Partium and Transylvania, where the largest number of Hungarians live (according to the data of the Romanian 2011 census, 1,227,623 citizens of Hungarian nationality live in Romania), the number of studies is proportionate. But the Hungarians of Upper Hungary and Vojvodina are underrepresented (in Slovakia, also according to 2011 official census data, 458,467 citizens declared themselves Hungarians; the number of Hungarians in Serbia/Vojvodina was 251,136 in 2011). The issue that each region beyond the border has a slow but continuous demographic decline is highlighted by each study. In what follows, the individual chapters of *Hungarian in the Motherland* will be reviewed by grouping them according to the regions they relate to.

Transylvania and Partium (Romania)

The primary concern of these writings is the region's Hungarian higher education. József Pálfi's university history ("Twenty-five Years and What Is behind It") presents the milestones of the Partium Christian University, including the presence of Christian faith and morality in the mission statement. Gábor Flóra's work is also related to this institution and to ecclesiastical responsibility ("Ecclesiastic Responsibility and Higher Education Institutional Identity in a Minority Situation"). It focuses on Christian identity, where the assertion of Christian values is one of the central goals, and stresses the ecumenical openness of the "school surrounded with churches" (231). Flóra also emphasizes the issue of human resources: the University of Debrecen has played and is still playing a key role in this regard, although it is now more able to develop the institution's own human resources. Partium is represented by another especially interesting research: Krisztina Bernáth (in "Student Attitudes in Higher Education

Institutions of the Partium Region") presents a qualitative questionnaire-based cross-sectional research carried out in the HERD project, in which the attitudes of higher education students were assessed. It is a very exciting topic, and identifying factors of learning attitudes could provide guidance for planning the education of the future.

The presentation of Transylvanian higher education situation is further refined by the studies pertaining to the Babeş–Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca. The studies by Noémi Szabó-Thalmeiner and Gabriella Mária Stark – "Education at Higher Level, or Higher-Education Training of Kindergarten Teachers and School Teachers at the Babeş–Bolyai University" and "PADI Student-Pedagogues," respectively – deal with the multi-phase research of the Babeş–Bolyai University's Pedagogical and Applied Didactics Institute (PADI) as well as that of its Faculty of Psychology and Education, from post-secondary to higher education levels, at four locations. Contrary to expectations, both works report on positive results, as the pedagogical vocation is a favoured choice at the examined sites. However, despite the positive conclusion, the reader still has a sense of lack of closure: the summaries are too general in nature, do not go beyond the presentation of results, and do not suggest possibilities for improving the situation.

In "Unequal Opportunities in Education for Hungarians from Romania and the Expansion of Higher Education as Reflected by Censuses" Valér Veres deals with the expansion of Hungarian higher education in Transylvania. Analyzing recent census data and the sources of the National Statistical Institute, he models a specific Hungarian-language higher education, also using visual techniques to illustrate the Transylvanian situation. He focuses on the Hungarian identity-shaping function of education, which can only work if it takes place in the mother tongue. Veres objectively concludes that although Hungarian student enrolment is gradually increasing, the inequalities of opportunity do remain unchanged in the Romanian-Hungarian relation, even though the political struggles of the Hungarian minorities have not been in vain.

In addition to the specific issues of higher education, the status of Hungarian public education in Transylvania is also highlighted: first in a general context; second, as an impact of the reforms related to preparatory classes; and thirdly, in the context of vocational training. László Murvai's "Some Features of Transylvanian Hungarian Education" discusses some of the peculiarities of Hungarian public education in Transylvania in the context of legislation, school network and enrolment indicators as well as with respect to content-related aspects of educational organization. Historical embedding is immensely broad. Murvai does not simply explore the current situation, but, beginning with the period that followed the Treaty of Trianon, he outlines the regulation of minority education, the "socialist" transformation of public education (and its impact on the Hungarian minority), and the legislation practices that came with the post-

1989 social changes. Transylvanian Hungarian public education is clearly visible in his detailed statistics. The tone is essentially objective, with some covert but realistic questions posed (with presupposed answers) here and there, but always in a manner suggestive of the (Ionesco-like) tragi-comedy of the situation.

