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Language for  

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Specific Purposes





# Training ESP Students in Language Awareness and Analysis

*Adrian Ciupe* \*

ESP teaching is not a mere continuation of ELT focus and approaches, but an altogether different educational paradigm with paramount final language learning consequences for the main stakeholders: university students enrolled on business English courses with a view to language mastery and practical use in their future careers. This article attempts to make a case for the role of the ESP teacher as an empowering factor in students' independence and assumption of responsibility towards success in using English as a future workplace skill. A theoretical section outlines the rationale of the author's argument, complemented by a practical hands-on demonstration in the form of a concise guide for ESP teachers at tertiary level.

business English; collocations; dependent prepositions; derivatives; dictionaries; ESP; general English; grammar; guide; idioms; input; language analysis; language awareness; language skills; language transfer; listening; output; phrasal verbs; reading; speaking; tertiary level; vocabulary; word building; writing

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## Why Language Awareness / Analysis Is Important in The Esp Class

University students enrolling on business English courses already benefit from a more or less substantial language knowledge base which needs to be put to good use in the ESP class. This is no easy matter, though, due to varying particular circumstances. As regards my own situation as an ESP teacher at tertiary level, each academic year I start a business English course with 1<sup>st</sup> year students divided into sizeable groups (30-35 mixed-ability students per group); the course typically covers two semesters, totalling 56 hours of guided teaching (class meetings) which also include various types of formally-required tests. Moreover, the course is based on in-house developed curricula, conditioned

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by the requirements and constraints of my department, faculty and university in general. Under the circumstances, each ESP teacher, including myself, must produce their own syllabus, being free but also entirely responsible for covering the core topics allocated to a certain semester (see above) – the keyword here is freedom / responsibility on the part of the ESP teacher to manage their own course within the arguably ‘generous’ existing limits.

The realities faced by many business English teachers at tertiary level are more or less the same, year on year. The start of each course presupposes an initial delineation of teaching materials and strategies apt to equip students with viable tools for success in their future careers in which English proficiency will play a major part. It is no easy task for an ESP teacher to go to their first English class in one particular academic year, meet mixed-ability students with different social and educational backgrounds and tell them ‘this course will be quite different from what you were used to in secondary or high school; we are going to try and build together on your previous experience and current knowledge base in order to make your English proficiency fit for situations in real-life, that is your future business-related professions.’ In other words, for a business English course to achieve such an ambitious goal, the starting point would be to analyse and encourage correct expectations. For this to work, a change of paradigm is needed.

By its very nature, ESP is lexical. A business English syllabus may include topics like marketing, advertising, international trade, finance, banking, accounting etc. This implies that students’ expectations have to be ‘diverted’ from traditional language teaching and learning (i.e. a focus on grammar) to practical approaches that can do justice to the ultimate objectives of business English instruction – practical future relevance of English in the workplace.

Since the advent of the *lexical approach* it has been amply demonstrated and reinforced that a grammar / vocabulary differentiation is spurious, as too much focus on convoluted or rare grammar structures used to be (or can still be) a ‘standard diet’ of advanced teaching materials<sup>1</sup> – I would add ‘of teaching strategies too.’ Let us not forget that any ESP course will build on students’ previous knowledge; usually, this knowledge comprises general lexis and lots of grammar rules. In order for an ESP course to achieve its aims (see above), traditional expectations such as ‘if I know grammar, I can manage in any linguistic situation’ would need to be discarded: ‘By taking a finite list of grammatical structures as their basis, many current course books and ministry syllabuses are seriously flawed. Progress in English for all post-elementary learners depends on sufficient lexical input, of which collocation is the single most important element.’<sup>2</sup> This renders the grammar / vocabulary dichotomy invalid, language being a scale

from strong fixedness to weak fixedness, thus consisting of grammaticalised lexis and not lexicalised grammar.<sup>3</sup>

It can thus be rightly assumed that lexis is 'one of the central organising principles of any syllabus'.<sup>4</sup> In other words, grammar and vocabulary merge into language chunks which, basically, underlie the main character of ESP altogether: '... language proficiency within science, medicine, and commerce will be determined to a large extent by the students' mastery of the common collocations particular to each field. This means that a focus on collocation must become a major priority in Business English and English for Academic Purposes courses.'<sup>5</sup>

It becomes obvious that the role of the ESP teacher shifts from simple (c.f. traditional) teaching to *managing* teaching and learning through student empowerment. This comes down to encouraging pro-active attitudes in students who will have to take responsibility for their own learning, by being introduced to lexical work techniques (e.g. being able to make full sense of dictionaries).<sup>6</sup> Ultimately, '... the role of the language teacher today is moving more and more towards that of learning manager, and as such, a primary aim of teaching must be to raise the students' awareness of their increasing responsibility for, and power over, their own learning.'<sup>7</sup>

Given the practical and highly focused nature of ESP instruction at tertiary level, the entire basis for my own endeavours as a teacher / manager derives from the fact that '... the ultimate purpose of input is learner output. From this perspective it is clear that understanding, though necessary, is not sufficient; in addition to *understanding* the input the learner must *notice* the chunks which carry the meaning. Each chunk is a single choice of meaning; if chunks are not noticed *as chunks*, they cannot be stored in the way which facilitates their availability as output.'<sup>8</sup>

For a long time, the rationale above has informed my own methodology as an ESP teacher at tertiary level. Over the years, I have found that my increasing experience has offered me more and more trust in designing syllabi and approaches that can really work under the circumstances. A palpable result, besides class teaching / management from this point of view, is this article.

Consequently, the next section aims to exemplify my methodology by offering a hopefully useful guide for teachers in similar situations. The following guide describes a possible approach to training students in language awareness and analysis as an introduction to a business English course proper. This kind of *initial* interactive class presentation would typically take about 180 minutes, including practice. For detailed reference / reminders, I have also set up a dedicated web page with freely downloadable language support.<sup>9</sup>

## A Concise Step-By-Step Guide for Tertiary Level ESP Teachers

Below you may find a sequence of arguments (A to I) whose final purpose is to raise ESP students' awareness of language work and acquisition by encouraging language analysis of the input provided in class activities (based on the teacher-designed syllabus) towards the production of high-quality spoken and written output in contexts that will transcend class settings – i.e. professional situations that require *graduates* (future employees) to write emails, reports, press releases etc. or to participate actively in meetings, negotiations, presentations etc. through the medium of English as a foreign language. This sequence is based on my first-hand experience over the years with groups of mixed-ability students majoring in a variety of business-related specialities, such as finance, banking, computer science and economics, accounting, marketing, management etc.

All of the following sections are interactive and most of them will have to be accompanied by short practical sessions (10-15 minutes each) to illustrate the case in point.

### A. How language works: skills and input / output

Ask your students to remember the basic skills in learning any language (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>); they will come up with listening (L), speaking (S), reading (R) and writing (W). Write these down on the board like in the table below.

L	S
R	W

Next, ask students to try to mention the skill(s) where grammar and vocabulary (GV) are important; they will conclude that mastering each of the four skills is dependent on a solid GV knowledge base. At this point, add `+GV` to each skill on the board. You may wish to remind students that both grammar and vocabulary are equally important if you want to understand what you listen to (L), what you read (R), how and what you say (S) or how and what you write (W). At this point, add `+GV` to each skill on the board:

L (+ GV)	S (+ GV)
R (+ GV)	W (+ GV)

Now draw the following arrows in the table and ask students if they see any logic in the relationships thus shown *on the horizontal*:

L (+ GV) →	← S (+ GV)
R (+ GV) →	← W (+ GV)

Students are expected to come up with answers like ‘you always listen (L) to what other people say (S) / you speak (S) to people who are listening (L) to you’; ‘you always read (R) what other people wrote (W) / you write (W) something so that it will be read (R) by other people.’

Now erase the horizontal arrows (for the sake of focus and simplicity of argument) and put in vertical ones, like in the table:

L (+ GV) ↓	S (+ GV) ↓
↑ R (+ GV)	↑ W (+ GV)

Ask students if they see any logic in the relationships thus shown *on the vertical* (see above). They may hesitate, so help them with a leading question like ‘Which is easier, listening and reading (L & R) or speaking and writing (S & W) and why?’ Most students will agree that listening and reading are easier than speaking and writing, so add the following information to the table:

L (+ GV) ↓	S (+ GV) ↓
↑ R (+ GV)	↑ W (+ GV)
easier	harder

If you further ask your students why L and R are easier / S and W are harder, they should be able to suggest answers like ‘When we listen or read, we get something and when we speak or write, we must give something (logically, receiving something is easier than giving something)’. Acknowledge such an answer as shown in the table:

L (+ GV) ↓	S (+ GV) ↓
↑ R (+ GV)	↑ W (+ GV)
easier	harder
passive / receptive	active / productive

To reinforce the idea above, you can remind students that when they try to understand something they hear (L) or something they read (R), they usually focus on meaning, trying to grasp the gist of a spoken or written message. In this situation, even though their language mastery (GV) is not perfect (c.f. C1 / C2 CEFR levels), they can still understand by 'filling in the blanks', i.e. by inferring the meaning of unknown language from the context, towards *getting* the main idea / essence / gist / upshot etc. of a *message produced by other people*. At this stage it should be safe enough to introduce two more concepts: *input* (what we hear or read) and *output* (what we say or write); add them to the table accordingly (redraw the horizontal arrows as well, for a complete picture):

L (+ GV) → ↓	← S (+ GV) ↓
↑ R (+ GV) →	↑ ← W (+ GV)
easier	harder
passive / receptive	active / productive
input	output

By now you will have provided students with a logical system apt to facilitate the understanding of 'how language works'. This is also the moment when 'how language works' would need to be correlated with 'how language is acquired'; remember that the ultimate goal here is to convince students that success in mastering a foreign language like English is tantamount to the ability to produce good quality (ESP) output in future real-life contexts (written and / or spoken) to be found in various business-related fields (jobs / professions / careers).

In order to make these implications easier to understand during your class presentation, you could try the following Q / A line of reasoning ('A' here referring to the expected or elicited answer on the part of your students):

Q: *When did you start to speak in your first (native) language?*

A: *Around the age of 2 / 3 / 4 (expect answers to differ and acknowledge all of them).*

Q: *When were you able to produce a simple correct sentence in your first language, like 'I am hungry' or 'I want that' or 'I want to eat' or 'I don't like it'?*

A: *Around the age of 3 / 4 (expect answers to differ and acknowledge all of them).*

Q: *When you were able to produce such a sentence, had you had any formal instruction in grammar rules for tenses or vocabulary word classes?*

A: *No.*

Q: *So, how did you manage to produce such correct structures?*

A: *By imitating my interlocutors (c.f. parents / tutors).*

Q: *Could you read then?*

A: *No, I just listened.*

Q: *Was it enough for you to listen just once to a phrase like 'I'm hungry' and then reproduce it correctly straightaway?*

A: *No, it took many instances of repetition (c.f. trial and error) for me to get to use such a phrase correctly.*

Q: *OK, so you managed to get yourself understood (i.e. you produced output based on the input previously provided) by speaking. So, first you LISTENED, then you SPOKE. Could you also read and write at that same time?*

A: *No.*

Q: *So, first you had to LISTEN to be able to SPEAK. Which came next, READING or WRITING?*

A: *Reading - i.e. one needs to have first perceived symbols / letters (= READING) before being able to reproduce them (= WRITING) in order to make sense to others by WRITING (= output).*

At this stage, you can assign numbers to the four skills in the table, based on the logical order in which they are learnt (in the case of the first / native language):

L1 (+ GV) → ↓	← S2 (+ GV) ↓
↑ R3 (+ GV) →	↑ ← W4 (+ GV)
easier	harder
passive / receptive	active / productive
input	output

This being the case with the first language, it would be safe at this phase to progress to implications inherent to acquiring a second (foreign) language, like English. From this point of view, students should be reminded that:

we learn a foreign language in a similar way to which we learn our mother tongue, based on acquiring input (L + R) which we then transform into output (S + W);

the time it takes to master a foreign language (on condition sufficient motivation is present) is *less* than the time required for the acquisition of our first language: we already know how to listen, speak, read and write in (at least) one (first) language;

consequently, the paradigm  $L1 > S2 > R3 > W4$  is halved and inverted at the same time:  $L1R1$  (= input)  $>$   $S2W2$  (= output), resulting in halving the time needed (once again, on condition sufficient motivation is present) for mastery of a foreign language;

however, language learners are to be warned that language B (the 2<sup>nd</sup> or foreign language being acquired) has its own specificity in relation to language A (the 1<sup>st</sup> or native language already acquired); this presupposes struggling with instances of language transfer along the way (see subsections D-I below).

At the end of this section of your class presentation, students should be left with the realisation that exposure to language (*input* through L + R) will lead to performance in that language (*output* through S + W). Moreover, ESP (in this case), as its name suggests, presupposes the adaptation of general English to the requirements of business English, as ESP will mostly serve current students in their own personal situations as future professionals / employees; most of those professional situations will rank *output* (e.g. writing reports, emails, press releases, publicity materials etc. or taking part in presentations, meetings and negotiations) over *input* (i.e. simply just understanding oral or written business English messages). In other words, the future focus of ESP instruction will be on *production* (= active), rather than on *reception* (= passive).

### **B. General and business English**

Right from the start, students should be made aware that `business English` is *not* `another English` altogether. Business English builds on the general English students already `know`; business English also has the same grammar as general English – what can make it different is that some (functional) grammar items may be more prevalent (or not) in business English and vice versa. For example, the 2<sup>nd</sup> conditional may be more important (and frequent, for that matter) in business English because we need a good grasp of it to be accurate in, for



instance, negotiations: *'I would be prepared to make a compromise if you were able to reduce the interest rate by 2%.'* Otherwise, students should expect that most of the differences between general and business English will be *lexical*, rather than *grammatical*. An easy and quick way of illustrating it would be for you to write on the board two simple (or more complex, depending on your students' level) sentences, like:

*I am a student enrolled on a language course.*

*I am an HR manager tasked with interviewing job applicants.*

Then use a short Q & A exchange to make sure your students understand the differences:

Q: *Which sentence do you think is 'business English' and which one 'general English'?*

A: *Sentence 1 'belongs to' general English and 2 to business English.*

Q: *Is there a lot of / any difference in the grammar structures used in 1 and 2?*

A: *No.*

Q: *Then where does the difference between 1 and 2 lie?*

A: *In the words used (c.f. vocabulary).*

Once you have made your students aware of what to expect in terms of ESP (business English), i.e. *lexical* rather than *grammatical* differences, you will be able to proceed smoothly with the other sections (C-I) in the sequence here.

### **C. Grammar and vocabulary in ESP (business English)**

Your students' expectations have already been geared towards lexical, rather than grammatical differences regarding business versus general English. Nevertheless, expect old habits to die hard, in that teachers before you may have favoured grammar over vocabulary (see the first section of this article) in their secondary or high school syllabi, so your current ESP students might find it 'strange' that their business English syllabus will insist on vocabulary, rather than grammar structures – just as strange, perhaps, as the fact that whenever grammar is concerned, they will no longer have to demonstrate proficiency in using 'very complex' structures.

To be more explicit, this is the point at which I write on the board a sentence like the following: *'By this time next year I will have been studying Spanish since 2010.'* When asking students whether they consider it difficult or not, they almost invariably confirm that it is indeed difficult; after all, 'by' introduces a time expression as a deadline that works with perfect tenses (this time, the perfect progressive future 'will have been studying'); in such a context, knowing how to handle constructions with 'since...' or 'for...' (and to also distinguish between

them) is also a grammatical accuracy *must*. Many students (at least indirectly) acknowledge that being able to use such complex grammatical structures used to be one of the staples of their previous language training towards (spuriously prescribed) success in English. I am always pleased to notice a sigh of relief on their part when I go *'Don't worry! The business English course we are about to start will NEVER ask you to use such structures, simply because these structures are very rare outside grammar textbook explanations. Business people express themselves more concisely in professional situations in REAL LIFE, focusing on simple grammar that accommodates accurate lexical expressions to make their point as exactly as possible.'* For extra reassurance, I usually add a perfectly sincere afterthought: *'I have a BA in English, I did my MA in English and my Ph.D involved a 100% bibliography in English. I've talked to lots of Brits and Americans, I publish in English, 90% of everything I read is in English, including daily news, all the films I watch are in English; I also go to London every year, to visit friends. Given all these, I've never EVER had to use such a sentence, nor have I heard / seen it used anywhere EXCEPT in grammar textbooks. Most people DO NOT speak / write like that!'*

Students are thus primed for the intake of the subsections that follow here, D through to I.

#### **D. Dependent prepositions**

One of the most important reminders for ESP students is that words never work in isolation, but in various types of combinations with other words, ranging from *fixed* to *free*. Of particular importance for a business English syllabus would thus be *fixed* and *semifixed* combinations. The former category would include fixed phrases with dependent prepositions (see the current subsection), phrasal verbs (subsection E) and idioms (subsection F), while the latter (subsection G) refers to collocations. From experience I have concluded that starting with fixed expressions (D, E, F) has a pedagogic benefit in that all these structures are to be found in a good learner's dictionary as a full inventory, searchable by keyword (noun, verb, adjective, adverb – in this order of importance). In this way students can be prepared gradually towards coming to grips with the arguably hardest phraseological category (collocations) due to its relativity resulting from *semifixedness*.

When tackling dependent prepositions with my students, I find it useful to ask them a question like *'If we have dependent prepositions, it means we also have the opposite, which is...'*, eliciting an answer like *'independent / free prepositions.'* This helps students understand the applicable differences in focus

regarding prepositional phrases. For instance, I start with an example of how *free* prepositional combinations work (based on meaning / logic): ‘*She ran up / down the stairs / the road*’; ‘*She ran across / over the bridge*’; ‘*She ran into / out of / in / around the house*’ etc. I add that such free (*logical*) combinations will not be particularly dealt with in our syllabus, on account of their ease of use, dependent on logic and meaning alone. Then I introduce the notion of ‘dependent’ prepositions, explaining that they are called ‘dependent’ because they ‘depend’ on a certain word category (noun, verb, adjective) – at this point I give some examples of constructions which are usually considered difficult by students (such prepositions are *unexpected* based on word-for-word translations; c.f. *language transfer*): ‘*on the horizon*’ (NOT ‘*at the horizon*’, ‘*John works on a farm*’ (NOT ‘*at a farm*’), ‘*there are clouds in the sky*’ (NOT ‘*on the sky*’) etc. In effect, these are exactly the types of prepositional phrases that pose problems for students, for several reasons: previous teachers may have insisted on word-for-word translations; lower-level students are usually too reliant on their mother tongue, translating language chunks word-for-word through *language transfer* when trying to express themselves in a foreign language; some students have been using dictionaries mainly for *decoding*, rather than *encoding* purposes etc. In summary, most of such problems arise from lack of training in *noticing* combinations of words (language chunks), rather than words in isolation. Many times, I tell my students ‘*Stop asking what a word means; better ask how you can use it.*’ It cannot be stressed enough how important it is for students to look at language as (*prefabricated*) *chunks*, rather than discrete lexical units ‘logically’ combined in grammatical structures (see the first section of this article).

Next, I proceed by writing on the board the main structures with dependent prepositions that students may expect, pointing out that whenever they are not sure what preposition to use, simply by looking up a keyword (noun, verb, adjective) in a learner’s dictionary they will find the correct answer:

structure	example
NOUN + preposition	<i>ADDITION to</i>
preposition + NOUN	<i>in ADDITION</i>
preposition + NOUN + preposition	<i>in ADDITION to</i>
VERB + preposition	<i>ACCUSE of</i>
ADJECTIVE + preposition	<i>GUILTY of</i>

I continue with a short practical section (e.g. gap-filling) using some pre-prepared exercises (10-15 minutes) and encourage students to notice and record the entire expression, not just the preposition that they have to suggest as an answer.

### E. Phrasal verbs

Most students will already be familiar with the notion 'phrasal verbs' - just as well, many will also be intimidated by it, especially if their native language does not accommodate such verbal phrases. To start with, I elicit a few examples, making sure that students will come up not only with two-element but also three-element phrasal verbs; see the table below that also includes a basic guide to usage:

structure	example and usage
VERB + particle (2 elements)	<i>CLOSE down:</i> <i>They closed down the factory.</i> <i>They closed the factory down.</i> <del><i>They closed down it.</i></del> <i>They closed it down.</i>
VERB + particle + preposition (3 elements; the last one is <i>always a preposition</i> )	<i>COME up against:</i> <i>We came up against problems.</i> <i>We came up against them.</i> <del><i>We came problems up against.</i></del> <del><i>We came them up against.</i></del> <del><i>We came up problems against.</i></del> <del><i>We came up them against.</i></del>

In explaining the contents of the table above, I find it important to provide some cautionary notes:

1. a particle looks like a preposition, but it behaves like an adverb (which is why they are also called 'adverbial particles');
2. when using pronouns for nouns, the particle can only come *after* the pronoun;
3. as its name suggests ('pre-position'), a preposition comes in front, regardless of whether it is followed by a noun or a pronoun;
4. in the case of three-element phrasal verbs, the last (3<sup>rd</sup>) element is *always* a preposition.