Szeklerland, a unique block of Hungarians in Transylvania, rates an independent treatment thanks to Kinga Magdolna Mandel's "Direct and Indirect Effects of the Preparatory-Class Reforms in Szeklerland." In a very colorful, sometimes outright humorous style, Mandel propounds the issue, concluding it with an innovative summary. The matter of vocational training is a particularly vital issue for the Transylvanian region. Juliánnna Bodó and Zoltán A. Bíró's multi-faceted, objective study argues for maintaining the minority nature of vocational training ("Changing Hungarian Vocational Training in Romania"). No matter how detailed, this writing merely focuses descriptively on the situation and does not formulate a conclusion.

Transcarpathia (Ukraine)

It is remarkable for the volume to describe several levels of the Transcarpathian education system, from kindergarten to doctoral training. Two studies focus on education and language policy in general. Ildikó Orosz tries to follow Ukraine's two-and-a-half decades of often unfollowable educational policy boldly, critically and unapologetically ("On the Situation and Quality of Transcarpathian Hungarian-Language Education"). She introduces the differences arising from the Transcarpathian situation: multiple border changes in the past, political discrimination, collective guilt, the development of the Ukrainian nation state and the strengthening of Ukrainian identity. She emphasizes the polemics of mother-tongue education and clearly sums up her finding that in Ukraine the Transcarpathian Hungarians are undoubtedly the defeated segment of the population. She levels unbiased criticism at the quality of education, supported by interviews. As for the future, she provides ideas for innovative thinking. It would be desirable for competent Ukrainian educational policy makers to dip into her study.

Krisztina Pecsora ("The Impact of Ukrainian Language Policy on Hungarian Public Education in Transcarpathia") presents a painful picture of the Hungarian students in Transcarpathia. The Hungarian student with a minority status has three options: integration (bilingualism), assimilation (monolingualism = state language) or segregation (monolinguality = mother tongue). All aspects of the study confront us with the violent assimilation drive of the Ukrainian language policy. We must pay close attention to the factual and scientific chapters of *Hungarian in the Motherland*, especially to those concerned with current educational policy events in Ukraine. Attila Z. Papp focuses on the motivations of Transcarpathian

Ph.D. students ("What Motivates Transcarpathian Students in Deciding on Doctoral Training: An Attempted Typology"). By means of semi-structured interviews, he presents types of student pathways with background analysis and features interesting typologies. The essence of the term "Scientific Patriotism" is that their minority origin has become dominant for these PhD students. Co-authors Anita Nánási-Molnár and Magdolna Séra deal with kindergarten and school choice motivators ("Kindergarten and School Choice Motivators in Transcarpathia"); re-analyzing available statistical data, they demonstrate the connection between the language of teaching and identity, as well as statistically significant correlations between ethnic identity and the quality of the Hungarian kindergartens and schools. Mihály Fónai and Katalin Cséke's decision to study the Transcarpathian Roma, "the minority of minorities," is unusual and praiseworthy ("Situation Report on the Schooling of the Transcarpathian Hungarian-Speaking Romas"). Relying on scholarly research results, they emphasize religion as being the decisive factor in the development of Roma youth. Religion contributes to self-acceptance, change of worldview, and by transforming outlooks it creates a marginal identity. Fónai and Cséke also pay attention to the various, relevant organizations and foundations, incorporating tables and photographic material to illustrate the significant work those organizations and foundations do.

Vojvodina (Serbia)

The educational situation of the Hungarians in Serbia is represented by a single, extremely valuable study in the volume. Irén Gábrity Molnár's work places the Hungarians from Vojvodina in the Serbian educational space, studies equal opportunities, student migration, and labour market expectations, also giving an account of the employment opportunities of minority professionals, using empirical research findings ("Educational Levels in Vojvodina: A Survey"). Through detailed statistical analysis, Gábrity Molnár explores the situation from kindergarten and primary school to higher education, highlighting the fact that there is no independent Hungarian university in Serbia. It is a great plus for the study that, besides the situational analysis, it also provides concrete suggestions that could serve as a useful guide for educational policy makers and organizers.

Upper Hungary (Slovakia)

The Hungarian secondary schools and their graduating students in Slovakia (especially Central-Eastern Slovakia) are also covered in a single study, by Tünde Morvai ("School-Leavers of Central-Eastern-Slovakian Hungarian-Language

Secondary Schools"). Her quantitative and qualitative research results indicate that broadening offers in Hungarian-language higher-education training led to a drop of interest for study in Hungary. The eastern higher education region of Kosice and Eperjes is becoming more and more attractive for students. Despite deteriorating demographic numbers, the student body seems to be growing, and this can be considered a positive finding. However, the necessity of state-language knowledge is an important factor in school choices here as well.