Further explanations include the following:

1. many phrasal verbs have single-word equivalents (e.g. 'give up' = 'renounce') but in many contexts, the phrasal verb is more natural (and frequent) than the single-word equivalent: one would normally say 'I

- want to give up smoking', rather than 'I want to renounce smoking' (even though the latter sentence is grammatically correct);
2. contrary to some half-baked ideas, phrasal verbs do *not* necessarily belong to an informal register – quite frequently, a phrasal verb is the *optimal* choice in terms of both register and exactness: 'They are trying to drum up business';
  3. phrasal verbs have meanings as self-contained units, not as sums of individual word meanings (e.g. in 'I want to give up smoking' the verb 'give' does not mean 'offer' and the particle 'up' does not refer to an upward movement);
  4. a phrasal verb may be characterised by *polysemy* – just as many individual words, it may have *several* meanings, not just one (e.g. 'call up').

The main message to get across to students is that phrasal verbs, admittedly difficult for learners whose native language lacks them, are in many cases *not* a choice but a *must* towards producing natural-sounding messages, both written and spoken.

I continue this section with a brief practical part (gap-filling exercises where students must come up with either the particle / preposition or the verb itself). When in need, students are encouraged to look up phrasal verbs by using the main verb – and also pay attention to multiple meanings to choose from.

### F. Idioms

Concluding the list of fixed expressions are idioms – another difficulty for learners of English at any level. I remind students that they share many features with phrasal verbs:

1. idioms are *metaphorical*, so word-for-word translations are not possible, as an idiom has a meaning *as a whole unit* in itself, not as a sum of the meanings of its components;
2. grammatical changes inside the idiom are usually *not* possible (e.g. if I wanted to speak about *my own* bad situation that is unavoidable, I could NOT say 'That's the way *my* cookie crumbles');
3. lexical changes are also usually restricted – synonyms do *not* work: 'That's the way *the* biscuit crumbles';
4. in many cases, idioms sound much more *natural* (through frequency of use in certain contexts) than single-word equivalents, irrespective of the language register (formal / informal); for example, one would say 'There's too much *red tape* involved in this' rather than 'There's too much *bureaucracy* involved in this'.

The table below sums up these basic characteristics of idioms. Students are reminded that whenever they are not sure about the meaning of an idiom, looking up one of its main components will solve the problem; dictionary searches should proceed (in order of *part of speech importance*) from noun to adverb: noun > verb > adjective > adverb. If an idiom contains two nouns or more, the idiom is usually listed under the most 'detailed' noun. For example, you can find out the meaning of the idiom '*that's the way the cookie crumbles*' if you look up the key noun 'cookie' (more particular), *rather than* 'way' (more general).

structure	example and meaning
long (from three words up to a complete sentence)	<i>That's the way the cookie crumbles.</i> (= a bad situation is unavoidable)
short (two words only)	<i>red tape</i> (= bureaucracy)

A short practical session follows (10-15 minutes). Exercises may include gap-filing, multiple choice, definition matching etc.

### G. Collocations

As regards basic training in ESP phraseology, saving collocations for last can really hammer home the fact that *quality output is conditioned by quality input* based on the already established understanding that words do not work in isolation but in 'prefabricated' language chunks. Collocations are particularly difficult for language learners for several reasons:

1. they are *language-specific*: each language has its own collocations; collocates differ (c.f. synonymy) from one language to another;
2. errors resulting from *language transfer* can be frequent, even in the case of high-level students;
3. if dictionaries can accommodate *full* inventories of fixed phrases (dependent prepositions, phrasal verbs, idioms), they *fall short* regarding collocations, for lack of space.

In my experience, this *protean character* of collocations can best be explained to students by way of translation. For example, in English we say '*do an exercise*' but '*make a mistake*'; in Romanian we use the same verb for both: '*a face un exercițiu*', '*a face o greșeală*'.

Almost invariably, students will ask '*Why?*'. Just as invariably, as a teacher, I can only respond '*Because!*' (*with a smile*). I continue the explanation by

pointing out that collocations are ways in which speakers of a certain language have been using the same combinations over and over (*logic aside*) and these combinations have come to be considered 'natural' over artificially 'logical expectations' on the part of foreign language learners. This is again an opportunity to highlight the importance of *noticing* language chunks rather than focusing on *meanings based on fallaciously presupposed forms* (through language transfer).

Before putting on the board the table below (drawing attention to the main types of collocations / language chunks to be expected in ESP learning), I always find it useful to caution students against falling into 'logical' traps like those unwittingly (or downright incompetently) perpetuated by previous teachers, along the lines 'we use *DO* to refer to more abstract notions and we use *MAKE* to refer to more concrete notions, for example you *DO* an exercise (abstract) and you *MAKE* a cake (concrete)'. Such attempts at logic simply do *not* work: 'we *DO* an exercise' and 'we *MAKE* a mistake' (both abstract); 'we *MAKE* progress' and 'we *MAKE* a cake' (the former is abstract; the latter is concrete).

Trying to find *any* logic in 'constructing' collocations would simply come down to catching at straws. The only way to deal with collocations is by *noticing* (and *recording*) them as they come up, avoiding any *spurious* suggestion of 'logical rules' that do not exist. Besides the arguments above, the only other aid I can offer my students is the basic inventory below:

structure	example
VERB + NOUN	<i>close (down) a factory; enforce a law</i>
NOUN + VERB (PHRASE)	<i>a cheque bounces; a law comes into effect</i>
NOUN + NOUN	<i>a spate of attacks</i>
ADJECTIVE + NOUN	<i>a bitter rival</i>
ADVERB + ADJECTIVE	<i>highly adept</i>
VERB + ADJECTIVE	<i>to go bankrupt</i>
VERB + ADVERB	<i>to complain openly</i>
VERB + PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE	<i>to burst into laughter</i>

Follow-up practice (10-15 minutes) may include pre-prepared gap-filling, multiple-choice, translation etc. exercises.

### H. Word building (derivatives)

The only reason for the inclusion of this issue in my article is that major international English proficiency exams still feature this kind of task – my students need to be prepared for that kind of expectation as well. To all intents and purposes, I find ‘word building’ a more or less ‘atavistic’ pedagogic endeavour to provide learners with ‘rules’ – this time ‘lexical’, to complement the ‘grammatical’ ones (conditionals, modals, tenses etc.). Rhetorically speaking, at the end of the day, what’s the use if a student knows how to derive ‘*partnership*’ from the prompt ‘*partner*’ as long as they cannot use a phrase like ‘*go into partnership with someone*’?

For the mere sake of *indulgence* (should there still be teachers who consider word building a ‘skill’, as long as essential derivatives like ‘partnership’ are already listed as *headwords* in dictionaries), I can offer the following tips for ‘word building’ (*Caution!* These words *already exist as such*; they do *not* have to be *built!* It’s only an exercise in *de-* / *re-*construction!):

1. step 1 (logical / grammatical / easy): based on the context, make out which part of speech is missing: a *noun*, a *verb*, an *adjective* or an *adverb* (the same parts of speech are tested as such in international English proficiency exams);
2. step 2 (logical / grammatical / easy): based on the context, decide what form of the part of speech you need: singular or plural of a noun; ‘-ed’ / ‘-ing’ / ‘-s’ for verbs (or an irregular form of verbs); base / comparative ‘-er’ / superlative ‘-est’ forms for adjectives and adverbs; remember to use any prefixes or suffixes needed for nouns (e.g. ‘-ness’, ‘-ence’), verbs (e.g. ‘-en’, ‘en-’), adjectives (e.g. ‘-ish’, ‘-y’), adverbs (e.g. ‘-ly’);
3. step 3 (logical / easy): see the larger context to determine if you need a *positive* derivative for a *positive* context (e.g. ‘*I had an enjoyable and COMFORTABLE journey.*’) or if you need a *negative* derivative for a *negative* context (e.g. ‘*I had a boring and UNCOMFORTABLE journey.*’);
4. step 4 (*illogical / hard*): before giving the right derivative, check a dictionary to see if: the negative prefix is correct (‘un-’, ‘in-’, ‘im-’, ‘dis-’ etc.); spelling is correct (‘-ence’ / ‘-ance’, ‘-ent’ / ‘-ant’, ‘-ible’ / ‘-able’ etc.).

Whatever the kinds of practice exercises used for this section, remember that if students correctly derive, for example, ‘bankruptcy’ from ‘bankrupt’, this does not necessarily mean that they will automatically know how to use ‘bankruptcy’ in chunks like ‘*face bankruptcy*’, ‘*be on the brink / verge of bankruptcy*’, ‘*go / be forced into bankruptcy*’, ‘*file for bankruptcy*’, ‘*declare bankruptcy*’ etc. Attaching



too much importance to word `building` as a skill in itself (unnecessary as it is) may easily *defeat the purpose* of teaching ESP altogether.

### I. Choosing and using dictionaries

In my experience, the best way to conclude a presentation on ESP language skills would be to have a quick collective hands-on demonstration in class (this includes the teacher) of how all the relevant points mentioned (D-H above) can benefit from the use of a good learner's dictionary; dictionary access in class will be easy, given that the majority of students have an internet connection on their mobile phones and all dictionaries in question are freely available online.

It would be worth starting by specifying that general and specialised dictionaries (1 and 2 in the table below) can be used by both native and non-native speakers to clarify the meanings of unknown words, whether general or topic-based (specialised), and *pretty much* nothing more:

type of dictionary	focus and target
(1) general <sup>10</sup>	decoding general meanings; general audience
(2) specialised <sup>11</sup>	decoding specialised terms (c.f. ESP); professionals
(3) learner's <sup>12</sup>	decoding and encoding, including some specialised terms; learners

Examples of usage (c.f. *encoding*) are quite scarce in such dictionaries (1 and 2 above). Consequently, you may want to stress the importance of (advanced) *learner's dictionaries* (3) because they:

1. offer *full inventories* of fixed expressions (dependent prepositions, phrasal verbs, idioms, other phrases);
2. mention the *main collocates* of frequently used words (especially nouns);
3. offer all *word grammar information* needed (transitive / intransitive, countable / uncountable etc.);
4. define word meanings in clear and simple language;
5. provide *ample usage examples* in language chunks or in complete sentences;
6. may highlight problem words / phrases in context;
7. may offer *thesaurus features*;
8. may facilitate language acquisition through *full-text search options*; etc.

Practice in this subsection could amount to a summary of the explanations provided in subsections D-H previously covered by illustrating the types of lexical items mentioned in a very practical and technology-friendly format. Last but not

least, this subsection (I) can provide a *sense of closure* to the entire presentation, by reinforcing, once again, the reality that words do *not* work in isolation, *but* in combinations with other words – and this is what successful performance in ESP is all about!

## Further Comments and Conclusions

There is already a wide range of readily available ESP (business English) courses available from major publishers like OUP, CUP, Macmillan, Longman / Pearson etc. However, such ready-made course books presuppose management techniques *of their own*, in terms of class size, level, number of guided teaching hours and topic coverage. When it comes to tertiary level education, conditions may be very *different*; in turn, syllabi and teaching materials *will have to be different* as well.

Here I have provided a possible model for tackling ESP as a tertiary level teacher of English. It is *by no means* the one and only 'perfect' approach, but hopefully, it can be one the many possible 'sound' approaches to ESP teaching. It is not only informed by research in the field (c.f. the Lexical Approach), but also by its practicality repeatedly confirmed over the years in my own teaching experience. To conclude, for those teachers who have found this article informative, here are a few reminders intended to reinforce the main points:

ESP is *not* a simple continuation of teaching and learning English as a foreign language; it builds on previously acquired knowledge towards *real-life practicality* in various professional fields;

given the nature of ESP, students have to be trained *right from the start* in having *correct expectations* in relation to a kind of teaching / learning different from the ones experienced in secondary / high school;

a direct consequence needs to be the distinct realisation that learning habits and teaching techniques will be *different* from students' past experience; this will require a *shift* from traditional ways to possibly novel paradigms;

university students just one step short of starting a career will need to adapt to real-life situations in which they use English, by *leaving behind* the old prescribed learning strategies and confidently proceeding to 'the next level';

tertiary level ESP teachers need to *adapt* in such a way as to be able to *empower* their students towards mastery of language and best performance in their future professions by competently transferring focus on *student responsibility* based on *guidance and coaching*, rather than on reinforcing a stereotypically 'safe' educational role.

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## Notes

- 1 Morgan Lewis, "There Is Nothing as Practical as a Good Theory", in *Teaching Collocation. Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, ed. Michael Lewis (Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2000), 11-17.
- 2 Jimmie Hill, "Revising Priorities: from Grammatical Failure to Collocational Success", in *Teaching Collocation. Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, ed. Michael Lewis (Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2000), 68.
- 3 Michael Lewis, "Language in the Lexical Approach", in *Teaching Collocation. Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, ed. Michael Lewis (Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2000), 137.
- 4 Jimmie Hill, *ibidem*, 65.
- 5 George Woolard, "Collocation – Encouraging Learner Independence", in *Teaching Collocation. Further Developments in the Lexical Approach*, ed. Michael Lewis (Boston: Thomson Heinle, 2000), 31.
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- 7 George Woolard, *idem*, 46.
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# Representing Linguistic Knowledge – A Cognitive Perspective

*Ana Maria Hopârtean* \*

The present paper analyses different theoretical perspectives of representation and the manner in which they can be applied to foreign language learning. Representation is seen as a key cognitive process that is used when learning both grammar and vocabulary in a new language. Different ways of learning concepts in a foreign language are also discussed. By addressing the difference between static and dynamic representations, the paper also attempts to clarify the ways in which meaning and form are represented.

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representation; concept; meaning; form; grammar; vocabulary.

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REPRESENTATION AS A COGNITIVE PROCESS HAS BEEN DEFINED AS THE MANNER in which knowledge is stored and organized<sup>1</sup>. The first definitions of representation were limited to describing it as a “mental idea” or an “image”<sup>2</sup> that encapsulate information. As limiting as this perspective may seem, Richardson analysed different forms of representation, such as coding, cognitive schemes, cognitive scenarios and mental maps, highlighting the necessity of researching representation in the light of the other cognitive processes.

As early as 1964, Bruner<sup>3</sup> developed a theory about the functionality of representation arguing that the different modes of representation are in direct connection with the types of information the subject comes into contact with. The more complex the information, the more advanced the types of representation. Thus one can distinguish between primary representation (for sensorial memories), iconic representation (which refers to the storage of information as sensorial images), symbolic representation, etc. Therefore, the manner of

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organizing knowledge depends on the object of representation as a cognitive process, i.e. what is being represented.

Concepts and prototypes are used for representing objects, cognitive schemes are relevant for representing scenes, while cognitive scenarios and sequences of rules are instrumental in representing actions<sup>4</sup>. The cognitive system has been recognized to have a tendency to specifically store semantic information about a certain stimulus. At the level of foreign language learning this tendency is reflected in the learners' greater difficulty when it comes to storing the form of linguistic items as compared to the meaning which is generally the same as in the learners' native language.

Some contemporary researchers argue that representation as a cognitive process has been given too much attention, while even suggesting its elimination from cognitive models<sup>5</sup>. These researchers are in favour of a dynamic representation of the cognitive system, in contrast with a static view which sustains that, even though representations are subject to dynamics, they are essentially static, even atemporal<sup>6</sup>.

Returning to the first type of representation mentioned above, concepts are used to group and classify objects, events, ideas<sup>7</sup>. Concepts have a set of characteristics, as well as a set of rules to show how the characteristics can be combined. Researchers talk about classical concepts and probabilistic concepts. The former refer to concepts whereby each example has all the defining characteristics, while the latter only include a limited number of such features.

Concepts can be structured in two ways. The first way includes lists of characteristics, in which different items of a certain concept are related through the common characteristics that they share. This theory is supported by Collins and Quillian<sup>8</sup>. The second way was supported by Rosch<sup>9</sup> who proposed the prototype theory and who also argued that not all concepts are equally significant, some being more general than others. There are three levels of concept abstraction: the superordinate, the basic and the subordinate level<sup>10</sup>. An example of a superordinate concept is that of a "flower", which is a very wide category. A basic category would be, for instance, a "rose", which can be associated to subcategories (i.e. the subordinate level) such as red, white or different rose species.

This entire theory is questioned by Hayes who doubts its validity as the majority of concepts used in experiments are not natural. It is possible, he argues, that people use other categorization criteria in the "real" world. For example, Sloman<sup>11</sup> shows that the principle according to which basic categories borrow superordinate characteristics is not always applied.

From a linguistic perspective, representation as a cognitive process can be seen as both static and dynamic.

Representation as a static process has been analysed by Bialystok<sup>12</sup> and belongs to psycholinguistics. As the author suggests, this static aspect clarifies two problems. The first problem is the relation between meaning and form and the ways in which the meaning of words is learned in a foreign language. This is particularly insightful in terms of how vocabulary is learned. The second issue is that of linguistic representations and the way in which two or several languages are interconnected in such a representation.

As for the first aspect, a closer look at the relation between meaning and form can lead to a better understanding of how children learn their native language, how they represent the meaning of words and how this leads to learning languages in general. Here, two aspects must be considered: that of the origin of meaning and that of connections between meaning and form.

Jackendoff<sup>13</sup> tackled the issue of the origin of meaning, which he considered to be built on some sort of inborn system. The second matter, i.e. that of connections between meaning and form was debated by Quine in 1960<sup>14</sup>, the question being about the manner in which subjects manage to identify the right referent for a certain newly learned word. Some researchers argued this was due to some kind of biological predisposition, while others considered that subjects (i.e. children learning their native language) use context for this purpose. Mandler<sup>15</sup> also attempted to solve the problem of connections between meaning and form. He discovered that children use some concepts such as animation starting as early as nine months. Such concepts are represented in a sensorial and motor manner, thus avoiding the need for some inborn systems meant to facilitate language learning starting at an early age. In this context, the connections between meaning and form can be based on such primary representations.

Obviously, the issue of these connections between meaning and form cannot be addressed in the same way in the case of adults, for they have already established their own concepts. Still, there can be situations in which conceptual systems can change when a new language is learned.

As for manners of representation in two or more languages, there are three points of view with different impact over the way in which the foreign language is learned.

Firstly, Snow et. al<sup>16</sup> consider that there are two distinct representations for two separate languages. The main proofs refer to functional differences regarding the context, the purpose of communication and the interlocutor. Moreover, they argue that if there were a single representational system for two different

languages, the subjects could no longer distinguish between the lexical elements of the two systems. What is also mentioned is the ability to distinguish between the sounds of different languages, present in children only a few months old.

On the other hand, Cook argued for a unified representation of two or several languages<sup>17</sup>. In this unified representation languages influence one another. One of the few proofs brought in support of this line of argument is that of the ability to use two languages at the same time, namely using a word from the other language when this is not accessible in the intended language.

Last but not least, Bialystok suggests a unified version of the two contrasting viewpoints. In this version, there is a unified linguistic representation in which several subrepresentations can exist, such as vocabulary, some grammar rules and other restrictions specific to each language.

This proposal is not in conflict with research in the field of foreign language learning. Two separate representational systems for two different languages would imply relearning even the common grammatical rules.

The dynamic aspect of representing a foreign language that we referred to above is concerned with restructuring information in interlanguage. McLaughlin<sup>18</sup> suggested a new model of information processing according to which there are certain changes in the way in which information is represented and in the strategies used, for example moving from a type of representation based on examples to a rule- guided representation, e.g. learning the past form of verbs in English.

In sum, representation, far from being an easy to describe cognitive process, is crucial for learning a new language, whether that is one's native language or a foreign language. Understanding the way in which the brain represents new and old concepts and also meaning and form could lead to a fresh outlook on learning grammar and vocabulary and, ultimately help learners to learn more effectively.

### Notes

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# Different Types of Learners, Different Types of Motivation: Challenges in Teaching English to Different Professional Categories

*Diana Zelter* \*

In today's challenging business environment, companies require employees to possess very good knowledge of foreign languages. They also provide courses either in-house or by sending employees to courses organized by language schools. Challenges arise in both situations depending on the professional category involved as well as on their motivation and expectations. This paper is based on personal experience in teaching different professional categories and provides an insight into how to motivate people with opposite educational backgrounds (in this particular case blue collars versus white collars) in order to reach the expected results and how scarcity of language knowledge and skills may work better than other motivational factors.

*courses; scarcity; motivation; learners.*

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## Introduction

A Chinese proverb says: “Tell me and I may forget/Teach me and I may remember/ Involve me and I will learn”. In a world in which according to Scott Thornsbury “We are out of methods”<sup>1</sup>, the question which arises would be: “Would involvement be the key to successful ELT?”. And if it is so, how can we get our students more involved, especially if they are adult professionals who take English courses at the request of their company?

These are the questions we are to answer in the following pages.

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## English – the global language of work

Theoretically speaking, nowadays involvement should originate in the current need for foreign language skills (English, in particular) which exists both on the job market and in the academic environment. English has become the global language of education and business and it represents a major requirement in recruiting well-qualified professionals in almost all fields of expertise. Communicating for professional purposes in a foreign language is a daily activity in the majority of companies all over the world. Hence the necessity of improving employees' language and communication abilities, a necessity which companies fulfil by providing their employees with language and communication training. What is even more important is that this training is not just for white collars but also for blue collars, people working on the shop floor, as a good command of English has become essential even for performing technical routine tasks.

Most often companies prefer to organize such trainings in-house. They hire a language trainer and arrange the schedule according to the employees' activities instead of sending a large group of people to attend a course at a language centre.

Which are the advantages of in-house language training from the trainer's perspective? First of all, such courses require more adaptation to the trainees' needs as they are usually tailor-made courses. As an in-house trainer, you are in permanent contact with the management and the teaching situations become more challenging as you are dealing with a variety of types of learners. However, sometimes there are also disadvantages teaching inside the company. There could be restrictions regarding the content of the course and the length or, as a trainer, you may encounter difficulties when it comes to very specialized vocabulary (mainly, technical) or you may not always have the adequate teaching facilities.

## The motivation challenge

When it comes to considering the sources of motivation involved in language training, extrinsic and intrinsic sources would function on almost equal positions. The company offers free training which one should attend and, in turn, the training will help perform one's job better. However, there are also other factors in question.

One of them is the educational background combined with the position in the company. For blue collars basic language knowledge will be absolutely necessary in understanding work instructions. New machinery will come with new procedures and rules which are vital for performing different tasks. On the other hand, the presence of foreign managers/engineers/instructors calls for

daily communication which is impossible in the absence of foreign language knowledge. Companies may provide translators; however, it is indicated that interpersonal communication should also be developed together with the improvement of linguistic knowledge.

In the case of white collars, mastering a foreign language is not just a matter of necessity, but also a matter of prestige and reputation. They must be able to communicate with colleagues and superiors of different nationalities, develop business rapports but, at the same time, make use of various business skills supported by good use of foreign languages (negotiation skills, presentation skills etc.).

Another important source of motivation (as we are going to show later on) is awareness of one's scarcity of foreign language knowledge and more specifically, of what exactly one lacks in particular. In the case of blue collars there might be a scarcity of technical terms associated with lack of grammar knowledge and adequate vocabulary. For white collars, problems may range from grammar issues to misuse of accurate register or scarcity of particular business skills.

So, how does scarcity work as a source of motivation?

## Scarcity

The concept of scarcity was developed by the economists S. Mullainathan and E. Shafir with reference to financial and time scarcity and their implications on people's mental activity. However, the concept of scarcity can be applied to any kind of scarcity in any field as the effects are similar. It can be a source of negative stress but also a source of motivation

The basis for this research is represented by the book *Scarcity* written by Sendhil Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, also entitled "The true cost of not having enough". Although the book refers to economics, we found similarities between the way scarcity works in the financial area and the way it works in language acquisition.

The general assumption would be that while physical scarcity is ubiquitous, the feeling of scarcity is not and it has certain limits leading to dissatisfaction and struggle. However, as scarcity means lack shortage, lack of something (money, time, knowledge etc), it is not just a physical constraint, it is a mindset which captures our attention and changes the way we think.<sup>2</sup> Hence from, scarcity, in every form, creates a similar mindset, being that about money, other resources or even words, rules etc. as we are going to show in our study.

The effects of scarcity are, according to the two economists, both positive and negative. When scarcity captures our mind, we may become more attentive and

more efficient. On the other hand, scarcity also perpetuates scarcity because it creates a shortage of bandwidth and you think only about what you lack, it creates its own trap; consequently, we may become less efficient in the rest of our life<sup>3</sup>.

## Research methodology and case study

In order to study the way in which scarcity works as a source of motivation in language training, we made a case study inside a transportation company where employees were provided with in-house English language training courses. The methods we used were observation during training and focus group. The participants to the focus group as well as to the training were 20 Romanian employees (the majority of them drivers), two Romanian managers and a foreign manager.

First of all we analysed the scarcity issues the participants had. In the case of blue collars it was noticed and then confirmed by the focus group that their main problems were scarcity of grammar rules, scarcity of technical vocabulary and spelling and pronunciation difficulties.

In the case of the high-calibre learners (the managers), it was clear that they had good knowledge of technical vocabulary and quite good command of grammar rules. They were also fluent and did not have major communication issues. However, as they explained during the focus group, they encountered problems when using the adequate register in certain professional contexts and lacked particular business skills such as negotiation or presentation skills. In addition to these, managers confessed coming across certain cultural problems while dealing with their foreign counterparts.

Nevertheless, scarcity for both categories has the same effects: employees are not able to perform their tasks correctly and efficiently. Lack of adequate vocabulary would prevent blue collars from understanding the instructions related to maneuvering their trucks, for example and as a consequence they would execute wrong actions. On the other hand, although white collars do possess a large range of vocabulary, they are not able to use it appropriately when delivering a presentation or negotiating with a client given the fact that their background is mainly technical and they lack communication and business skills.

It was very interesting to notice that the theory about scarcity effects presented by the authors of the book mentioned earlier generally applies in the case of language scarcity. Mullainathan and Shafir discovered that scarcity perpetuates scarcity as it captures people's minds and makes them less effective in the rest of their life. A person with financial difficulties would tend to spend more and get in debts while estranging from their family or friends.<sup>4</sup>

The same effect was experienced during the language training and acknowledged by the participants to the focus group. While focusing on scarcity of technical vocabulary, the drivers made mistakes in their work. Moreover, as they were focusing on scarcity of grammar structures, they failed to use correctly even the vocabulary they were familiar with. Being preoccupied to understand the instructions they were given and to answer correctly in English, the drivers made more mistakes than when they weren't really paying attention to the correctness of their expression. The explanation originates in the scarcity theory: scarcity creates a shortage of bandwidth (the allocation of our limited information and processing abilities)<sup>5</sup> and consequently the drivers were focusing on what they did not know or could not express correctly and hence they were not able to concentrate on their work or use even the vocabulary/structures they were already familiar with. Some special cases were represented by drivers who have not learnt English in an organized framework and have acquired a lot of wrong structures as well as bad pronunciation. These people had great difficulty in using new structures correctly because their mindset was dominated by what they have learnt incorrectly and they were not able to process information which was different from what they already knew.

In the case of managers, while focusing on scarcity of business communication skills (presentations, meetings), they tended to use grammar structures and vocabulary incorrectly. Their mindset was dominated by the fear that they were not able to deliver an effective presentation in English or to participate in a meeting effectively and consequently they made grammar and pronunciation mistakes which they wouldn't have normally done in a casual conversation with fellow managers from other countries.

Both drivers and managers admitted during focus group discussions that scarcity is a source of motivation for them. Lack of linguistic knowledge and skills makes them more interested in attending the language training organized by their company. They do not perceive it as a burden but as a necessity and appreciate their company's effort. Drivers acknowledged that their scarcity of English knowledge made their communication with the foreign managers and colleagues very difficult. They were aware that improvement was absolutely necessary in order to be able to write e-mails or speak on the phone and later on to write reports as it is sometimes requested by the managers.

The managers, on their turn, said that it was very difficult for them to understand e-mails written by drivers and to have a conversation with them as their pronunciation and spelling were not really good. They suggested that

some of the drivers would need extra language training in order to be able to communicate appropriately.

The training itself was designed according to the needs expressed by the company. After a diagnosis test, the drivers were split into two groups according to their level. Another group was formed of managers whose level was pretty homogeneous. The trainer tailored the course to the needs of the trainees, combining materials from different sources in order to improve pronunciation and spelling, enrich vocabulary (mainly technical), cover basic grammar issues, develop speaking skills (phone conversations in particular) and writing skills (e-mails and reports). The course for managers was shorter and was based on the development of specific business skills in English, with an emphasis on oral communication (presentations, meetings, negotiations).

## Conclusions and proposals

According to the results of the study, it is obvious that scarcity could work as a source of motivation but it can also hinder the development and function as a barrier in the assimilation of new knowledge or correction of wrongly-acquired structures.

In order to use the advantages scarcity brings about and diminish the disadvantages, blue collars were recommended to use more the structures they were already familiar with but also to correct them if necessary and use them again in the right way. They were encouraged to use new rules and vocabulary in relation to the structures they knew and to integrate the technical vocabulary in their conversations and e-mails. For those whose level was quite low and had problems in acquiring new structures and rules, a Keep It Simple approach was used, helping them to use simple and short sentences in order to communicate basic things. It is clear that the teaching approach must be adapted to the learners' educational background and to their particular needs.

The managers were advised to use a large range of vocabulary and grammatical structures in order to make their discourse more fluent and to compensate for the lack of certain communication/business skills. At the same time, they should prepare more before a presentation or a business meeting. This will give them more confidence and would help change the focus of their mindset from the skills scarcity to the objectives of the business endeavor they are undertaking.

In conclusion, our case study shows once again the necessity of adapting teaching methods to the target learner in order to fulfill their needs and obtain measurable results. In a globalized world it is imperative that we should tailor our courses and offer both business people and different categories of company



of employees the resources and activities which would help them perform better in the workplace.

### Notes

- 1 Scott Thornsbury Plenary Speech Cambridge Days ELT Conference Cluj-Napoca, 2016
- 2 Mullainathan, S., Shafir, E.(2014) *Scarcity*, London: Penguin Books, p:25
- 3 Ibidem, p.137
- 4 Ibidem, p.150
- 5 Ibidem, p.49

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# Zur Entwicklung der Fertigkeit Sprechen im Fachsprachenunterricht.

## Die AKSAN-Methode

Oral Skills Approach in German for Specific Purposes. AKSAN-  
Method

*Maria Parasca* \*

The main aim of this paper is to present a teaching method for improving the oral skills, by taking into consideration the oral assessment quality criteria according to the Common European Framework. Following the methodological patterns for the exercises from the paper entitled *Fertigkeit Sprechen*, this method has five steps: enriching the vocabulary, combining words, structuring lexical items, using the lexical structures in proper contexts, improving natural fluency. This method can be used at groups with different levels of proficiency, from A2 to C1/C2, ensuring an improvement of the oral skills.

competence; speaking; common European language frame; teaching method;  
business German.

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### 1. Einleitung und Zielsetzung

„Wir wollen in Deutschland anrufen, um uns zu erkundigen, was mit der Lieferung los ist“ oder „wir müssen mit einem deutschen Kunden telefonieren, um ein Paar Punkte zu klären, bevor wir ihm das Angebot erteilen“ – „Können Sie das bitte tun?“ Diese sind nur zwei Beispiele von prototypischen Aufgaben für deutsch sprechende Mitarbeiter in einem Unternehmen. In diesen Fällen geht es in erster Linie um das Können in einer Fremdsprache, um die Fähigkeit des deutschsprechenden Mitarbeiters sich angemessen in deutscher

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Sprache auszudrücken und effizient mit einem deutschen Muttersprachler zu kommunizieren.

Das stellt auch das globale Ziel des Fremdsprachenunterrichts im Allgemeinen und somit auch des Fachsprachunterrichts, als eine Schnittstelle zwischen dem Fremdsprachenunterricht und Fachunterricht in einer fremden Sprache, dar. Das erklärte globale Ziel des Fachsprachenunterrichts ist, „den Lerner in seinem Fach sprachlich handlungsfähig zu machen, bzw. ihm den Erwerb der sprachlichen Handlungsfähigkeit zu ermöglichen“. Der Lerner soll also fähig werden, in fachspezifischem Kommunikationsrahmen zu kommunizieren.

Die vorliegende Arbeit setzt sich zum Ziel, eine in der Unterrichtspraxis erprobte Methode zur Förderung und Entwicklung des mündlichen Ausdrucks im Fachsprachenunterricht, die ich AKSAN genannt habe und im Fachsprachenunterricht an der Fakultät für Wirtschaftswissenschaften und Unternehmensführung zur Entwicklung der Kommunikationsfähigkeit im Wirtschaftsbereich angewandt habe, darzustellen.

Im ersten Teil der Arbeit, der vorwiegend theoretisch ist, werden die qualitativen Merkmale des mündlichen Ausdrucks, so wie diese in dem Gemeinsamen Europäischen Referenzrahmen für Fremdsprachen definiert und vorgestellt sind, dargestellt. So wie für Fremdsprachen gelten auch für Fachsprachen die gleichen qualitativen Merkmale, wobei diese dann spezifisch für jedes Fach näher formuliert werden. Zusätzlich werden kurz die Übungstypologie zur Förderung der Fertigkeit Sprechen und die Prinzipien des effektiven Spracherwerbs genannt und beschrieben.

In dem zweiten Teil wird die AKSAN-Methode ausführlich dargestellt, wobei nicht nur die Zielgruppen und das geeignete Sprachniveau für deren Einsatz definiert werden, sondern wird auch schrittweise erklärt, wie die Methode in der Unterrichtspraxis eingesetzt werden kann.

## 2. Zur Fertigkeit Sprechen

### **2.1 Qualitative Merkmale des mündlichen Ausdrucks gemäß dem Europäischen Referenzrahmen für Fremdsprachen (GER)**

Der Europäische Referenzrahmen für Fremdsprachen<sup>1</sup> setzt sich die Aufgabe, die „Fortschritte in den Lernerfolgen bezüglich der Fremdsprache“ zu beurteilen.

Dazu definiert dieser Rahmen vier sprachlichen Fertigkeiten, die für diese Aufgaben grundlegend sind: Sprechen, Schreiben, Hören und Lesen.

Während es sich beim Hören und Lesen in erster Linie um rezeptive Fähigkeiten handelt, d. h., der Lernende soll das Gehörte und das Gelesene verstehen und sprachlich verarbeiten können, handelt es sich beim Sprechen und Schreiben um Produktionsfertigkeiten, d. h., der Lernende soll imstande sein, (zusammenhängende und sinnvolle) Sätze und Texte zu produzieren. Dabei gibt es auch hier bedeutende Unterschiede im sprachlichen Produktionsprozess, abhängig davon, ob sich der Lernende schriftlich oder mündlich ausdrücken soll. Sei hier nur auf die fehlende Überlegungszeit oder mangelnde Satzbaukomplexität beim Sprechen hingewiesen.<sup>2</sup>

GER legt für die Beurteilung des mündlichen Ausdrucks fünf qualitative Merkmale fest, die gleichzeitig als Kriterien für die sprachliche Einstufung fungieren. Diese Merkmale sind: **Spektrum, Korrektheit, Fließigkeit, Interaktion und Kohärenz.**

Das Merkmal **Spektrum** bezieht sich auf die lexikalischen Strukturen, über denen der Lernende beim Sprechen aktiv verfügt, wobei nicht nur der Umfang, sondern auch die Variation und die Komplexität von Bedeutung sind. Je höher das Sprachniveau ist, desto komplexere Strukturen verfügbar sein sollten. Wenn man sich auf eine Fachsprache bezieht, bezieht sich Spektrum auf deren Terminologie, verstanden als die Ganzheit der zu einem Fach angehörigen Fachwörter oder Termini.<sup>3</sup>

Das Merkmal **Korrektheit** bezieht sich in erster Linie auf die grammatikalische Korrektheit, sprich die morphologische und syntaktische Korrektheit. Auch hier gilt es: je höher das Sprachniveau, desto komplexere insbesondere syntaktische Strukturen zum richtigen grammatikalischen Einsatz kommen können. Bezogen auf die Fachsprachen setzt die Korrektheit Kenntnisse über die morphologischen und syntaktischen Besonderheiten voraus. Zum Beispiel stellen der Nominalstil und der häufige Einsatz von Passivkonstruktionen<sup>4</sup> Besonderheiten der deutschen Wirtschaftssprache dar.

Das dritte Merkmal, die **Fließigkeit** stellt den „natürlichen Sprachfluss“ in den Vordergrund. Dabei wird die Fähigkeit sich in jeglicher Kommunikationssituation spontan und mühelos auszudrücken, dem Mangel ständig, auffällig nach Wörtern

zu suchen, entgegengesetzt. Ein anderer Aspekt, der hier eine Rolle spielt, ist, ob der Lernende beim Sprechen viele und auffällige oder wenige und kaum bemerkbare Pausen macht. Denken wir an die Kommunikation in einem Fach, ist dieses Merkmal besonders wichtig, nicht nur wenn die Fachleute untereinander kommunizieren, sondern auch wenn eine Kommunikation Fachleute - Laien stattfindet. Sich flüssig zu einem Fachthema ausdrücken zu können ist für das Bild eines Fachmanns ausschlaggebend.

**Interaktion** als Qualitätsmerkmal bezieht sich auf die Gesprächsführung, wobei nicht nur die Fähigkeit beurteilt wird, ein Gespräch zu eröffnen, sondern es auch in Gang zu halten und es zu beenden. Sprachlich angemessen in einem Gespräch agieren und reagieren zu können, bekommt vom Anfängerniveau bis zu den fortgeschrittenen Niveaus entsprechende Graduierungen. Sei hier nur auf die Verhandlung als typischer Interaktionsanlass im Rahmen der beruflichen Kommunikation hingewiesen, im Rahmen derer die Interaktionsfähigkeiten der Gesprächspartner direkte Folgen auf den wirtschaftlichen Erfolg eines Unternehmens haben.

Mit dem letzten Merkmal, die **Kohärenz**, wird die Fähigkeit den roten Pfaden beim Sprechen zu bewahren, hervorgebracht. In diesem Sinne bekommen die verschiedenen Gliederungs- und Verknüpfungsmittel eine besondere Bedeutung zugeordnet. Sagt man Kohärenz, denkt man automatisch an Präsentationen, die im beruflichen Alltag ständig anwesend sind, gehe es um ein Produkt, ein Angebot oder eine Weiterbildungsmaßnahme, die präsentiert werden müssen.

## **2.2 Zur Entwicklung der Kompetenz Sprechen im Sprachunterricht**

In der Fernstudieneinheit **Fertigkeit Sprechen**<sup>5</sup> wird die Fertigkeit Sprechen als Bestandteil der Kommunikationsfähigkeit, die „seit Anfang der Achtzigerjahre des 20. Jahrhunderts“ als „erklärtes Lehr- und Lernziel im fremdsprachlichen Deutschunterricht“<sup>6</sup> gilt. In diesem Sinne soll diese Fertigkeit als Zielfertigkeit<sup>7</sup> verstanden werden: „Sprechen als Zielfertigkeit beherrschen wir, wenn wir mit Sprache handelnd umgehen, uns mitteilen und Sprache zur Verständigung mit anderen gebrauchen.“<sup>8</sup>

In dieser Einheit werden viele Übungen zur gezielten Verbesserung der Fertigkeit Sprechen angeboten, die in drei Kategorien eingeteilt werden:

1. Übungen und Aufgaben, die mündliche Kommunikation vorbereiten;

2. Übungen und Aufgaben, die mündliche Kommunikation aufbauen und strukturieren;
3. Übungen und Aufgaben, die mündliche Kommunikation simulieren.

Ferner ist die Einhaltung der folgenden GIPS-Anforderung diejenige, die den Erfolg der durchgeführten Aufgaben sicherstellt:<sup>9</sup>

So kann gewährleistet werden, dass:

- jeder Lernende einen mehr oder weniger **Gleichen Anteil** zum Endergebnis beitragen muss.
- jeder Lernende **Individuell** für das Endergebnis verantwortlich und daraufhin ansprechbar ist.
- die Lernenden in der Gruppe in **Positiver Hinsicht** voneinander abhängig sind, um zu einem Endergebnis zu gelangen. Sie brauchen einander und erleben dies als positiv.
- so viele Lernende wie möglich **Simultan**, d. h. gleichzeitig, aktiv beschäftigt sein sollten.

Zusätzlich sind noch folgende Prinzipien zu beachten, „wenn der Unterricht sprachliche Handlungsfähigkeit im Fach entwickeln bzw. fördern soll“, ist es nicht nur fachbezogen, inhaltsorientiert und systematisch zu arbeiten, sondern muss auch geachtet werden, dass die „qualitative Orientierung bei der Vermittlung Vorrang vor der Quantitativen“ haben muss.