The Broader Perspective (Europe, the Carpathian Basin)

The regional structure of this collection of essays is further refined by the research results of two comprehensive studies that deal with minority European higher education, with a broader European and Carpathian Basin perspective. Zoltán Takács ("The Higher Education of Minorities and New Higher-Education Institutions in Europe and in the Carpathian Basin") examines minority education in a European context, from consolidational, reformist-alternative and educational policy perspectives (with special regard to Eastern Europe). His chapters on institutional history as well as the recounting and analysis of the conditions set by local society and political will as requirements for founding institutions conclude that minorities are underrepresented in higher education, not only worldwide, but also in Europe. Takács stresses the point, however, that universities are among the most important instruments of nation building. If we take this as our point of departure, we may surmise that underrepresentation may not be a coincidence.

Gabriella Pusztai and Zsuzsanna Márkus's broad and comprehensive contribution ("Hungarian Students in the Higher Education Institutions of the Carpathain Basin") shares the findings of a research program launched at the University of Debrecen at the turn of the millennium. The project started with empirical research on education in the mother country and across borders (with fieldwork, quantitative data collection) and became more and more extensive as it progressed (thirteen higher education institutions, ≈1750 students). The basic question they posed themselves was: is it possible to identify a feature in the status of Hungarian minorities (both uniform and diverging from what we find in Hungary) which would be common enough to allow young people participating in Hungarian-speaking educational institutions beyond the borders to be considered a single group? The results exhibit a varied picture. What is more, serious differences among Hungarian minorities were exposed, with proportional and socio-demographic dissimilitudes, and differences in settlement structure and language usage. One of the merits of this research is that it is based on John Ogbu's cultural-ecological theory, which distinguishes immigrants seeking assimilation

from indigenous minorities interested in preserving their identity. In this way, the researchers made it clear: the Hungarian population of the Carpathian Basin is an indigenous minority, therefore the right to use the mother tongue is their right everywhere, regardless of national boundaries and majority languages. Conversely, the volume reveals that the education of each country defines and applies minority rights differently. It all boils down to dual, opposite cultural assimilation spirals. From the Hungarian viewpoint the direction of the spiral is downward (opportunities are continuously narrowed); from the viewpoint of the majority culture it is an upward spiral (as a result of assimilation pressures).

In an essay that does not fit the regional organization of the book, Károly Gergely Bán investigates the teaching methodology of geography between the two World Wars from an unusual perspective, which was timely in those days. He discusses how the contents of the curriculum, the textbook presentation and the teaching methods of geography as a subject were transformed by the Trianon trauma ("The Intrusion of Trianon into the Secondary-School Teaching of Geography in the Interwar Period").

Summary

As a summary, it can be concluded that *Hungarian in the Motherland* is an excellent work that professionals and interested readers alike can benefit from. There is good cohesion within the individual chapters, and the scientific reference system as well as the referenced bibliography are impressive. The successive, complementary, and interlinked studies sweep the reader along. The most important scientific achievement of this collection of studies is the formation of collaborative scientific workshops. In the light of these analytical investigations, cross-border dialogue has intensified on this topic – a development which generally augurs well as for future research of the subject.

Translated from the Hungarian by Hajnal Minger

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Schubert, Gabriella. 2017. *Was ist ein Ungar? Selbstverortung im Wandel der Zeiten* [What is a Hungarian? Self-Positioning through the Ages].

Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. 319 pp.

Review by

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"What is a Hungarian?"[1] is the title of Gabriella Schubert's latest book, published in 2017, and the question she sets out to answer on approximately 300 pages (including many illustrations). Some of the basic information expected of every academic work, such as its aim and position within current research, definitions of key terminology, structure, and a brief overview of its main sources, is provided in the foreword and the introduction (Chapter I). It becomes clear that this is a book addressed to German-language readers and intended to provide a differentiated account of the cultural and historic background needed to understand present-day Hungary.