### 3 Die AKSAN-Methode

#### 3.1 Vorüberlegungen

„Sprechen mögen wir nicht, wir sind ja Buchhalter, arbeiten lieber mit Zahlen ...“ oder „Besser schreiben wir darüber, mit Sprechen geht das nicht so“ sind Aussagen, die ich immer wieder im Wirtschaftsdeutschunterricht hören darf. Ferner habe ich in den letzten fast zehn Jahren Unterrichtspraxis Folgendes beobachten können:

1. Unabhängig vom Sprachniveau (A2 bis B2) fehlt es am Übung beim Sprechen;
2. Viele Studenten haben keine Schwierigkeiten eine Vorlesung in deutscher Sprache zu folgen, können aber das Gehörte schwer wiedergeben; sei hier nur auf die allgemein unter Fremdsprachenlehrern bekannte Aussage: „Verstehen kann ich fast alles, sprechen aber ...“
3. Viele Studenten verfügen über die Fähigkeit, problemlos Texte in deutscher Sprache zu verstehen und können die drin beinhalteten Informationen in

der Muttersprache mühelos erklären, aber sie nicht in deutscher Sprache präsentieren.

So wollte ich die Fertigkeit Sprechen angemessen üben, um sie zielgerichtet zu verbessern, sodass die Lernenden einerseits an Flüssigkeit und Kohärenz gewinnen, andererseits derer Interaktionsfähigkeit zu entwickeln, sodass sie ihrer Angst vor dem Sprechen loswerden. Da ich mit Gruppen von verschiedenen Sprachniveaus (A2 bis C1/C2) arbeite, war es wichtig, dass die Methode auf allen Sprachniveaus angewandt werden konnte. Ferner sollte sie vom Zeitbedarf her, nicht länger als 90 Minuten in Anspruch nehmen, da der Unterricht an der Fakultät für Wirtschaftswissenschaften und Unternehmensführung in Einheiten à 90 Minuten organisiert ist.

### 3.2 Was bedeutet AKSAN?

Diese Methode ist eine Kombination der klassischen Übungsarten zur Entwicklung der Fertigkeit *Sprechen* zur gezielten Verbesserung jeder der fünf Merkmale des mündlichen Ausdrucks, so wie diese in GER definiert sind.

- A von *Fachwortschatz aufbauen*;
- K von *Kombination*, sprich die Fachwörter in einen passenden Kontext bringen;
- S von *strukturieren*;
- A von *anwenden*;
- N von *natürlicher Sprachfluss*.

**1. Schritt - Fachwortschatz aufbauen:** Das Spezifikum jeder Fachsprache ist von dem Fachwortschatz, der in erster Linie aus Fachwörtern besteht, dargestellt. Der Lernende soll in erster Linie über die spezifischen Fachwörter aktiv verfügen, um sie in der mündlichen Kommunikation einsetzen zu können. Zum Aufbau des Wortschatzes eignen sich gut nicht nur Assoziogramme und Mindmaps sondern auch spezifische Fachtexte. Bei der Assoziogramm haben wir auch so verfahren, dass die Studenten Fachwörter in der Muttersprache genannt haben, derer deutschen Entsprechungen ich genannt habe. Wir haben auch so verfahren, dass wir einen Fachtext zum Thema gelesen haben, daraus die Schlüsselwörter exzerpiert haben und anschließend die Kombinationspartner aus dem Text zu den Wörtern eingetragen haben.



**2. Schritt – Kombination:** Dieser Schritt ist äußerst wichtig, da die Fachwörter nie allein verwendet werden, sondern in der Kommunikation ständig mit anderen Wörtern, insbesondere Verben und Adjektive kombiniert werden müssen. Dabei sind die semantischen Vorlieben und Restriktionen bei der Kombination nicht außer Acht zu lassen, da die Fachwörter nur durch die Partnerschaft mit passenden Verben und Adjektiven ihren fachlichen Inhalt entfalten können.<sup>10</sup> Sei hier ein viel zitiertes Beispiel erwähnt werden: *Fäden ziehen* und einen *Wechsel ziehen* im Rahmen denen das gemeinsprachliche Verb *ziehen* unterschiedlichen Inhalt zugeordnet bekommt, abhängig davon, ob es mit *Fäden* oder mit *Wechsel* kombiniert wird.

In diesem Sinne denke ich insbesondere an die halbidiomatischen Wortkombinationen namens *Kollokationen*, im Rahmen denen die Fachwörter einer Ausgangssprache in eine Zielsprache problemlos übertragen werden können, im Gegensatz zu deren Partner, die nur im Rahmen der Kollokation einen bestimmten Inhalt zugeordnet bekommen. Ein Beispiel dazu ist die rumänische Kombination *a obține profit*, im Rahmen der *profit* problemlos mit *Gewinn* übersetzt wird, das Verb aber nicht wortwörtlich übersetzbar ist, mit ‚*erreichen*‘.

Die Kollokationen als „Sprachbausteine“<sup>11</sup> helfen dem Sprecher, über die passenden Partner der Fachwörter ständig aktiv zu verfügen, sodass sich der Sprecher nicht mehr in der Situation befindet „nach Wörtern“ zu suchen und sich zu fragen, ob das ausgewählte Verb oder Adjectiv richtig ist oder nicht. Während beim Schreiben er die Möglichkeit hat, die richtige Kombiantion in einem Wörterbuch zu prüfen, muss er beim Sprechen automatisch darüber verfügen.

Da die Kollokationen eher im sprachlichen Kontrast sichtbar sind, half es den Studenten zunächst über die derer Existenz bewusst zu werden, indem beobachtet werden konnte, dass die vorkommenden Kombinationspartner der Fachwörter nicht wortwörtliche Entsprechungen in der rumänischen bzw. deutschen Sprache haben.

**3. Schritt – Strukturieren:** Bekanntlich lernt man besser und behält das Gelernte für längere Zeit, wenn das Gelernte in eine Struktur, in ein Netz eingebunden ist. Aus diesem Grund ist es notwendig, die in den ersten zwei Phassen erworbenen Kenntnisse in das eigene Kenntnisnetz einzubinden und Eselsbrücke aufzubauen.

Dieser Schritt bindet diese Methode mit dem SOL-Konzept und zwar mit dem Advanced Organiser. Dieses Konzept hebt hervor, wie wichtig für das Lernen, sprich auch für den sprachlichen Erwerb ist, dass der Lernende den zu lernenden Stoff für sich selbst organisiert, da jedes Individuum andere Zusammenhänge zwischen den Kenntnissen herstellt und sein Wissen auf eigener Art und Weise strukturiert. So betrachtet ist, es für den Lernenden vorteilhafter, die Möglichkeit zu haben, die Kenntnisse für sich selbst einzustufen, einzubinden und zu organisieren.

**4. Schritt - Anwenden:** Dieses Verb bezieht sich auf die beiden Aspekte des mündlichen Ausdrucks: zusammenhängendes Sprechen und Interaktion. Zusammenhängend Sprechen kann zum Beispiel eine Präsentation oder Vortrag sein. Mit der Interaktionsfähigkeit

wird der Tatsache Rechnung getragen, dass bei sprachlichen Kontakten, ja immer mindestens zwei Partner (oder mehr) beteiligt sind und dass die beiden interagieren müssen, um (sprachlich) etwas auszuhandeln, und das heißt: Jeder reagiert auf die Signale (sprachlich, gestisch, mimisch, inhaltlich usw.) des anderen und umgekehrt.<sup>12</sup>

Bei diesem Schritt wird die mündliche Kommunikation simuliert, indem der Lernende entweder einen kurzen Vortrag zum bearbeiteten Thema hält oder an einem themenbezogenen Rollenspiel teilnimmt. Beobachten konnte ich bei diesem Schritt, dass es den Lernenden dank der durchgeführten Vorbereitungen, viel leichter fällt, sich angemessen auszudrücken.

**5. Schritt - natürlicher Sprachfluss:** Beim letzten Schritt steht die Flüssigkeit im Mittelpunkt. Wie in der *Fernstudiumeinheit Fertigkeit Sprechen* angegeben eignen sich hierzu am besten die Kettenübungen. Folgende Arten von Kettenübungen habe ich mit meinen Gruppen ausprobiert: Vor- und Nachteile zum besprochenen Thema formulieren und eine Geschichte zum Thema schaffen.

### **3.3 Was ist aus didaktischer Sicht zu achten?**

Diese Methode kann auf jedem Sprachniveau eingesetzt werden. In der Praxis habe ich sie sowohl bei A2-Gruppen als auch bei B1-B2-Gruppen eingesetzt. Der Umfang des sprachlichen Inputs hängt vom Niveau der Gruppe ab: je höher das Sprachniveau der Gruppe ist, desto größer das Spektrum und die Komplexität

der bearbeiteten lexikalischen Strukturen. Dieses Prinzip gilt auch für die grammatikalischen Strukturen.

Diese Methode wurde in erster Linie für den Fachsprachenunterricht entwickelt, kann aber auch im Fremdsprachenunterricht eingesetzt werden, indem gemeinsprachliche Themen bearbeitet werden. Was den Zeitbedarf anbelangt, sind zwischen 90-120 Minuten zu rechnen, wobei auch weniger Zeit eingesetzt werden kann, wenn die Lernenden die ersten zwei Schritte selbstständig und einzeln durchführen.

#### 4. Zusammenfassung und Schlussbemerkungen

Die vorliegende Arbeit setzte sich zum Ziel eine in der Praxis erprobte Methode zur Entwicklung der Fertigkeit Sprechen im Fachsprachenunterricht vorzustellen, in Betracht ziehend, dass die Wirtschaftsdeutschunterrichtspraxis an der Fakultät für Wirtschaftswissenschaften und Unternehmensführung die Arbeit mit Studentengruppen von verschiedenen Sprachniveaus, von A2 bis C1-C2 voraussetzt. Berücksichtigt wurde auch der organisatorische Rahmen, da der Unterricht in 90-Minuten-Einheiten organisiert ist und die Methode diesen Zeitrahmen nicht überspringen sollte.

Die vorgestellte Methode, AKSAN genannt, besteht aus fünf Schritten, mithilfe denen die fünf in dem Europäischen Referenzrahmen für Fremdsprachen definierten Merkmale zur Beurteilung des mündlichen Ausdrucks in einer Fremdsprache aber auch in einer Fachsprache, verbessert werden können. Bei jedem Schritt, vom *Wortschatz aufbauen*, *Kombination*, *strukturieren*, *anwenden* bis hin zum *natürlichen Sprachfluss* beim Sprechen wurden die Besonderheiten der Kommunikation in einem Fach, in diesem Fall, Wirtschaftsdeutsch berücksichtigt. Dabei wurde bei der Festlegung der Schritten Reihenfolge die in der *Fernstudieneinheit Fertigkeit Sprechen* angegebene methodologische Reihenfolge der Übungen für die Entwicklung der Fertigkeit Sprechen, von der entsprechenden Vorbereitung (erster und zweiter Schritt), zum Aufbau und zur Strukturierung (dritter Schritt) bis zum Simulieren (letzte zwei Schritte: anwenden und Verbesserung des Sprachflusses durch spezifische Kettenübungen).

Zum Schluss ist hervorzuheben, dass durch die Einhaltung der GIPS-Prinzipien und der Leitprinzipien des Fachsprachenunterrichts bei jedem Schritt der Erfolg der beschriebenen Methode sichergestellt wurde, sodass der mündliche Ausdruck gezielt und nachhaltig verbessert werden kann.

## Notizen

- 1 Vgl. <http://www.europaescher-referenzrahmen.de/sprachkenntnisse.php>, zuletzt abgerufen am 06.12.2017.
- 2 Weitere Unterschiede zwischen der mündlichen und schriftlichen Kommunikation sind u.a in DUDEN – Briefe schreiben leicht gemacht, (Mannheim: Bibliographisches Institut & F.A Brockhaus AG, 2003), 11f.
- 3 Vgl. auch die Definition von Fluck (1976) „Fachsprache – das ist die Gesamtheit aller sprachlichen Mittel, die in einem fachlich begrenzten Kommunikationsbereich verwendet werden, um die Verständigung zwischen den in diesem Bereich tätigen Menschen zu gewährleisten“ zitiert nach Buhlmann, Rosemarie, Fearn, Anneliese, Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts (Berlin und München: Langenscheidt, 1991), 5. Aufl., 11.
- 4 Hier wird auf eine ausführliche Beschreibung der morphologischen und syntaktischen Besonderheiten verzichtet, da diese nicht zielführend für die vorliegende Arbeit ist. Dazu vgl. Kap. 4 und 5 in Buhlmann, Rosemarie, Fearn, Anneliese, Handbuch des Fachsprachenunterrichts (Berlin und München: Langenscheidt, 1991), 5. Aufl., 24ff.
- 5 Schatz, Heide, Fertigkeit Sprechen. Fernstudieneinheit 20 (München: Goethe Institut, 2006)
- 6 Idem, 16.
- 7 Zum anderen Pol befindet sich die Fertigkeit Sprechen als Mittelerfertigkeit: „Im Unterricht werden durch Sprechen häufig bestimmte Schülerleistungen überprüft, kontrolliert und korrigiert. In diesen Fällen steht das Sprachwissen im Vordergrund [...]. In diesen Fällen sprechen wir von Mittlerfähigkeit.“ Ibidem 7
- 8 Ibidem 8
- 9 Vgl. [http://www.goethe.de/ins/it/pro/pervoi/material/Werkzeugkiste\\_Sprechen.pdf](http://www.goethe.de/ins/it/pro/pervoi/material/Werkzeugkiste_Sprechen.pdf), S. 39, abgerufen am 11.12.2017
- 10 Solche Kombinationen zählen in der Phraseologie zu Kollokationen verstanden als Kombinationen aus einer Basis (idR Substantiv) und einem Kollokator (Verb oder Adjektiv) im Rahmen denen die Basis ihren semantische Autonomie bewahrt, den Kollokator dagegen seine semantische Identität nur in Verbindung mit der Basis bekommt. Vgl. dazu auch Hausmann, Franz Josef, Wortschatzlernen ist Kollokationslernen. Zum Lehren und Lernen französischer Wortverbindungen. In: Praxis des neusprachlichen Unterrichts 31, 1984, 395–406.
- 11 Vgl. dazu Hausmann, Franz Josef, Wortschatzlernen ist Kollokationslernen. Zum Lehren und Lernen französischer Wortverbindungen. In: Praxis des neusprachlichen Unterrichts 31, 1984, 395–406.
- 12 Schatz, Heide, Fertigkeit Sprechen. Fernstudieneinheit 20 (München: Goethe Institut, 2006), 20-21.

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Studies in  

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Literature



# Two Perspectives on Fictional Characters

Ioana Nan \*

Despite the major role played by the fictional agents in the economy of literary narratives, issues concerning “characterisation” have often been insufficiently exploited, sometimes because the trending emphasis was laid on other narratological issues such as point of view, or the text as a linguistic structural network, at other times because the conceptual framework of the traditional poetics of narrative was too limited to deal with certain pressing problems concerning fictional characters, such as their ontological status. The possible worlds semantic approach to literary studies and to fiction in particular has considerably enlarged this framework, allowing these issues to be reconsidered and for satisfactory explanations to be proposed concerning the fictional universe: its rules and limitations, the identity of its inhabitants and the way the readers are invited to relate to these.

character; characterisation; plot/fabula; reference; indexical theory; reader; possible world; minimal departure.

## Traditional narratological approaches to fictional characters

If we accept the theory of literary art as a mimetic form, character and plot,<sup>1</sup> the main elements of most narratives, cannot easily be thought of as separated, just as in real life we ourselves cannot be separated from our “operations through time.”<sup>2</sup> The distinction, however, was made for the sake of analysis as early as in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, where the issue was which of these elements takes precedence over the other. For the Greek philosopher, character is there for the sake of action, because, even if character reveals a series of qualities of the agents, it is by what they do that they reveal their thoughts: “[...] life consists in action, and its end is a mode of action, not a quality.”<sup>3</sup> Tragedy, accordingly, was supposed to imitate “men in action,”<sup>4</sup> “personal agents” endowed with character and thought – the “two natural sources from which actions spring.”<sup>5</sup> However, Aristotle believes that certain types of character are appropriate for different types of work: while

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tragedy and epic poetry should focus on the trials and tribulations of virtuous agents (“characters of a higher type”),<sup>6</sup> comedy should imitate persons that reveal some distortion or ugly feature of character, which is, however, ludicrous rather than painful or bad.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the eponymous heroes and heroines of the best-known tragedies of his time, some of whom are referred to in his own analysis (Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, Euripides’ *Medea*), seem to point to the fact that in these works characters were becoming just as important as the plots, that the action was there to reveal character, rather than the other way round. The same thing can be said for the eponymous heroes of the Shakespearean tragedies, such as *King Lear*, *Julius Caesar* or *Richard III*, or for the Romantic heroes in the lengthy poems of Byron (*Don Juan*, *Childe Harold*, *Manfred*) or Keats (*Endymion*, *Hyperion*). Many other examples can be found in the English literature of the following centuries as well, not only in drama or poetry, but also in novels, from Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Dickens’ *David Copperfield* to Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* and Oscar Wilde’s *Dorian Gray*.

So persuasive do these numerous instances appear to be that, in his *Art of Fiction* (1884), Henry James was questioning the seemingly established idea that there was a distinction to be made between “novels of character” and “novels of incident”, depending on which element was predominantly focused on, a difference novelists like himself could not earnestly approve of. According to James, the two cannot be separated: character is nothing but “the determination of incident”, just as incident is nothing but “the illustration of character.”<sup>8</sup> So, there is no novel that is not “of character”. Characters are the “movers” of action, the agents that cause events to happen, and in the course of these events they reveal the substance that they are made of. This is also a view embraced by the proponents of the semantic approach to fictionality. For instance, Mary-Laure Ryan argues that, while at the level of discourse, the goals, plans and moves are performed by “speakers”, on the semantic level these are performed by “characters”: “Narratives are supported by plots, and plots live from characters plotting against each other.”<sup>9</sup>

However, plots appear to be easier to understand and describe than characters. Readers usually have to make a continued effort of inference to piece all their gestures and actions together in order to fill in the gaps in their description. However, this kind of effort is not always required, dependent as it is on how “flat” or “round” the character may be. The distinction belongs to E.M. Forster and refers to the depth of characterisation of the fictional personae. Some of them, as those in comedy or satire, appear to embody to typify only one human trait, and are consequently perceived as hilariously mechanical. These are the



“leitmotif characters” on the surface of the story, usually depicted sketchily by a characteristic phrase or gesture.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, round characters are not so easily classified. They are complex and often contradictory, much like real people. In fact, the test of a round character is “whether it is capable of surprising in a convincing way.”<sup>11</sup>

Towards the end of the 1980s, summarising Jonathan Culler’s observations about the lack of attention paid by structuralism to analyses of characters in novels,<sup>12</sup> Michael J. Toolan was also noticing the paradoxical nature of the fact that, even if the character dimension of narrative is the one element that appeals most to the readers, who often tend to see themselves in these fictional individuals, identifying their own struggles with the characters’ tribulations and embracing the philosophies of the story protagonists as their own, serious narratological studies related to this area had been relatively few.<sup>13</sup> The fact is also mentioned by Leech and Short, who blame the low position of research about characterisation on the dominance, on the critical agenda of the 1980s, of all things connected to the point of view problem.

They also note that the critical studies carried out in drama character right up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century used to discuss these *dramatis personae* as if they were real people. When speculation on how many children Lady Macbeth might have had was put an end to by drama criticism in the sixties, focus on character also shifted towards the textual properties of the plays.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the fallacy of thinking of fictional characters as real people was replaced by its directly opposite but equally extreme view that characters are irrelevant to fiction criticism, because they are not people at all. At the root of this total rejection of the aspect of characterisation from literary criticism lies, according to Toolan, the strong suspicion aroused among structuralist analysts, popular at the time, by the seemingly insurmountable issue of the ontological status of the fictional individuals.<sup>15</sup>

For instance, if, as the structuralist ethos maintained, all there is to literature is discourse and the discourse consists of linguistic signs of a purely arbitrary nature, what readers actually do is willingly choose to misinterpret these signs as “referring to” or “fleshing out” fully-fledged, individuated human beings. To do that, according to the structuralist view, is to refuse to see the text as construct, to bypass its contrived nature, to access the textual domain by force. Consequently, structuralists usually thought of this kind of reading as triggered by prejudice of an ideological kind and did not deem it worthy of study as a phenomenon related to reading.<sup>16</sup> Character as an expression of some psychologically coherent

individuality did not amount to more than a myth<sup>17</sup> in the eyes of the proponents of the structuralist approach to literary studies.

On the other hand, structuralists also saw themselves as the advocates of a changed perspective on literature. By focusing on establishing or outlining relations and networks rather than on describing and interpreting textual data from a single vantage point, structuralist critics were signalling a shift in perspective, from outside observation to inside participation. Their philosophy sought to emphasise the ever-changing nature of knowledge and reality; that explains why they could not approve of a static way of approaching literary character, a point of view they relegated to a previous age. Consequently, characters came to be considered as nothing more than “nodes in the verbal structure” of the work, with a “relatively precarious identity”<sup>18</sup> that shifted just as the works themselves, especially the modernist and postmodernist ones, registered numerous shifts in setting, perspective and voice.

The modernist “new novels” of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century especially, with their emphasis on faceless, “pronominal” characters<sup>19</sup>, seem to situate themselves ages away from the well-defined, culturally and historically located, value-laden fictional persons of the previous century’s literary works. By focusing on the unavoidable anonymity of their protagonists, these novels actually expose and undermine our very expectations of being able to “understand” or “psychoanalyse” the traditional fictional heroes.<sup>20</sup> In fact, their “heroic” nature is also undermined as they cease to become typical or easy to classify. Their individual identity and moral values become too complex to grasp at once, making the act of reading itself more difficult, requiring a previously unnecessary effort of engagement with the text as a multilevel whole.

The existence of fictional characters was alternatively relegated to the mental realm. According to this position, the linguistic signs of the page, even if they do not directly refer to real entities, serve to conjure a representation of them in the minds of the readers or viewers. The fact that this representation is as repetitive and as varied as the minds that are stimulated to generate it may serve as evidence that such is the case. At the same time, as H. Porter-Abbott points out, we may also hypothesise that fictional characters do have reference, namely the one given them by the author in the process of creation. Does not the author “refer”, at such times, to a character already in some sort of “existence” in his/her mind, sometimes so lively that they can identify with this persona? For instance, while writing about *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert felt one with his heroine: “Madame Bovary, that’s me”.<sup>21</sup> However it may be, this kind of mental referencing,

common to both readers and authors of fiction, may also serve as an argument for a semantic theory of fiction postulating possible worlds.

According to Ricoeur, referring, absolutely speaking, to something “real” seems to be reserved only for historians, in the sense that the events and persons about which they speak were observable to witnesses in the past. By comparison, “the characters of the novelist are themselves quite simply ‘unreal’; ‘unreal’, too, is the experience described by fiction. Between the ‘reality of the past’ and the ‘unreality of fiction’, the dissymmetry is total”.<sup>22</sup>

Having given rise to so much speculation, the ontology of fictional characters came to be considered “at least a vexed issue”<sup>23</sup> probably best solved, according to H. Porter Abbott, by thinking about fictional characters - and of the implied author, too - as constructions of real persons in the minds of the readers. Moreover, this kind of solution may also provide an answer to the same question regarding characters of non-fictional narratives, too. If we agree that the process of narrativisation might actually transform reality and real people into constructed characters, we should also accept to think about all kinds of characters, fictional or non-fictional, as mental constructs. Then we may also be able to argue that the images of real people in narrative appear too clear and crisp for us to allow ourselves to mistake these characters for actual people. All characters, fictional and non-fictional alike, will inevitably be flattened, or typified, to some degree, in the process of narrating.<sup>24</sup>

This, on the other hand, does not contradict the natural way in which we think about real people. There is no type-free way to describe them to ourselves and to others. All representation of the human element involves a process of limitation and selection, whether this is done consciously or not. If this is so, narrative may not be, after all, an instrument refined enough to capture the high-level of intricacy involved in everything human. As Huxley points out in one of his novels, the method by which one can tell reality and fiction apart is the fact that, while fiction makes too much sense, reality never does. While fiction has unity and style, the facts of raw existence possess neither.<sup>25</sup> Typifying the characters for the sake of rendering them graspable and exemplary, in this case, may be the best that narrative can do and its only possible purpose.<sup>26</sup>

## Possible world approaches to fictional entities

The fact remains - and this is one of the strongest critiques against the structuralist view of fictional discourse - that we could not make sense of fiction, and of fictional characters, unless it were by comparing and contrasting them to actual states of affairs. This does not mean, however, that we need to subscribe

to the mimetic doctrine which customarily reads fictional characters as if they were real. This sort of operation, traditional as it may be, reduces the fictional universe to one single world – that of actual human experience – and gives rise to confusion as to where reality stops and fiction begins, and vice-versa. This is where a possible world semantic approach to fictionality may come in useful. On the one hand, it allows us to keep the two domains quite separate, but on the other hand, it is open to a bilateral, two-way exchange between fiction and reality: while we are setting up imaginary worlds by drawing on the actual encyclopaedia, we may also draw on fictional constructs to understand reality better.<sup>27</sup>

It is Lewis' indexical theory<sup>28</sup> that explains the fact that, for readers of fiction, the possible world of the text seems to replace, if only temporarily, the actual one. These two epistemological attitudes experienced simultaneously lead to the ontological discrepancy between what we come to know about literary characters and the way in which we relate to them as living, breathing, fully-fledged individuals. A pioneer in the field of possible world semantics, Lewis begins his article on truth in fiction by explaining the nature of fictional characters. The first important note he makes is that any statement we wish to make about the characters of fiction must be introduced – even if only tacitly - by an intensional operator (“in fiction...”) meant to change the sense of any sentence following, from the factual to the fictional.

Umberto Eco also believes that the theory of possible worlds (and, more specifically, the process of comparing worlds) is a significant contribution to the theory of fiction for several reasons. First, starting from our knowledge of the actual world, we are able to evaluate individuals and properties in narrative worlds of imagination, which allows us to understand differences such as those between literary genres, or the identity of characters as compared to that of real individuals. Then we can also learn to become better (if not model) readers by understanding how our forecasts affect the world of the fabula<sup>29</sup> (and vice versa) and by adjusting our interpretation of a text. In addition, misreadings or deliberately false readings can sometimes be debunked by resorting to the strict ontology of the fictional world.

According to the reader-oriented theory advanced by Eco, any text is a metatext: it requires two types of successive reading, beginning with a naïve and trustful one and using this kind of reading to build a second, critical interpretation. This second level of reading will reveal the metatextual nature of a text by allowing access to the threefold layer of the story: that of its characters, that of the presumptuous reader himself/herself, and that of the critical reader (potentially the same as that of the text itself).<sup>30</sup>

For Eco, some of the fictional worlds set up by the text are not only doxastic worlds (possible worlds set up by characters' beliefs)<sup>31</sup>, but sometimes embedded systems of such worlds, where individuals have different, often contradictory propositional attitudes, or ideologies. To decide on their compatibility, he suggests we need to distinguish between logical and fictional necessity, where the latter is a principle of individuation (an S-necessary property, by which we identify one character as the same character throughout the fabula).<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the problem of accessibility between worlds might show the fundamental incommunicability between the worlds of fiction and the actual world, to the apparent detriment of the individuals in the "handicapped worlds" of fiction.<sup>33</sup> However, soon enough we may also come to understand that we think of our world, of its structure and mechanisms, in exactly the same way as fictional characters do about theirs, and that we can take some of them as "living" models of our own condition. Besides, this is part of the therapeutic function of reading and recounting narratives, comparable to that of myths:<sup>34</sup> by reading fiction we release the feeling of anxiety we seem to have whenever we try to utter truths about the real world.<sup>35</sup> This is perhaps because, by being projected as a small, already overfurnished world,<sup>36</sup> unlike the real world, the world of fiction seems to enjoy the privilege of offering the comfort and security of immutable truths.<sup>37</sup>

That may also be why very often, in the absence of enough relevant hints as to the nature of the world of the text, we find ourselves reading many kinds of narrative such as newspaper articles, diaries or even historiographical accounts as if they were fiction, before we stop to consider whether we have enough clues to go by in this direction, or whether we should change our mind and stick to the actual world: "Often we do not consciously propose to enter a fictional world: we just find ourselves in it, and at some point we realise it and we decide that what is happening to us is a dream."<sup>38</sup>

This kind of naïve, semi-conscious reading may sometimes cause either the fallacious import of fictional characters and events into our real encyclopedia (as a result of which, for instance, many readers will wish to visit London's 221 Baker Street), or the migration of certain well-known characters to other texts. Narrative migration of this sort is of special interest to Eco not least because he thinks of the "liberation" of the characters from their respective stories as the explanation for the "cult" phenomenon which seems to guarantee these fictional individuals "the right of citizenship in the real world,"<sup>39</sup> whether they come from movies or from books. In addition to that, what gives such works "cult" status is the fact that the less structured and the more prone to fragmentation they are, the more room they leave for adventurous inferential walks: "In order to become

a Sacred Woodland, a forest must be as wild as the Druidic woods, not as ordered as a French park.”<sup>40</sup> So, while these forests should not necessarily be pleasing to the eye, they can only become sacred to the degree to which their structural unpredictability reflects that of life itself.

The issue of accessibility between the real and the fictional worlds has enjoyed a significant amount of attention. For instance, according to Marie-Laure Ryan, interpreting fiction is hardly possible without applying the principle of “minimal departure”, and this is especially true in the case of historical fiction. This fundamental law of reading fiction states that we reconstrue the world of a text as conforming as much as possible to the way we represent the actual world to ourselves. All we know about our reality we will project on these fictional worlds, making only the adjustment the text dictates we should.<sup>41</sup>

Without this fundamental rule of fictionality, we could not establish the transworld identity linking the individuals in the textual actual world with their counterparts in the actual world, as in the case of historical fiction. Moreover, despite the incompleteness of the discursive representation of the fictional worlds, by applying this principle to their interpretation of fiction, readers can fill in the information gaps with their own “ghost chapters,”<sup>42</sup> without considering the worlds themselves as ontologically defective in any way.

On the other hand, the principle of minimal departure may depend too much on what Eco called the reader’s encyclopedia, and by so doing it appears to contradict the classic theory of intertextuality as supported by T.S. Eliot and the French Structuralism and as outlined by the divergent positions of Thomas Pavel and Lubomir Doležel.<sup>43</sup> Unlike them, Marie-Laure Ryan speaks for the complementarity and mutual reliance of the two functions on each other. On the one hand, minimal departure assumes the existence of a personal experience which has been culturally mediated (thus, textually mediated) to yield knowledge about the real world. To this effect, as Eco’s own case studies indicate, we make use of fictional and non-fictional texts alike. Just as we interpret a fictional text by bringing its world closer to ours, we also fill in the information gaps about our system of reality by trusting the information we get from fictional works. Thus, minimal departure allows as frame of reference not only the actual world of unmediated experience, but also other textual universes as semiotically mediated forms of experience. Moreover, the selection of several such textual universes as frames of reference makes it possible for characters to migrate from one fictional world to another.<sup>44</sup>

Supported by the discursive structure, the fabula establishes the actual possible world of the fictional text. Besides its own course of events, this world

also comprises the possible world of the characters, set up by their propositional attitudes (what they wish, desire or believe to be the case). Eventually, these worlds will be either proved or disproved by the course of action of the fabula.<sup>45</sup> To establish accessibility relations between the world of reference and the world of the fabula, readers have different strategic options. They can look for similarities between every state of affair of the fabula and the world of reference, or they can compare the entire world of the fabula with different worlds of reference.<sup>46</sup> If literary genres are taken into account, the world of the fabula might itself indicate an appropriate world of reference, as is the case with historical novels.

Nevertheless, even if the world of the fabula is accessible to the world of reference, this relation is not symmetrical. Even if we do sometimes use a world of fiction to make judgements about our own, as for example when we find reality stranger, less systematic, less rational and less “real” than fiction, the fact remains that the direction of our speculation most often leads from our world to the world of a novel, rather than the reverse, as it is most clear in the case of the aesthetics of realism.<sup>47</sup>

There seems to be a connection between the referential density of the text and the density of the fabula. The “thicker” the fabula is in relation to the text dimension, the more alert the narrative pace and the more accelerated the dramatic rhythm. Thus, Thomas Pavel notices a change in the dramatic pace of narratives over time, to the effect that in the case of modernist narratives, for instance, the narrative flow seems to slow down considerably.<sup>48</sup> The number of characters is also relevant to the density of the projected world, since their actions contribute to the density of the fabula. If we consider the characters that share the same narrative moves as forming what Pavel calls “dramatic domains,”<sup>49</sup> the more numerous these domains are, the more populated the fictional world will be. These dramatic domains need not be stable, either. Unlike the novels of previous centuries, the realist novel, for example, orchestrates large numbers of minor characters who, apart from sharing in the dramatic domain of a major character, can move more flexibly between several such domains, following their own initiative.

## Conclusion

The borderlines dividing fiction and nonfiction are not necessarily set from the start. They can shift over time, before the two domains become structured and ossified. Even if today we may see them as totally separated on the grounds of truth claims (or belief versus make-believe, as Currie<sup>50</sup> would put it), real-life events thus transferred to the realm of fiction could, in the past, enhance their



value as exemplary truths. An instance of this kind of transfer could be that of a real-life event to the domain of legend or myth. Whenever we read the *Iliad*, or historical fictions in general, we tend to forget that the characters (at least the main ones) are not fictional, so the first readers of such epics must have had a different “sense of reference”<sup>51</sup> regarding these characters and events. In such cases, fictionalization is the result of the loss of this referential connection between the elements that become fictional entities and events, and their real-life equivalents.

However, once the borderline has been set, the division between what is actual and what is fictional holds, despite the cases in which, for example, the names of fictional entities are identical to the names of actual persons, as in historical narratives. Even if characters such as Napoleon and Socrates may populate a vast number of fictional worlds, their essential properties, which may render them recognisable at all these worlds as identical to the actual historical figures, are always complemented by make-believe properties which disengage them from actuality to different degrees, depending on the literary genre and the trending literary movement. To paraphrase Ricoeur’s expression, fictional characters are always “dissymmetrical” to their actual historical counterparts.

For all its undeniable analytical insight, traditional narratological views of character have operated within frameworks too limited to employ concepts such as the doxastic worlds of literary-fictional entities. The possible world approach has been able to deepen the perspective on fictional characters by making room for their ontology. In the universe set up by any literary-fictional text, there are no minor, or flat, characters any longer – just citizens of the actual textual world without whom that universe could have been a different one.

### Notes

- 1 The term “plot” is a vexed term in English, commonly used, however, to mean “story”, as opposed to the European tradition in which it refers to the discursive order in which the events of the story are arranged (H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 194). Eco, for instance, retains the Formalist terminology in distinguishing between *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot or discourse) (Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 27). That is why, when discussing Eco’s views later in the article, we will also use the term “fabula” to mean “plot” or “story”.
- 2 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 123.
- 3 Aristotle, *Poetics*, transl. by S. H. Butcher, <http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/poetics.html>, 5.
- 4 *Id.*, 2.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 4.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 4.



- 8 Henry James, "The Art of Fiction", <https://public.wsu.edu/~campbelld/amlit/artfiction.html>, no page number.
- 9 Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 7.
- 10 It does not mean that flat characters cannot sometimes extend into round ones when the action requires it. E.M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), 107. <https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.509170/2015.509170.Aspects-Of#page/n1/mode/2up>
- 11 Id., 121.
- 12 Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1975), 269.
- 13 Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative. A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 91.
- 14 Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short, *Style in Fiction. A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose* (London, New York: Pearson Education Limited, 2007), 296.
- 15 Michael J. Toolan, *Narrative. A Critical Linguistic Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), 90.
- 16 Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics* (London and New York: Routledge, 1975), 269.
- 17 Id., 269.
- 18 Ibid., 270.
- 19 Ibid., 270.
- 20 Ibid., 270.
- 21 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 127-128.
- 22 Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 157.
- 23 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 128.
- 24 Id., 129.
- 25 Aldous Huxley, *The Genius and the Goddess* (London: Vintage, 1955), 7.
- 26 H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 129-130.
- 27 Lubomir Doležel, *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 10-11.
- 28 David K. Lewis, *Counterfactuals*. (Oxford, UK and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1973), 86.
- 29 Eco retains the Formalist distinction between *fabula* (story) and *sjuzet* (plot or discourse). Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 27.
- 30 Id., 205.
- 31 Ibid., 220.
- 32 Ibid., 237.
- 33 Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 74.
- 34 See also Toma Pavel, *Lumi ficționale* (București: Editura Minerva, 1992), 88-93.
- 35 Umberto Eco, *Șase plimbări prin pădurea narativă* (Constanța: Pontica, 1997), 114.
- 36 Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 67; Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 218.

- 37 Umberto Eco, *Şase plimbări prin pădurea narativă* (Constanța: Pontica, 1997), 119.
- 38 “Adesea nu ne decidem să intrăm într-o lume ficțională: ne găsim înlăuntrul ei, iar la un moment dat ne dăm seama și hotărâm că ceea ce ni se întâmplă e un vis” (our transl.). Umberto Eco, *Şase plimbări prin pădurea narativă* (Constanța: Pontica, 1997), 163.
- 39 Id., 165, 166.
- 40 “O pădure, ca să devină un Codru Sacru, trebuie să fie încălcată precum pădurile Druizilor, și nu ordonată ca un parc franțuzesc” (our transl.). Ibid., 168.
- 41 Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 51.
- 42 Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 214. However, not all fictional genres allow the ready application of minimal departure, so existential propositions should be restricted to those that prevent the textual reference world from being invaded by undesirable entities (Marie-Laure Ryan, *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 53).
- 43 Toma Pavel, *Lumi ficționale* (București: Editura Minerva, 1992), 193; Lubomir Doležel, *Heterocosmica. Fiction and Possible Worlds* (Baltimore, London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 200. Eco himself favours the idea of intertextuality by virtue of his faith in a Model Reader whose inferential competence includes the ability to manipulate an “intertextual encyclopedia” without writing in ghost chapters that are not supported by the text (Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 217).
- 44 Ryan’s explanation of fictional individuals’ migration as an effect of minimal departure complementary to intertextuality corrects and completes Eco’s view of the same phenomenon. While Eco sees it more as the undesirable effect of naïve reading practices (Umberto Eco, *Şase plimbări prin pădurea narativă* (Constanța: Pontica, 1997), 165), Ryan’s more nuanced perspective redeems it as a natural interpretive phenomenon.
- 45 Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979), 235-236.
- 46 Id., 239.
- 47 Ibid., 241-242.
- 48 Toma Pavel, *Lumi ficționale* (București: Editura Minerva, 1992), 169-170.
- 49 Id., 170.
- 50 Gregory Currie, *The Nature of Fiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 18.
- 51 Ibid., 132.

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# Traduire la poésie de Boris Vian

Translating the Poetry of Boris Vian

*Letiția Ilea* \*

This study analyzes the general and particular difficulties of translating the poetry of Boris Vian in Romanian.

availability of being translated; sonnet; playful; inventive lexicality.

DANS CE QUI SUIT, NOUS ALLONS INDIQUER QUELQUES DIFFICULTÉS QUE POSE LA traduction de la poésie de Boris Vian en général et en particulier en roumain, examinant en grandes lignes chaque recueil de l'auteur.

Outre les problèmes généraux de la traduction de la poésie, il y a des difficultés spécifiques lorsqu'on passe du français au roumain, bien que les deux langues soient apparentées. En ce qui concerne la traduction du dernier recueil de Boris Vian, *Je voudrais pas crever*, il y a des problèmes d'ordre général qui se posent, liés à l'évolution différente du français et du roumain au fil des siècles et aux registres de langue que chacune de ces deux langues utilisent.

À la différence du français, dont le vocabulaire est organisé en trois strates (langue littéraire ou standard, langue familière et argot), le roumain ne possède pas toujours de niveau intermédiaire entre la langue standard et l'argot. Cela oblige les traducteurs à une traduction trop marquée de la langue familière que Vian utilise dans ses poèmes, chose évidente dès la traduction du titre du recueil, où « crever » est rendu par l'argotique « a mierli ».

Cette différence fondamentale du point de vue du vocabulaire entre les deux langues est expliquée par Raluca Bran-Pierrot, qui préface la version roumaine des poèmes de Vian :

Le développement de ce niveau intermédiaire en français s'explique par un fait historique et sociologique : comme les normes de la langue littéraire ont été fixées

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très tôt, au XVII<sup>e</sup>-ème siècle, le français écrit s'est vu interdire toute évolution possible. Il revenait alors au français de prendre le relais et de poursuivre une évolution aussi naturelle qu'enrichissante, chose qu'il continue encore de faire. C'est l'inverse qui s'est produit en roumain – les normes de la langue littéraire ont été établies très tard, au XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, et l'existence de doublets d'accentuation et de mots qui peuvent offrir plusieurs modèles de flexion montre que ce processus est encore en cours.<sup>1</sup>

Cela représente un obstacle majeur à la traduction des poèmes de Vian vers le roumain, que les deux traductrices, Linda Maria Baros et Georgiana Banu, ont partiellement dépassé.