The book's ten chapters are not organized according to a discernible logic or progression, so that there is not necessarily either a chronological or a thematic connection or succession between any two chapters (present-day Hungary is followed by Hungarians' origins, their place within Europe, Hungarian language, others' perceptions of Hungary, Hungarians' perceptions of East and West, their self-perceptions, national symbols and finally famous historical persons). What all the chapters have in common is that they contain approaches to the title question from different angles. Their sequence gives the impression of a compilation, a collection of knowledge about Hungary in the past and today. The chapters will be dealt with here in the order of their appearance to make this impression relatable, because it contributes in an essential way to this review's main criticism of Schubert's "What is a Hungarian?".

1 The translations from German are my own throughout the article.

Following her introduction, the author dives right into present-day matters by asking "Where does Hungary position herself today?" (chapter title, 19).[2] This (unfortunately) brief second chapter of only ten pages touches upon some of the most important developments shaking up and transforming Hungary in recent years, such as its positioning within Europe, which is essentially viewed here as oscillating between East and West. The only constant is seen in the lasting sense of marginalization among Hungarians and attempts to "cure" that with different constructions of "Mitteleuropa," 'Central Europe,' at times with a more Eastern, at other times a more Western connotation. The chapter concludes by pointing out the growing importance of the Visegrád community (27) and the fact that the quest for a Hungarian identity is "in a permanent state of tension which has its causes in the geopolitical constellation of the country and the historical experiences of its inhabitants" (28). With this finding, the discussion is now fully opened and one might be tempted to read the remaining chapters as attempts to resolve that tension. Chapter III thus approaches the question of Hungarian identity from a historical perspective and asks: "Where have Hungarians come from?" (chapter title, 31). It posits the origin as "decisive to the question whether the Hungarian will feel as if belonging to the 'East' or the 'West'" (31). From the perspective of cultural studies, acceptance of this dictum as fact appears as a surprising shortcut considering the amount of work existing on the complex construction of collective identity (think only of Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* (2006 [1983]), for instance). The chapter then presents the contradictory and conflicting theories of the origin of the Hungarian language and people – the widely accepted theory of Hungarian as being part of the Finno-Ugric family of languages, on the one hand, and a few more controversial yet long-lived alternative theories as that of Hungarians' Turkic ancestry, on the other. The author makes sure to point out the crucial importance these theories have today, as they inspire certain groups, particularly those leaning to the far political right, to celebrations of a mythical – and partly invented – Hungarian past intended to help glorify the country's present. The author concludes that

> [t]he root cause of the described […] search for ancestry is the consequence of a self-confidence broken multiple times by traumatic historical experiences and a search for identity that is at the same time carried by worry about the loss of traditional values of Hungarianness. This is to be taken seriously. Yet searching the past should not be a hindrance to coping with urgent problems of the present and with future challenges. (53)

2 All page numbers with no further bibliographical information refer to the work reviewed.

Similar positioning on the part of the author can be found on a few occasions throughout the book and helps readers evaluate contemporary displays of such "traditional values of Hungarianness" (53).

The fourth chapter looks at the "milestones" of Hungary's integration in Europe – these milestones being named here as 1. the Hungarian conquest of the Pannonian basin, 2. the Christianization of king István/Stephen I, and 3. the openness of Hungary as a host country to foreigners in the Middle Ages. This choice of steps itself can be considered a commentary on Hungary's current political situation, especially concerning the migrant/refugee situation in Europe.

Chapter V takes an even more detailed look at Hungarian language, not so much at its origins this time but at its development through the centuries and the influences that helped shape it. Schubert places special emphasis on language because it is what "gave Hungarians, time and again, a ground for arguing their own place as being either in the East or in the West" (77). She reminds readers that Hungarian has always set its native speakers apart from other European languages and their speakers: this tension is one between standing out among all the others, on the one hand, and belonging to an isolated minority, on the other. The chapter provides basic information on the structure of Hungarian language and its similarities with Turkish, Slav languages, German influences, Latin and Italian as well as examples of internationalisms. In return, it also looks at Hungarian terms that have been influential elsewhere, such as "*huszár*" ('hussar'), "*kocsi*" ('coach', 'cart') or "*paprika*" ('pepper').

The next chapter is an overview of how Hungarians have been and are today viewed by others in Europe and abroad. Schubert witnesses a development from an entirely negative depiction of Hungary (as "barbaric") to feelings of respectful distance (for their brave but dangerous hussars), romanticized rapture (fuelled by a sense of the country's "exoticism," love of freedom, operetta, and other stereotypes) to a mixed perception today. The latter assessment is not an expression of the author's indecision but of her opinion that it is too early to speak of a contemporary perception of Hungary abroad, as the country is still involved in a process of transformation and currently stuck in a deep political and cultural identity crisis.