Les poèmes de Vian contiennent beaucoup de calembours et d'autres jeux de mots. Jacqueline Henry, auteur de l'ouvrage *La traduction des jeux de mots* (2003) observe que les particularités des langues ont une influence sur les choix que le traducteur opère et cite dans ce sens Charles Camproux, qui précise, au sujet du lexique français :

D'autres traits du lexique français sont la faiblesse de la motivation entre signifiant et signifié /.../, l'abondance des homonymes, la faiblesse de l'autonomie du mot (d'où grandes possibilités de calembours et jeux de mots). Ces traits rendent le lexique du français beaucoup plus solidaire de la syntaxe et de la structure générale de la langue que n'importe quel autre lexique des langues romanes.<sup>2</sup>

Ce sont des traits que le roumain possède aussi, mais dans un moindre degré. Cela rend difficile la traduction du français vers le roumain d'une poésie qui abonde en jeux de mots. À ce sujet, Jacqueline Henry, qui établit dans son livre mentionné ci-dessus une typologie du calembour, mentionne encore la spécificité du français lorsqu'il s'agit de transférer cette figure vers une autre langue :

les langues comme le français ou l'anglais, dans lesquelles il n'y a pas de correspondance fixe entre l'orthographe et la phonétique /.../ se prêtent bien à des jeux qui exploitent cette variabilité, comme les calembours homophoniques et paronymiques. En revanche, les langues dont le système orthographique est plus simple et plus systématique et dans lesquelles « on écrit comme ça se prononce », comme l'italien ou l'allemand, tendent à être plus riches en termes polysémiques ou homonymiques, et donc à mieux se prêter aux calembours de ces deux types. Il est certain qu'en matière de traduction des jeux de mots, il est difficile de passer outre ces caractéristiques, sous peine de produire des résultats forcés.<sup>3</sup>

Cette observation s'applique très bien à la traduction de la poésie de Boris Vian vers le roumain, langue à orthographe phonétique. On pourrait se demander alors si la traduction d'une poésie aussi truffée de jeux de mots ne serait pas une entreprise vouée au hasard. Une possible solution nous est offerte par Umberto Eco, auteur, entre autres, de la traduction des *Exercices de style* de Queneau (jugés intraduisibles) vers l'italien : « il ne s'agissait pas de traduire, tout au moins au sens courant du terme, mais de comprendre les règles du jeu que Queneau s'était données, puis de jouer la même partie dans une autre langue »<sup>4</sup>. En d'autres mots, dans le cas des poèmes de Vian, un bon traducteur devrait juger de l'intention avec laquelle Vian avait usé de tel ou tel jeu de mots et de son effet sur le lecteur, essayant ensuite de reproduire ceux-ci dans la langue-cible.

Pourtant, la destinée de l'œuvre poétique de Vian en roumain est, à notre avis, heureuse. Le roumain a une grande richesse du vocabulaire et une grande perméabilité aux néologismes, dont Vian use assez fréquemment. De même, le langage enfantin souvent utilisé par le poète peut aisément trouver un correspondant en roumain, riche en possibilités de ce point de vue.

En ce qui suit, nous allons examiner les recueils de Vian du point de vue de leur traduisibilité, par ordre chronologique, tels qu'ils ont été organisés dans le cinquième tome de ses *Œuvres*, auquel nous allons nous référer constamment.

Le premier recueil de poèmes composé par Vian, les *Cent sonnets*, défie l'éventuel traducteur premièrement par son titre calemboursque : *cent sonnets/sansonnets*. *Sansonnets* est d'ailleurs le titre du troisième cycle de ce recueil. En roumain, un pareil calembour n'existe pas, ce pourquoi ce titre peut difficilement être traduit. On est obligé de garder en traduction le mot « sonnet », puisqu'il renvoie au contenu du recueil, mais on ne dispose d'aucun nom d'oiseau en roumain qui ait dans sa composition ce vocable.

Une autre difficulté que poserait la traduction de ce recueil est liée à la forme fixe du sonnet. Vian respecte parfaitement les exigences formelles de cette espèce poétique ; pour un traducteur qui ne serait en même temps poète il serait très difficile de transposer un tel poème dans la langue-cible. De notre propre expérience, nous savons qu'il est très difficile de garder la rime et le rythme de l'original sans en sacrifier le sens. Vian utilise en général dans ses vers l'alexandrin, l'octosyllabe et le décasyllabe, avec quelques exceptions. La rime de ses sonnets suit le modèle consacré abbaabbaccddcc ou abbaabbaccdeed. Ces caractéristiques du vers se perdraient à coup sûr dans une éventuelle traduction, sauf si, nous le répétons, le traducteur serait un poète de la même taille que Vian.

En dehors des sonnets, ce recueil contient aussi six ballades, composées dans le plus strict respect des exigences formelles du genre : trois huitains (rimes ababbcbc) qui se terminent par un vers-refrain et un envoi dédié à un « prince » qui reprend les rimes bcbc. Dans la poésie française, ce genre est déjà représenté par François Villon, tandis que dans la poésie roumaine ce genre n'est pas si populaire et ne respecte pas le modèle français. Lorsqu'on lit une ballade qui se soumet aux exigences du genre en français, il y a toujours une allusion intertextuelle, un clin d'œil, aux ballades de Villon. En traduction roumaine, cela se perd.

Ce recueil de Vian se caractérise, d'une part, par l'exploitation de thèmes biographiques, et d'autre part par une approche ludique des possibilités que le langage offre au poète. Vian use souvent du calembour, même dans les titres (« Où chante le coq tôt », « Dans l'écu » etc.), ce qui pose un problème presque insurmontable pour le traducteur. Un sonnet comme « Poissons » qui cite plusieurs espèces de poissons sous forme de calembour est quasi intraduisible :

Le brochet, craignant avant tout le relieur  
 La carpe, célébrée par Horace ; oublieur,  
 Le rémora, cherchant un mé problématique  
 Et l'avare gardon, maquereau l'Écossais...  
 Mais au pisciculteur géomètre français  
 Je conseille de cultiver la raie torique.<sup>5</sup>

L'ambiguïté sémantique qui existe dans le poème *Art poétique* :

Choisissez votre vers comme fait le pêcheur<sup>6</sup>

ne peut pas être restituée en traduction telle qu'elle, puisqu'en roumain le mot « vers » ne signifie pas en même temps « appât utilisé par les pêcheurs ». Une possible solution, dans ce cas, serait de traduire « vers » par « viersul », qui pourrait renvoyer au mot roumain « vierme ».

Un autre obstacle à la traduction est représenté par les orthographes fantaisistes, du genre « pohêtes ». Pour une traduction en roumain d'un tel mot, il faut tenir compte du contexte et de l'intention de Vian. Ce mot apparaît dans le sonnet *Apport au prince*, et est utilisé ironiquement à l'adresse de Paul Fort, élu « prince des poètes » en 1912. Dans ce cas, la traduction devrait obligatoirement comporter une note explicative sur Paul Fort. Nous suggérons comme possible traduction le roumain « poetastru ».

Le cycle *Détente* du même recueil contient treize sonnets qui finissent chacun par un jeu de mots sur le terme « pédéraste » :

Sa copine occupée d'Eraste...<sup>7</sup>

Avalant centipède et rostre<sup>8</sup>

De vouloir faire un troupiér d'Érasme,<sup>9</sup>

etc., inventions ludiques qui perdraient beaucoup si elles étaient traduites.

Une autre difficulté de la traduction de ce recueil est constituée par les mots familiers que Vian utilise comme titres de ses sonnets : *Le Ballot*, *Bizuth*, etc.

Il y a aussi, dans ce recueil, des sonnets qui posent des problèmes supplémentaires de traduction. Citons *Terres absconses* :

Il y a quelques jours, j'ai fait un rêve affreux

J'étais un Vrai poète, et sur un papier jaune

J'écrivais en Vrais Vers un morceau long d'une aune

Avec de l'encre rose...et voici cinq d'entre eux

Galbe au tréfonds des sources blêmes...Col des preux

Contemnant rupicole en l'ogive du faune aigre,

Vers le néant du geste, ainsi des aunes force dardée...

Calmons les matins ténébreux...

En moi sourd le lyripipion des ontogones !...<sup>10</sup>.

Les cinq vers en cause peuvent facilement déclencher la perplexité d'un lecteur non habitué à l'écriture de Vian. Pour les traduire, il faut d'abord identifier l'intention de Vian : celle de ridiculiser la poésie précieuse et absconse. Bien sûr, le traducteur devra inventer des mots aux sonorités qui ressemblent à celle de l'original, pour créer des vers aussi incompréhensibles en roumain qu'en français.

De même, le traducteur devrait fournir des références socio-culturelles, soit en notes, soit dans une préface, par exemple pour le cycle *Zazous*. « *Zazous* » était le nom attribué pendant l'époque de l'occupation aux « jeunes gens qui, par anticonformisme et farouche liberté de penser, affichaient ostensiblement leurs intérêts propres et vitaux, bien éloignés des hostilités en cours : le jazz, les surprises-parties et la pratique des canulars »<sup>11</sup>. Même chose pour des poèmes qui citent des personnalités de l'époque, comme par exemple le sonnet *Amende honorable*, qui fait mention de plusieurs vedettes de cinéma contemporaines de l'auteur.

Dans l'ensemble de l'œuvre poétique de Vian, le recueil *Cent sonnets* est, à notre avis, le plus difficile à traduire. Malheureusement, nous n'avons pu consulter la seule traduction de ce recueil qui existe, en allemand, parue en 1989, faute d'une connaissance suffisante de cette langue.

Qu'en est-il de *Barnum's Digest*, le deuxième recueil de Vian ?

Commençons par son titre, qui est un croisement entre les noms de deux références américaines, Phineas Taylor Barnum, inventeur d'un nouveau type de cirque, et le magazine *Reader's Digest*. Nous suggérons comme possible traduction en roumain « Barnum în rezumat », accompagnant bien sûr cette traduction d'une ample note qui explique les deux références.

Un grand défi concernant la traduction de ce recueil est représenté par les titres. Les dix poèmes de ce recueil ont chacun un titre qui commence par la préposition « à » : *À nageoires*, *À double entrée*, *À collier*, *À griffes*, *À la colle*, *À queue alternative*, *À privatif*, *À poil*, *À lard*, *À cornes*. La préposition roumaine « cu » peut être utilisée dans la majorité des cas, mais pas dans tous. Une bonne traduction de ces titres devrait refléter leur unité formelle qui existe en français.

Il y a une certaine continuité entre *Barnum's Digest* et le recueil précédent, par l'usage des jeux de mots et des néologismes, anglicismes et hispanismes, autant des difficultés pour l'éventuel traducteur. Citons, par exemple les mots espagnols « barrera » et « toro » que Vian utilise dans *À cornes* (que le traducteur est obligé de garder tels quels), mais aussi les inventions à sonorité espagnole, comme « banderiller », qui peuvent mettre à l'épreuve l'éventuel traducteur.

De même, la capacité d'invention lexicale de Vian semble illimitée. Quelle solution choisir pour traduire de pareils vers ?

Dans certaines baraques de foire  
Remplies d'alguaizils péruviens  
Avec de grands coutelas et plein d'os de mort dans les oreilles  
On rencontre, à côté des barbançons velus  
Des cournaflûchesrebondisseurs et des tortillâtres de Malte.<sup>12</sup>

Ces vers ont un lien avec le type de cirque promu par Barnum, avec des monstres. Le traducteur devrait avoir cela en vue et aussi tenir compte de la sonorité des « monstres lexicaux » français.

Vian utilise dans ce recueil aussi des orthographes fantaisistes (par exemple « prophesseurs de physique »), que le traducteur devrait reproduire.

Excepté les difficultés citées ci-dessus, ce recueil ne pose pas de problèmes particuliers et pourrait trouver un traducteur et un éditeur roumains. La traduction devrait bien sûr être accompagnée des dessins de l'édition originale (rappelons que par ce recueil Vian s'était proposé d'illustrer les dessins de Jean Boulet). Pour le moment, ce recueil a été traduit en espagnol.



Pour conclure sur ce recueil, disons qu'il y a une parfaite unité thématique entre le titre, les dessins et les vers de Vian, qu'une éventuelle traduction roumaine devrait restituer dans son entier.

Vian a écrit les poèmes de *Cantilène en gelée* (son troisième recueil) entre 1946-1949. La première édition, parue chez Rougerie, était illustrée par une jeune artiste, Christiane Alanore. Ce recueil non plus n'a pas encore été traduit chez nous.

Le titre en est, selon Gilbert Pestureau, qui signe la préface de ce recueil dans le tome V des *Œuvres* de Vian, un « accouplement du genre parapluie et machine à coudre »<sup>13</sup>. Le même critique note la préférence de Vian pour les formes anciennes, ballade, sonnet, cantate, desquelles fait partie la cantilène aussi. Si on traduisait ce titre en roumain, il y aurait des nuances qui se perdrait inévitablement. Le titre français est un nouveau clin d'œil à la littérature française du Moyen Âge (*Cantilène de Sainte Eulalie*), tandis qu'un tel genre existe dans la littérature roumaine beaucoup plus tard (chez Tudor Arghezi et Dan Botta, par exemple). De plus, le terme « gelée » a en français deux sens, selon le Trésor de la Langue française informatisé : 1. « Abaissement de la température au-dessous du degré zéro qui provoque la congélation de l'eau. » 2. « Suc de substance animale qui a pris, en se refroidissant, une consistance gélatineuse », et par analogie, « Jus de fruits cuits avec du sucre qui prend, en se refroidissant, la consistance de la gelée de viande. ». En roumain, le terme « jeleu » correspond au second sens de « gelée ». Donc, en traduisant par « Cantilene în jeleu », on procéderait à une restreinte du sens.

Tous les poèmes de ce recueil sont dédiés, à l'exception du dernier. Même dans les dédicaces, Vian aime jouer sur les mots. Ainsi, le poème *Qu'y a-t-il ?* est dédié à « Jacques Pré-vence », nom-valise pour Prévert, qui avait habité à Saint-Paul-de-Vence, dans les Alpes Maritimes. Le poème *Chatterie* est dédié « Aux Scorpions », nom sous lequel se cachent les patrons des Éditions du Scorpion. Vian dédie aussi deux poèmes de ce recueil à son ami Raymond Queneau, auteur de l'autobiographie en vers *Chêne et chien*. Une des dédicaces est « À Raymond-le-Chien », l'autre « À Raymond-le-Chêne ». Ces exemples confirment une fois de plus le fait qu'un traducteur exigeant par rapport à soi-même doit effectuer un travail non négligeable de documentation, préalable à la traduction proprement dite.

Dans ce recueil Vian se rapporte de nouveau parodiquement et de manière irrévérencieuse à la poésie d'avant lui. Par exemple, le poème *Chanson*, composé de deux couplets identiques, est dédié à Émile Verhaeren, auteur du recueil *Les Villes tentaculaires* :

Les villes tentaculai-ai-reu  
Les villes tenthaculai-reu  
Les villes tantan  
Les villes tata  
Les villes cucu  
Les villes tantakulè-è-reu  
Les villes thantackulair<sup>14</sup>.

La tâche du traducteur en roumain de ce poème est facilitée par le fait que le roumain « tentacular » est un néologisme emprunté du français. En tout cas, l'éventuel traducteur doit faire preuve d'inventivité lexicale.

Le poème *Art poétique*, dédié « À victorugo », qui ne comporte que trois vers, est une nouvelle manière de se moquer de la poésie classique, jouant sur la polysémie du mot « coup » :

Il est évident que le poète écrit  
Sous le coup de l'inspiration

Mais il y a des gens à qui les coups ne font rien<sup>15</sup>.

Pourtant, ce poème est parfaitement traduisible en roumain (« E evident că atunci când scrie/ Poetul e lovit de inspirație/ Există însă oameni pe care loviturile nu-i ating deloc »).

Dans ce recueil aussi, Vian use d'altérations phonétiques à caractère ludique, qui doivent figurer en traduction aussi ; par exemple, dans le second poème dédié à Queneau, *La vraie rigolade*, qui fait allusion au roman de celui-ci *Zazie dans le métro*, dont Vian pastiche aussi l'écriture :

Les places tamponnées sette et uitte  
Sont réservottées aux squelettes  
Et aux lépreux et aux jésuites  
Par ordre de prioritette.<sup>16</sup>

En préfaçant *Cantilènes en gelée*, Gilbert Pestureau dit :

Ce bref recueil dont l'art fantaisiste mais aussi « térébrant » informe une vision aussi allègre que terrifiante de la vie – joie de vivre, angoisse et violence récurrentes, présence foudroyante de la mort – est fort varié dans l'inspiration comme dans la forme. Les associations et les trouvailles phonétiques et verbales révèlent d'emblée la puissance des

mots ; les comparaisons et les métaphores frappent par leur originalité, qu'elles soient burlesques ou subtilement poétiques. /.../ Les titres sont souvent ironiques ou hermétiques et jouent comme les textes sur la fausse logique et la surprise.<sup>17</sup>

Un bon traducteur devrait être sensible à cette tonalité générale du recueil et la restituer en traduction, avec les innovations formelles de Vian. Dans son ensemble, *Cantilènes en gelée* pose des défis spécifiques au traducteur, mais n'est pas le recueil le plus difficile à traduire de l'œuvre poétique de Vian. Ce recueil a été d'ailleurs traduit en danois, en portugais et en espagnol, selon l'Index Translationum, que nous avons consulté sur le site d'Unesco.

Sous le titre *Poèmes divers*, les éditeurs des œuvres de Vian ont groupé « toute la production poétique non volontairement rassemblée et organisée par l'auteur et, sauf exception, inédite de son vivant »<sup>18</sup>. Bien que l'inspiration et le ton de ces poèmes soient divers, il y a quelques lignes de force que l'on peut dégager, qui contribuent à une certaine unité de ce recueil.

Par rapport à ses recueils antérieurs, il y a une continuité thématique : la mort, l'amour (à la fois cruel et touchant), la satire du monde du travail et de la vie littéraire, etc. Mais la tonalité générale de ces poèmes est plus optimiste, plus gaie. À noter aussi l'orientation en direction de la chanson qui s'opère, manifeste dans des poèmes tels *Cantate des boîtes*, *Chanson de charme*, *Chanson de vieillards*, etc. En ce qui concerne la forme, Gilbert Pestureau observe : « Les jeux de mots, calembours et clichés de langue moqués participent, comme chez Robert Desnos, à la création poétique ; le plaisir linguistique et phonétique peut emporter vers un délire enthousiaste, lyrisme qui n'exclut jamais la gouaille ni l'humour »<sup>19</sup>. C'est de ce côté que se situe la difficulté de la traduction de ce recueil. Citons à ce titre un poème de trois vers, que Gilbert Pestureau considère un écho-hommage à *L'enchanteur pourrissant* d'Apollinaire :

L'enchanteur échanuré  
éventre le chantre  
en chantant<sup>20</sup>.

À notre avis, la répétition du son « ch » pourrait être restituée en traduction par tout autre son ; de même, une traduction mot-à-mot serait impossible. Le traducteur pourrait créer en roumain une phrase à effet comique basée sur une répétition.

L'inventivité lexicale de Vian est sans bornes dans ce recueil aussi. Ainsi, dans le poème *Deligny*, l'expression « de fond en comble » devient « de con-t-en-fomble », ce qui pose de problèmes sérieux de traduction.

On a souvent l'impression que les jeux de mots sont le seul enjeu de certains poèmes, comme ce poème sans titre de *Poèmes divers*, dont le prétexte est l'homonymie « l'époux/ les poux » :

Mais les Amerlauds ont du DDT  
Et Salacrou doit être embêté  
Fini l'amour lente et fini l'époux  
Il n'y a plus d'amour.<sup>21</sup>

Il y a dans ce recueil une lettre-poème, hommage de Vian à Queneau par son orthographe phonétique, qui représente un défi majeur pour tout traducteur. Nous en citons une des six strophes :

leskelques mots formant préface  
évoqués par mon ékrivoir  
et qu'il me plet tant que tu face  
puiske ta plume est lace lace  
s'ils attendaient que tu rentraces  
le mal ne serait pas bien noaur<sup>22</sup>.

Dans un autre poème sans titre, à l'allure de lettre à son ami Henri Robillot, membre du Collège de Pataphysique, Vian transcrit le langage parlé :

Robillot  
de mon cœur  
tumfais peur  
t'ès si haut  
sijpouvais  
jiraistvoir  
samdisoir<sup>23</sup>.

Il serait difficile à un traducteur de rendre sensible le lecteur roumain à un tel procédé stylistique, vu qu'en roumain il n'y a pas de différence entre ce que l'on entend et ce que l'on écrit.

Le même recueil contient aussi des vers rimés, ce qui pose un problème supplémentaire au traducteur (comme par exemple la célèbre chanson de Vian *Le Déserteur*).

Sous le titre *Dernier recueil*, Marc Lapprand et Gilbert Pestureau, les éditeurs des œuvres complètes de Vian, ont groupé les 23 poèmes publiés pour la première fois en 1962 par Jean-Jacques Pauvert dans le recueil *Je voudrais pas crever*. C'est, jusqu'à présent, le seul recueil de Vian traduit en roumain. Ce recueil a été aussi traduit en anglais, en allemand et en bulgare.