Chapter VII looks at how Hungarians have constructed their own identity over time and finds that this has mostly occurred within conceptions of "East" and "West." Schubert successfully shows the long history of this back-and-forth that continues to this day. The description of Hungarian identity as torn between East and West for centuries does prompt the question in this reviewer's mind of whether (and, if so, where) more original interpretations of Hungarian identity have surfaced yet.

The author goes on to investigate Hungarians' self-perception(s), emphasizing self-images created in the twentieth century and the present. Unsurprisingly, the

chapter yields an eclectic collection of features and Hungarian auto-stereotypes rather than a homogeneous answer to the question that lends its title not only to the book itself but also to this eighth chapter, "What is a Hungarian?" (169).

With its nearly sixty pages, Chapter IX is the longest individual chapter by far – and one of the most thrilling ones, because in dealing with national symbols and their narratives, it touches on some of the vivid debates around collective cultural memory and its manifestations in the appearance (and/or names) of public space(s). Schubert is at her best when she provides a deconstructionist reading of collective symbols in everyday life such as *paprika* ('pepper') and *gulyás* ('goulash') (223–231).

The final chapter introduces readers to famous Hungarian "historical personalities, writers, composers" (chapter title, 245). The choice of personalities (Lajos Kossuth, Count István Széchenyi, Saint István/Stephen I., King Matthias I Corvinus, Francis II Rákóczi, Prince Árpád), writers (Sándor Petőfi, János Arany, Endre Ady de Diósad, Attila József, Mór Jókai, Zsigmond Móricz), and composers (Zoltán Kodály, Béla Bartók, Ferenc Erkel, and Ferenc Liszt) follows a list compiled by cultural anthropologists Ágnes and Gábor Kapitány in their 1997 field work (Kapitány and Kapitány 1999, 48, as quoted in Schubert 2017, 245) – a choice that could have been scrutinized considering the changes in the cultural canon of Hungary in the twentieth century alone.[3] The fact that this consideration is left out, and that the book ends rather abruptly after this list of personalities and their works and deeds, makes the chapter appear as a selective "who is who" of Hungarian history.

Schubert's book is a very helpful, well-researched, balanced and abundant resource for anyone wanting to learn about the cultural codes, the important debates and the cultural canon that are relevant to life in Hungary today. The author tells the "Magyar" tales without succumbing to them, always remembering to point out the purpose they might serve or have served at a specific point in time. Her practice thus echoes the "cui bono?" typical of the critical agenda of cultural studies (Miller 2017, 2). As a contribution to knowledge about Hungary and the currents that move the country today, it is therefore indispensable and cannot be overestimated. In fact, it will be a beneficial read for any person preparing for a stay of any length in Hungary, as it provides a solid background for discovery of that country. Incidentally, however, this very aspect also touches on the book's main weakness: the qualities outlined above make the book a superior travel guide for exigent travellers, a guide that even includes current political commentary – but it is not, and probably cannot be both at the same time, a contribution to academic debate about identity constructions in central Europe. It lacks the theoretical background and the in-depth original analysis of

3 Cf. Kulcsár Szabó 2013, particularly section VII.2.3 about the history of poetry, especially p. 471, as an example of the volatility of the literary canon.

phenomena or events to be such a contribution. The absence of a clearly outlined theoretical foundation to the text and its compendium-like quality as a collection of information rather than a treatise of one topic that culminates in new insights or ideas (epitomized by its eclectic structure and lack of a conclusion) are the hallmarks of this shortcoming.

Yet if held to the standards that the work sets for itself – as spelled out in the foreword and introduction – Schubert's book entirely fulfils its own goals and does an admirable job of doing exactly what it intends to do: educating German-language readers about the complexities at play in contemporary Hungary and the different narratives of the country's past, the collective negotiation of which contribute to its partly conflict-laden present.

Schubert's book offers a deconstructionist reading of some of these dominant narratives and provides a wealth of information that most German-speaking readers will not previously have been aware of. In this sense, the omission of too much theoretical input may even be a strength, if readership is to be found in rather wider than merely academic and, even more specifically, cultural studies circles.

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