Les poèmes qui le composent réunissent des méditations sur les grands thèmes lyriques, vie, mort, amour ; il semble que l'imagination de Vian se libère. Du point de vue formel, Vian use des procédés stylistiques classiques, accompagnés du jeu verbal et du paradoxe. Le poète utilise le langage parlé et les déformations phonétiques, comme il nous a déjà habitués. Mais cela n'est pas gratuit ; de pareils procédés ont la fonction de réduire le dramatisme d'un thème comme la mort :

Quand j'aurai du vent dans mon crâne  
 Quand j'aurai du vert sur mes osse  
 P'têt qu'on croira que je ricane  
 Mais ça sera une impression fosse  
 Car il me manquera  
 Mon élément plastique  
 Plastique tique tique<sup>24</sup>.

De vers pareils sont une provocation pour tout traducteur, tout comme les mots à orthographe phonétique que Vian utilise souvent : « pohêteû », « ivrogneû », « Mon nœuvreû complait ».

Le français familier utilisé par Vian dans un poème comme celui qui suit peut représenter un problème pour le traducteur roumain, qui ne dispose que de l'argot pour traduire de tels vers, accentuant ainsi l'intention de Vian :

J'ai mal à mes cardans  
 J'ai mal à mes graisseurs  
 J'ai mal à ma babiole  
 J'ai mal à ma sacoche  
 Mais je ldirai jamais, là  
 Mais je ldirai jamais.<sup>25</sup>

Dans un autre poème célèbre du même recueil, l'inventivité lexicale de Vian est sans bornes, ce qui requiert, à notre avis, un traducteur-poète :

Un jour  
Il y aura autre chose que le jour /.../  
Il y aura l'auraille, plus cruel  
Le volutin, plus dégagé  
Le comble, moins sempiternel  
Le baouf, toujours enneigé  
Il y aura le chalamondre  
L'ivrunini, le baroïque<sup>26</sup>.

*Je voudrais pas crever* est dans son ensemble un recueil difficile à traduire.

Pour conclure sur les difficultés de traduction des poèmes de Boris Vian en général et en roumain en particulier, nous dirons que qu'il s'agit d'une poésie qui présente, par endroits, une véritable « résistance à la traduction ». Mais l'effort vaut la peine, parce que Boris Vian est un poète original qui mérite de jouir d'une reconnaissance plus large hors de son pays. Nous avons insisté sur le caractère ludique de ses vers et sur ses innovations formelles, mais le lecteur ne doit pas croire que la poésie de Boris Vian n'est que cela. Gilbert Pestureau le souligne d'ailleurs :

Sa poésie ne serait-elle que petite musique ludique ? Non certes ; allant de l'intimisme des confidences jusqu'à une vision cosmique, de l'incongru quotidien à l'émotion poignante, Vian nous offre dans des poèmes légers et lyriques, grinçants ou caustiques, une poésie fort originale, riche d'invention sémantique, mélange unique d'humour noir et d'ardeur, d'insolence, de sarcasme et de passion, de cynisme féroce et de déchirement angoissé.<sup>27</sup>

Boris Vian est un auteur très apprécié, chose dont on peut se rendre compte d'après le grand nombre de traductions de son œuvre. L'Index Translationum répertorie non moins de 346 traductions de son œuvre. De celles-ci, il y a moins d'une dizaine de livres parus qui contiennent des traductions de sa poésie, à cause, sans doute, des difficultés que nous avons essayé de mettre en évidence ci-dessus.

## Notes

- 1 Raluca Bran-Pierrot, « Traduire Vian en roumain ou comment jouer avec les mots », in Boris Vian, *Je voudrais pas crever/ N-aşpreavrea ca s-omierlesc* (Piteşti : Paralela 45, 2004), 10.
- 2 Charles Camproux, in Jacqueline Henry, *La traduction des jeux de mots* (Paris : Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2003), 133-134.
- 3 Jacqueline Henry, *La traduction des jeux de mots* (Paris : Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2003), 134.
- 4 Umberto Eco, in Jacqueline Henry, *La traduction des jeux de mots* (Paris : Presses de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2003), 108-109.
- 5 Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 41.
- 6 idem, 69.
- 7 ibid., 78.
- 8 ibid., 79.
- 9 ibid., 81.
- 10 ibid., 43.
- 11 Marc Lapprand, « Préface aux *Cent sonnets* », in Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 22.
- 12 Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 131.
- 13 Gilbert Pestureau, « Préface à *Cantilènes en gelée* », in Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 144.
- 14 Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 152.
- 15 idem, 167.
- 16 ibid., 155.
- 17 Gilbert Pestureau, « Préface à *Cantilènes en gelée* », in Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 144.
- 18 Gilbert Pestureau, « Préface aux *Poèmes divers* », in Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 174.
- 19 idem, 175.
- 20 Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 189.
- 21 idem, 191.
- 22 ibid., 202.
- 23 ibid., 204.
- 24 ibid., 235-236.
- 25 ibid., 239.
- 26 ibid., 249.
- 27 Gilbert Pestureau, « Boris Vianpoète », in Boris Vian, *Œuvres*, Tome V (Paris : Fayard, 1999), 16.

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# Techniques narratives dans le roman épistolaire *Les Liaisons dangereuses* de Laclos

Narrative techniques in the epistolary novel of *Les Liaisons dangereuses* de Laclos

Nicolae Șera \*

The article analyzes the narrative techniques of one of the most famous epistolary novel of the 18th century, *Les liaisons dangereuses* de Laclos. The novelty of the novel is highlighted by the plurality of narrative voices, by the different points of view of the author, but also by the characters who relate at their turn the action in the novel. We also analyze the relationship between author-character-reader and the possible permutations of these roles. Last but not least, we value the enrollment of this novel in the wider current of libertinage, so specific to the 18th century.

narrative; communication; action; reader; letter.

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DANS LE DOMAINE DE L'EXPRESSION LITTÉRAIRE ON PEUT DÉFINIR LE RÉCIT comme la représentation d'un événement ou d'une suite d'événements réels ou fictifs ; une représentation par le langage, plus précisément, par le langage écrit. Tout récit englobe des présentations des actions et d'événements qui constituent la narration proprement-dite et, d'autre part, des présentations d'objets ou de personnages, ceci se constituant dans la partie descriptive.

L'évolution des formes narratives, tout en substituant la description significative à celle ornementale, a eu la tendance de l'élément narratif : la description a perdu de son autonomie, mais, cependant a gagné d'importance dramatique. Aristote observait déjà que l'un des avantages qui rendent supérieur le récit par rapport à la représentation scénique est le fait de pouvoir traiter plusieurs actions simultanément ; mais, souligne Aristote, on doit les traiter dans leur succession, d'où les ressources, la situation et ses limites sont identiques au langage descriptif.

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On a aussi remarqué une opposition nette entre l'objectivité du récit et la subjectivité du discours ; les deux, l'objectivité et subjectivité, d'ordre purement linguistique. L'objectivité du récit se définit par l'absence de toute référence au narrateur. La diction propre au récit est d'une certaine manière la transitivité absolue du texte, l'absence totale non seulement du narrateur mais aussi de la narration elle-même, réalisés par la disparition de toute référence à l'instance du discours qui le constitue. Dans le discours par contre on aie entendre la voix de l'auteur et sa situation dans l'acte du discours est le foyer des significations les plus importantes ; par contraste, dans le récit personne ne « parle ».

Ne pouvant parler en son propre nom, ni confier l'acte de parole à un de ses personnages, l'écrivain partage le discours entre ses divers acteurs, soit sous la forme du récit composé par des lettres – pratique souvent utilisée dans la littérature du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (*Les Liaisons dangereuses* et *La Nouvelle Héloïse* sont des exemples en ce sens), soit à la manière de Joyce et de Faulkner, le narrateur assume successivement le récit par le discours intérieur des personnages principaux.

En feignant de présenter une correspondance, « des lettres recueillies dans une société et publiées pour l'instruction de quelques autres »<sup>1</sup> (sous-titre des *Liaisons*), Laclos, devenu le rédacteur fictif, veut faire croire à la vérité de ces lettres, et à l'existence des épistoliers. Pour conforter cet effet de réel, il met en place, dans l'avertissement de l'éditeur et dans la préface du rédacteur une stratégie du doute, bien connue des auteurs de romans épistolaires. Les romans épistolaires du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle utilisent la technique selon laquelle une histoire est racontée plusieurs fois, elle étant vécue et ensuite racontée du point de vue de plusieurs personnages. Chaque histoire des *Liaisons dangereuses* est racontée deux ou plusieurs fois, aspect qui confère aux événements une vision stéréoscopique. Seul le lecteur dispose de l'intégralité de la correspondance, et profite ainsi d'une vue surplombante sur l'ensemble de l'action.

Dans sa qualité de roman épistolaire, deux considérations s'imposent : tout d'abord, la lettre vue comme réalité de la vie sociale et de ce point de vue le roman *Les liaisons dangereuses* est un recueil de lettres plus ou moins imaginaires ; d'autre part, on peut considérer ce roman une œuvre littéraire se basant sur des lettres, la lettre étant en ce cas l'élément essentiel de la construction romanesque. Cette stratégie, qui joue de l'effet de réel, est, au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, âge d'or du roman épistolaire, une convention tacite entre l'auteur et le lecteur, qui assure à ce dernier une grande liberté d'interprétation : il peut penser que cette correspondance est authentique, et chercher des clefs, pour savoir quelles personnes réelles se cachent derrière les personnages du roman ; ou bien il peut accepter l'idée que

le roman a parfaitement suppléé la réalité, et qu'en tant que tel, il est captivant. Les lettres qui composent ce roman forment un énoncé qui a pour référent une réalité extérieure à la trame du roman<sup>2</sup>. La parole comme simulacre reçoit une grande importance puisqu'elle renvoie à une réalité désignée par l'énoncé. Il y a quelques situations qui permettent l'observation de plus près de l'aspect littéral de l'énoncé ; elles se trouvent dans toutes les lettres de madame de Merteuil car elle accorde une importance majeure à la lettre-même.

Aussi, l'opposition entre écrit et oral est également importante lorsque l'on aborde ce type d'écriture. L'existence d'un émetteur pour chaque énoncé est significative : l'auteur de la lettre 167 ressent l'obligation de se justifier, car il saisit le sens ambigu de la lettre non signée. Le récepteur lui-même se trouve dans une liaison très étroite avec l'énoncé : son nom est spécifié au début de chaque lettre et par là-même, sa présence est obligatoire pour plus de clarté de la lecture. Pourtant, le roman comporte symétriquement une lettre sans émetteur et une sans récepteur.

Une place à part est réservée à la citation. Selon T. Todorov, la citation est « un énoncé ayant double processus d'énonciation, un énoncé dont l'énonciation actuelle n'est pas originelle. »<sup>3</sup> Le cas le plus fréquent paraît être celui où la lettre citée a un autre émetteur ; ainsi, madame de Merteuil ajoute à la lettre qu'elle envoie à Valmont les lettres de Valmont adressées à madame de Tourvel. En ce qui concerne ce roman, la situation inverse est aussi possible : Valmont envoie à madame de Merteuil les lettres qu'il avait envoyées auparavant à madame de Tourvel. Il est possible aussi qu'il n'y ait aucune relation entre les interlocuteurs de la première et la deuxième lettre : de la sorte, Danceny envoie à madame de Rosemonde les lettres de Valmont adressées à madame de Merteuil.

Deux lettres des *Liaisons dangereuses* sont destinées presque exclusivement à la problématique de la lettre – en fait l'auteur utilise savamment la technique de la lettre dans la lettre, à savoir la mise en abîme – de la sorte que ces deux lettres requièrent valeur autodiégétique. Il s'agit des lettres 105 et 150. Ces deux lettres présentent deux conceptions différentes sur l'essence de la lettre et du message qu'elles véhiculent : Danceny, dans la lettre 150<sup>4</sup> adopte la conception plutôt romantique de la lettre, celle-ci étant à ses yeux l'expression de celui qui l'a rédigée, l'image de son auteur. A cette position romantique sur l'essence de la lettre s'oppose la conception pragmatique de Madame de Merteuil dans la lettre 105. Pour elle, le contenu de la lettre n'est pas l'expression de son auteur, mais plutôt ce contenu est lié au récepteur. Elle est la seule épistolière du roman qui a pris en compte la réaction de son récepteur, de son interlocuteur et non pas l'expression de ses propres sentiments.

Dans ce roman la lettre acquiert deux autres utilisations complémentaires : d'abord, elle offre une vision stéréoscopique et relève en même temps la complexité d'une personne, son hypocrisie, son habileté de porter des masques différents, selon que la situation demanderait ceci. D'autre part, la lettre montre comment les personnages perçoivent les événements relatés. Une autre utilisation de la lettre est fondée sur son aptitude de constituer une unité close et par là-même, d'interrompre la continuité et la linéarité du récit. Avec Laclos, la lettre se pare de nouvelles fonctions : elle devient une arme, nous l'avons dit à propos de Merteuil et de Valmont, mais aussi une clef qui ouvre bien des portes, dans le cas de Valmont : c'est sous le prétexte de remettre à Cécile une lettre de son amoureux Danceny qu'il s'introduit dans sa chambre. C'est pour remettre ses lettres à la Présidente qu'il obtient une entrevue avec elle, et la séduit. La lettre est également un outil d'analyse très efficace : Mme de Merteuil est une lectrice extrêmement fine, qui lit entre les lignes, et découvre très tôt dans les lettres de Valmont concernant la Présidente que la forfanterie de celui-ci ne cache que mal un sentiment amoureux puissant, que l'on se reporte à la lettre 10 par exemple. Elle se livre souvent à des explications de texte, comme à la fin de la lettre 33, dans laquelle elle commente une lettre de la Présidente à Valmont, et parfois elle donne des leçons de style ou de stratégie, car style et stratégie ne font qu'un dans *Les Liaisons dangereuses*. Que l'on se reporte à la lettre 105, destinée à Cécile de Volanges : « Voyez donc à soigner davantage votre style. Vous écrivez toujours comme un enfant. [...] », ou à celle destinée à Valmont : (lettre 33) « la véritable école [faute digne d'un écolier] est de vous être laissé aller à écrire.<sup>5</sup> »

Le roman *Les Liaisons dangereuses* est construit sur l'exposition simultanée de trois récits / histoires axés sur les trois figures féminines du livre : Madame de Merteuil, Madame de Tourvel et Cécile de Volanges. Le fait que le roman est raconté à travers des lettres offre la possibilité à l'exposition des déformations temporelles ; celles-ci consistent dans le décalage entre l'ordre chronologique des événements décrits et l'ordre de leur succession dans le roman. Par la disposition préméditée des lettres dans le roman, l'auteur intervient dans le déroulement de l'exposition autant de fois qu'il le croit nécessaire. L'art particulière de Laclos est justement l'habileté avec laquelle il utilise le même procédé romanesque – le récit par lettres – afin de répondre à deux besoins diamétralement opposés : aussi le narrateur que les personnages entrent dans le réel par le biais des lettres.

Les lettres ne racontent pas seulement l'histoire dans le roman mais elles relatent aussi l'histoire du roman, la manière dont il a été écrit. De cette manière, l'image du narrateur coïncide parfaitement avec la structure significative du livre, avec l'écriture du roman, sa création étant intégrée dans le récit romanesque.

Le moment culminant de l'intrigue, le dénouement, gagne une importance particulière dans le croisement des deux récits, celui du roman et celui dans le roman : c'est le moment qui permet le dédoublement de l'intrigue et l'apparition de l'écriture du roman, moment où tout récit, telle une image en abyme, se retrouve face à face avec sa propre partie constitutive<sup>6</sup>. Grâce à ces apparitions de l'écriture du roman, l'image du narrateur devient de plus en plus claire. La structure profonde du roman est celle de sa création ; cette structure intime est liée par le biais de l'autre à l'histoire du roman. L'œuvre de Laclos symbolise par là la qualité profonde et primordiale de la littérature, à savoir, l'aspect que le sens ultime des *Liaisons dangereuses* est justement l'idée de Littérature. Tz. Todorov affirmait que « toute œuvre, tout roman raconte à travers la trame événementielle l'histoire de sa propre création, sa propre histoire. »<sup>7</sup>

Dans le cas du roman de Laclos le récit est formé de micro-récits ; chacun de ces récits est formé de trois – parfois seulement deux – éléments dont la présence est obligatoire : la tentative (manquée ou réussie) de réaliser un projet, une prétention et un danger. La succession de ces éléments dans le récit n'est pas arbitraire, elle obéit à une certaine logique : de la sorte, l'apparition d'un projet provoque de la résistance ou une tentative d'y échapper. La forme épistolaire nous permet d'autre part d'avoir plusieurs points de vue sur un même événement. Dans les lettres XXI et XXII, nous apprenons que Valmont est allé au secours d'une famille qui allait perdre sa maison en rachetant leur maison et en faisant des cadeaux à la famille. La « bonne action » de Valmont est présentée de deux manières : tout d'abord par Valmont lui-même, puis par la Présidente qui transmet ce que son valet lui a dit. Dans la lettre XXI, Valmont confie à Merteuil le plan qu'il a élaboré pour convaincre Tourvel qu'il est charitable mais qu'il n'ose pas l'être ouvertement : il s'assure que le valet de la Présidente le suit et l'observe, puis il vient en aide à la famille. On aperçoit ainsi son côté manipulateur et calculateur, il est dépourvu de toute morale ; il n'hésite à profiter du malheur de ces gens pour son propre gain. La lettre XXII montre la crédulité de la Présidente et le talent de Valmont : il a réussi à en imposer au valet de Tourvel, qui a lui-même convaincu la Présidente de la bonté de cœur et de l'altruisme de Valmont. Les deux lettres parlent du même événement, mais d'un point de vue totalement différent.

Les *Liaisons dangereuses* relèvent aussi d'un type de récit que l'on pourrait appeler psychologique<sup>8</sup>. L'auteur utilise la polyphonie, mais va surtout faire de la lettre un instrument d'analyse psychologique, un témoignage de sentiments authentiques. Il s'institue entre les personnages un triple rapport : celui du désir (le plus fréquemment), celui de la communication (réalisé par les confidences) et celui de participer (comme un axe subordonné à celui du désir). Ainsi, on peut

établir deux niveaux de rapports perceptibles : le plan de *l'être* et celui du *paraître*, imaginaire.

On peut remarques également que dans le roman de Laclos abondent les figures rhétoriques classiques<sup>9</sup> ; une d'entre elles est le parallélisme de l'intrigue, rapporté aux grandes unités du récit : la confrontation des couples Valmont – Tourvel et Danceny – Cécile, ou celle des couples Valmont – Cécile et Merteuil – Danceny. L'intrigue du roman elle-même forme une pareille figure rhétorique, l'intrigue étant une sorte d'infraction à l'ordre, tout se rapportant à l'image de Valmont, en tant que personnage principal de la trame du roman. L'ordre qui détermine les actions des personnages jusqu'au dénouement et voire après est conventionnelle, voire extérieure à l'univers du livre, par conséquent, la vie devient partie constitutive du livre.

Le langage chiffré renvoie évidemment à la notion de secret qui est au coeur même du système épistolaire. La relation épistolaire est dangereuse car intrinsèquement liée à l'existence du secret : « L'oeuvre de Laclos se fonde sur la perversion de l'essence même de la lettre : la violation du secret, le détournement par un tiers de la lettre destinée à un autre. »<sup>10</sup> Les deux systèmes de violation de la correspondance pratiqués par les personnages de Laclos sont la lettre incluse et la publication finale des lettres qui provoquera la mort sociale de la marquise de Merteuil. Or, la technique de la lettre incluse nous place exactement sur le même plan que les libertins et nous en rend complices en nous faisant lire une correspondance privée qui ne nous est pas adressée. Nous accédons à un savoir pervers et sommes placés devant une représentation « impure » de la lecture.

Jusqu'à la fin du livre, les *Liaisons dangereuses* établissent un nouvel ordre, autre à celui extérieure ; ce dernier n'est présent que sous la forme du mobile extérieur de certaines actions. Le dénouement met fin à cet ordre et ce qui suit nous renvoie au même ordre extérieur, à savoir à la restauration de ce qui a été détruit par le récit précédent. Si le récit antérieur a été celui de *l'être*, celui de la in du livre est entièrement ancré dans le *paraître*, dans l'imaginaire, donc. Mais la in du roman met en difficulté en quelque sorte le lecteur, le situant devant un dilemme que le lecteur est appelé à résoudre. Le lecteur ne connaît pas la vérité, il peut saisir uniquement les apparences ; ce qui plus est, il ne peut saisir même pas la position de l'auteur.

## Notes

- 1 Choderlos de Laclos, *Les liaisons dangereuses* (Paris : Flammarion, 1981), 1.
- 2 Cf. Jean Rousset, « Une forme littéraire : le roman par lettre », in *Forme et signification* (Paris : Corti, 1962).
- 3 Tzvetan Todorov, *Littérature et signification* (Paris : Larousse, 1967), 70.

- 4 Cf. Les liaisons dangereuses, op. cit.
- 5 Cf. Les liaisons dangereuses, op. cit.
- 6 Cf. Laurent Versini, Le roman épistolaire (Paris : PUF, 1979).
- 7 Tzvetan Todorov, Littérature et signification (Paris : Larousse, 1967), 84.
- 8 Cf. Madeleine Therrien, « Les Liaisons dangereuses », une interprétation psychologique, (Paris, 1973).
- 9 Cf. Gérard Genette, Figures III (Paris : Seuil, 1968).
- 10 Frédéric Calas, Le roman épistolaire (Paris : Nathan Université, collection 128, n° 147), 64.

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# *I personaggi di Pirandello e di Baricco in cerca d'identità in un mondo in crisi*

Pirandello and Baricco's Characters in Search of Identity in a World in Crisis

*Delia Ioana Morar* \*

The present paper is a parallelism between Pirandello's Six characters in search of an Author and Baricco's The Young Bride. The two works were both created at the beginning of their century and they are a very good illustration and an accurate mirror of their times. Pirandello is obsessed with dichotomy between life and form, between essence and appearance in life and in arts. Baricco is obsessed with storytelling. Their characters are born as an outburst of their obsessions and they try to show us who we really are.

Pirandello; Baricco; characters; crisis; identity; Life vs. Form; story telling .

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LUIGI PIRANDELLO SCRIVE *SEI PERSONAGGI IN CERCA D'AUTORE* AGLI INIZI DEL 1900. La prima rappresentazione del testo avviene il 9 maggio del 1921 al Teatro Valle di Roma. La reazione degli spettatori non è stata per niente positiva e molti di loro hanno lasciato il Teatro Valle affermando che l'autore dovesse essere portato in manicomio.

Alessandro Baricco scrive *La sposa giovane* nel primo decennio del 2000. Il romanzo è ambientato agli inizi del XX secolo ed è pubblicato per la prima volta il 18 marzo del 2015. Le opinioni dei lettori contemporanei sono per lo più negative e sicuramente il libro non è stato accolto con molto entusiasmo.

Non crediamo che Luigi Pirandello e Alessandro Baricco possano essere paragonati, però riteniamo che i loro personaggi siano molto rappresentativi per il secolo a cui appartengono. Anche se non intendiamo fare un confronto e mettere i due autori allo stesso livello, ci proponiamo di fare nel presente articolo

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un parallelismo soggettivo tra il modo di agire, di essere, di presentarsi dei personaggi pirandelliani e baricchiani delle due opere sopraccitate. Vorremmo dimostrare che sia Pirandello sia Baricco, a loro modo, hanno colto molto bene l'essenza dei loro tempi e sono riusciti a costruire dei personaggi che ne sono fedeli rappresentanti e ci fanno vedere chi siamo veramente e come siamo cambiati.

Partiamo da una caratteristica che li accomuna: tutti i personaggi nascono da un bisogno di sfogo dei loro autori e sono testimoni e forme della crisi, dello *status quo* dell'inizio del proprio secolo. Si presentano davanti a noi nudi e con una forma fragile, nella speranza che il confronto con il pubblico li aiuterà a trovare la loro identità. Pirandello ha più consistenza, il messaggio della sua opera è molto più profondo e tormentato, come lo erano anche i suoi tempi. Baricco è molto più fragile, banale, superficiale, *barbarico* e mutevole, ma è questa l'essenza dei nostri tempi invasi *da barbari* e sotto il segno della *mutazione*. Il Novecento è stato capovolto da due guerre mondiali e l'umanità è stata costretta a confrontarsi con la morte ad ogni passo e a trovare la forza di rinascere dalle proprie ceneri e di andare avanti. Il XXI secolo è un secolo complicato, aggressivo e tragico, pieno di paradossi e di ipocrisia, ma almeno fino adesso, meno traumatizzante per l'essere umano rispetto al secolo anteriore e di conseguenza è anche meno profondo.

La modernità ancora attuale di Pirandello e la sua genialità sono accertate dal tempo (quest'anno celebriamo 150 anni dalla sua nascita) e anche dal premio Nobel che gli è stato conferito nel 1934. Pirandello non è solo un nome, è diventato ormai "un soggetto di identificazione collettiva" negli ambienti degli studiosi. Lo dice uno dei critici più autorevoli ed appassionati dell'opera pirandelliana, Nino Borsellino nell'introduzione al saggio *L'umorismo*. Anche chi non ha mai letto le sue opere sa che si chiama "pirandelliano" uno stato d'animo che introduce dubbi psicologici sulla propria identità, incertezze conoscitive sull'evidenza dei fatti. È pirandelliana una situazione quotidiana indistinta in cui le affermazioni si contraddicono, le parti sono intercambiabili, la verità è incomprendibile e il giudizio rimane in sospeso. È pirandelliano un momento politico che non consente soluzioni radicali. Quando uno dice personaggio pirandelliano, si capisce subito il messaggio e usando il termine possiamo far riferimento a una tipologia umana caratterizzata da anomalia o stravaganza intellettuale. Inoltre tutti i suoi titoli più famosi: *Così è (se vi pare)*, *Il gioco delle parti*, *Ciascuno a modo suo*, *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore*, e così via, sono stati copiati, parafrasati, adattati e ripresi con varie connotazioni e sfumature. Ormai l'opera, afferma sempre Borsellino, è diventata "un bene linguistico di consumo espressivo."<sup>1</sup>

Alessandro Baricco nasce a Torino nel 1958. Dopo aver conseguito la laurea in filosofia e aver lavorato per un'agenzia pubblicitaria, il Nostro ha intrapreso la carriera di critico musicale scrivendo articoli per i giornali la Repubblica e La Stampa. Poi lo vediamo come presentatore televisivo per il programma *L'amore è un dardo* su Raitre, programma che intendeva avvicinare il grande pubblico all'opera lirica. Presenta altri programmi alla radio e alla televisione. Nel 1994 fonda la Scuola Holden, una scuola di *storytelling*, una scuola che si propone di creare narratori e che gode di molto successo. Esordisce come romanziere nel 1991 con i *Castelli di rabbia*.

Ritorniamo adesso agli *eroi* delle due opere che sono l'oggetto della nostra analisi. Pirandello ha dichiarato egli stesso che all'inizio *Sei personaggi in cerca d'autore* doveva essere un romanzo, ma poi seguendo l'impulso della "servetta sveltissima" che egli chiama "Fantasia", ha scritto un pezzo teatrale. Nel caso della *Sposa giovane* abbiamo a che fare con un romanzo estremamente teatrale. La casa in cui i protagonisti di Baricco vivono potrebbe diventare in qualsiasi momento il palcoscenico di un teatro. Se i personaggi di Pirandello erano in cerca di un autore perché ritenevano di avere in loro un dramma da raccontare, quelli di Baricco sembrano in cerca di un narratore che poi tradiscono spesso a seconda del personaggio oppure il protagonista di una scena diventa il proprio autore come se non si fidasse più del narratore onnisciente.

Nella prefazione al suo testo, Pirandello descrive la gente da cui trae ispirazione per creare i propri personaggi come: "la gente più scontenta del mondo, uomini, donne, ragazzi, avvolti in casi strani da cui non trovano più modo a uscire; contrariati nei loro disegni; frodati nelle loro speranze; e coi quali insomma e spesso veramente una gran pena trattare."<sup>2</sup> I sei personaggi sono: il Padre, la Madre, la Figliastro, il Figlio, Il Giovinetto, la Bambina. Gli ultimi due non parlano e poi viene evocata anche la Madama Pace che è il personaggio che fa e dice le cose necessarie. Tranne loro sulla scena ci sono all'inizio gli attori della compagnia. Siamo su un palcoscenico dove degli attori provano la commedia *Il giuoco delle parti*. Le loro prove sono interrotte dai sei personaggi che sono stati rifiutati dallo scrittore che li aveva concepiti. Essi chiedono al Capocomico di dare loro vita artistica e di mettere in scena il loro dramma: il Padre si è separato dalla Madre dopo aver avuto da lei il Figlio. La Madre, spinta dal Padre, si ricostruisce una famiglia con il segretario che lavorava in casa loro e ha da lui tre figli. Ma questo muore e la famiglia cade in miseria, tanto che la Figliastro è costretta a prostituirsi nell'atelier di Madama Pace, dove la Madre lavora come sarta. L'atelier è frequentato di solito anche dal Padre che non conosce la Figliastro. La Madre riesce ad evitare appena in tempo l'incontro fra i due. Tormentato dalla

vergogna e dai rimorsi, il Padre accoglie in casa la Madre e i tre figli. Ciò provoca il risentimento del Figlio e la loro convivenza diventa insostenibile.

Il Padre è un uomo sulla cinquantina, con pochi capelli in prossimità delle tempie, biondo rossiccio, con baffi e gli occhi azzurri ovati. È pallido, a volte sorride in modo incerto e vano, ha un comportamento dolce, altre volte, invece, è aspro e duro. La Madre è sempre atterrita e schiacciata da un peso intollerabile di vergogna e di avvilitamento. È vestita di nero, ha un viso come di cera e tiene gli occhi sempre bassi. La Figliastro ha diocotto anni, è vestita di nero anche lei, ma molto elegante, è molto bella e sicura di sé. Mostra molto dispetto per l'aria timida e smarrita del fratellino, il Giovinetto di quattordici anni, vestito di nero anche lui ed è invece molto tenera con la Bambina, la sorellina più piccola che ha circa quattro anni, è vestita di bianco con una fascia di seta nera alla vita. Il Figlio ha ventidue anni, si mostra molto sdegnoso nei confronti del Padre e si dimostra molto indifferente verso la Madre. Indossa un soprabito viola e una lunga fascia verde girata intorno al collo.

Pirandello è ossessionato dalla relatività del rapporto tra l'essenza e l'apparenza sia nella vita che nell'arte, dal contrasto tra *Vita* e *Forma*. La ricercatrice Lucia Munteanu in uno studio molto ampio sul teatro moderno analizza il dramma dei personaggi di Pirandello. Secondo l'autrice, la convinzione dei personaggi che loro sono il dramma e che il dramma è in loro nutre la loro speranza che gli attori potranno dar loro la forma che sognano e che riusciranno a mantenere intatta la loro verità interiore. Il dramma comincia quando si accorgono che sono soltanto personaggi, cioè delle maschere. Il conflitto nasce tra loro e gli attori che li dovevano interpretare, subito dopo che accettano la loro condizione di "creazioni" di un'altra soggettività e capiscono che tra il loro essere intimo, tra le loro sensazioni e le immagini riflesse negli altri si intromette una distanza impossibile da superare. Loro non si ritrovano più nell'immagine offerta dagli attori e si sentono estraniati da loro stessi.<sup>3</sup>

La dialettica tra la realtà del mondo e la realtà dell'arte, le illusioni dell'esistenza e lo spettacolo teatrale come meccanismo di produzione di illusioni diventa l'argomento dei *Sei personaggi* nel tentativo disperato di convincere il Direttore di fermare il tumultuoso travaglio della loro esistenza e di dar loro una forma definitiva.<sup>4</sup>

I protagonisti pirandelliani sono degli esseri che si perdono nel tentativo di sovrapporre quello che sono sopra quello che vogliono apparire. Sono "esseri di intervallo"<sup>5</sup> che si costruiscono e si modellano continuamente non solo a seconda degli altri, ma rapportandosi all'universo finzionale nel quale entrano. Il loro

dramma è avere piena coscienza del fatto che la finzione è solo un'illusione, un mondo possibile, ma inesistente che deve accettare la propria illusorietà.

Il Padre esorta il Capocomico di accettare anche lui la propria illusione e indicando sé e gli altri Personaggi dice: “se noi oltre l'illusione, non abbiamo altra realtà, è bene che anche lei diffidi della realtà sua, di questa che lei oggi respira e tocca in sé, perché – come quella di jeri – è destinata a scoprirsi illusione domani”<sup>6</sup>. Pirandello ci fa assistere a questi commenti dei personaggi che si spiegano da soli, si guardano dal di fuori e discutono con l'autore, con il regista e con gli attori che dovrebbero già sapere tutto di loro. Praticamente siamo testimoni alla creazione dell'atto artistico visto da tutte le prospettive possibili e assistiamo alla decostruzione dei meccanismi creativi e alla ricostruzione di questi.

Alla reazione stupefatta del Capocomico che non ha mai visto un personaggio che esce dalla sua parte per perorarla e spiegarla, il Padre risponde:

Non l'ha mai visto, signore, perché gli autori nascondono di solito il travaglio della loro creazione. Quando i personaggi sono vivi, vivi veramente davanti al loro autore, questo non fa altro che seguirli nell'azione, nelle parole, nei gesti ch'essi li voglia com'essi si vogliono; e guaj se non fa così! Quando un personaggio è nato, acquista subito una tale indipendenza anche dal suo stesso autore, che può essere da tutti immaginato in tant'altre situazioni in cui l'autore non pensò di metterlo, e acquistare anche, a volte, un, significato che l'autore non si sognò mai di dargli!<sup>7</sup>

Al pubblico o ai lettori è attribuito sin dall'inizio lo statuto di “voyeur” delle modalità di incarnare l'illusione della rappresentazione, e i personaggi insistono sulla loro “realtà” proprio davanti a quelli che si mostrano più circospetti, vale a dire agli attori e al Capocomico. La violenza della drammaturgia pirandelliana non mira a provocare lo spettatore ad ogni costo, bensì “è costruita sullo sforzo che il personaggio compie per vincere quell'impossibilità”<sup>8</sup>, mentre, come vedremo in seguito, la narrativa baricchiana esiste per provocarci.

I sei personaggi principali della *Sposa giovane* sono: il Padre, la Madre, il Figlio, la Figlia, lo Zio e la Sposa giovane. Osserviamo subito un'altra caratteristica che accomuna i protagonisti delle due opere: non hanno un nome che li distingue, sono rappresentanti di una categoria, di una tipologia. Poi, al posto di Madama Pace, abbiamo il maggiordomo Modesto che è l'unico personaggio che ha un nome e che svolge il ruolo di maestro di cerimonie oppure maestro di *marionette*, inquanto più che persone, gli “eroi” di Baricco sembrano delle marionette. Tutti hanno una vita complicata, piena di automatismi e di segreti, molto drammatica ed esistono per raccontare la propria storia. Il luogo in cui vivono è poco preciso, così come lo è l'epoca storica: potremmo essere tra la fine dell'Ottocento e l'inizio

del Novecento, in una villa lussuosa di campagna. Il Figlio ha vent'anni, la Sposa giovane ne ha diciotto, devono sposarsi, sono già fidanzati da tre anni, ma lei ha accompagnato suo padre in Argentina e il Figlio è andato in Inghilterra a sorvegliare gli affari dell'azienda tessile della famiglia. Come stabilito da tempo la Sposa si presenta alla villa e continua insieme alla famiglia ad aspettare il Figlio che forse tornerà. Lo attendono come si attende Godot, ma molto meno ansiosi e privi di speranza. Nel frattempo la vita della villa continua seguendo gli stessi automatismi ancestrali e la Figlia è iniziata alla vita e all'arte della seduzione.

Il Padre è un uomo bonario e se necessario feroce, ma con un cuore di vetro: “aveva capito che era in prestito alla vita, e ne aveva dedotto un'abitudine alla cautela, un'inclinazione all'ordine e la confusa certezza di abitare un destino speciale”<sup>9</sup>. La Figlia ha ereditato dalla Madre una bellezza che da quelle parti poteva essere percepita come aristocratica: ha un taglio giusto degli occhi, delle gambe fortunate e dei capelli di un nero corvino. All'età di otto anni ha subito un incidente e ora cammina trascinando la gamba destra, “che pur disegnata alla perfezione risulta dotata di un peso irragionevole e priva della benché minima idea di come armonizzarsi al resto del corpo. Anche il braccio non è normale, pare capace solo di tre posizioni, e neanche troppo eleganti. Lo si direbbe un braccio meccanico”<sup>10</sup>. La figura dello Zio è percepita come una presenza positiva in famiglia e insostituibile. Lo Zio soffre di una sindrome unica e misteriosa che lo tiene sospeso in un sonno perenne da cui esce ogni tanto per partecipare alle conversazioni della famiglia con una puntualità che “tutti ci eravamo ormai abituati a considerare ovvia e che invece era, evidentemente, illogica. Qualcosa in lui era in grado di registrare, pur nel sonno, qualsiasi accadimento e ogni parola”<sup>11</sup>. La Madre è di una bellezza mitologica, ha sempre fatto impazzire tutti con la semplice presenza. Si distingue dagli altri per il suo eccesso di sillogismi e sappiamo che nel pomeriggio, di nascosto, legge poesie.

Giulio Ferroni fa una descrizione dei personaggi di Baricco che ritroviamo in *Seta*, ma che si addice a tutti i personaggi della narrativa baricchiana: “sembrano spinti da una molla agonistica, votati a dar prova di sé sulla scena del nulla: sfidano i limiti del mondo per mantener fede a scelte in cui si risolve tutto il senso della loro identità”<sup>12</sup>.

I personaggi baricchiani sembrano alla ricerca di un destino eccezionale, ma risulta chiaro che il loro destino è stabilito nei minimi dettagli dall'autore sin dall'inizio. Festeggiano la vita ogni mattina con delle colazioni sontuose, esagerate, quasi irreali e temono la notte perché potrebbe portare loro la morte. Sono dei personaggi spinti verso ogni limite, portati *in extremis*, privi di logica, paradossali ed istrionici. Ma non sono forse questi tratti alcune delle

caratteristiche dell'uomo del XXI secolo? Ferroni continua le sue osservazioni critiche ed ironiche dicendo:

I gesti di questi personaggi sono spesso automatici: hanno la consistenza ritmica delle mosse delle marionette; e così sono i loro discorsi, apodittici, assertivi, elementari, paratattici. Questa ritmicità [...] fa da sostegno a tutta una serie di incastri combinatori, di coincidenze sorprendenti in cui si può sentire uno spruzzo di Borges o Calvino, ma con un puro effetto di sorpresa estetica o di accidente esistenziale, che può dare la stura a massime generali, a frasi a effetto sul senso della vita, sulla sua casualità, crucialità, drammaticità, micidialità, sulle strade che si separano e si intersecano sugli amori che si cercano, persistono nell'assenza, restano sospesi a gesti rivelatori ed essenziali.<sup>13</sup>

La specificità di Baricco, secondo Elisabetta Tarantino<sup>14</sup>, è quella di operare in quello che viene definita come *middle culture*, intesa come una cultura non esclusivista, non programmaticamente inaccessibile. Anche se Baricco è riuscito a raggiungere un pubblico estremamente vasto e per riuscirci si è avvalso di tutti i mezzi odierni resi disponibili dalla comunicazione di massa: spettacoli dal vivo in varie città italiane, programmi televisivi, Internet, giornali. Sa molto bene promuoversi e autopromuoversi e ha capito come gestire se stesso in questi tempi moderni. Si comporta da vero *one man show* che raccoglie la gente in un teatro per presentare i propri libri, che è a suo agio in mezzo al suo pubblico e tra i suoi lettori presenti o futuri. Per Baricco la modernità è sinonimo di spettacolo: "Nessuna voce incline a vietarsi il rischio della spettacolarità potrà riuscire a cantarla"<sup>15</sup>. Il bisogno di mostrarsi, esibirsi a tutti i costi è diventato il nostro modo di stare al mondo oggi.

Le pagine di Baricco ci costringono a scendere a un basso livello umano, in Pirandello succede proprio il contrario, ci troviamo di fronte ad un alto livello di umanità e di saggezza. Il Bordello, per esempio, diventa un ambiente elevato, mentre la frequentazione dell'atelier della Madama Pace era una vergogna per il Padre e gli provoca grandi rimorsi. Nella famiglia c'è una grande fiducia nelle cose, nelle persone, e in se stessi. Non si vede la necessità di ricorrere a palliativi come sarebbero i libri. Appena arrivata nella casa, alla Figlia vengono presentate alcune regole della casa: la prima esorta a temere la notte, la seconda dice che la felicità non è gradita, la terza sentenzia che i libri sono assolutamente vietati e la quarta si riferisce al Padre da cui non si può aspettare nessuna distrazione perché porta un'inesattezza nel cuore. La spiegazione per il divieto dei libri è quella che la vita va ascoltata perché contiene già tutto, non c'è bisogno di leggere libri. Poi Modesto le confessa che lui ama leggere i libri e ne tiene sempre uno in casa

nascosto e vi dedica del tempo prima di addormentarsi. Dopo che lo legge, lo distrugge.

Il Figlio ogni mattina manda un telegramma dall'Inghilterra con lo stesso testo immutabile: *Tutto bene*. Poi, "inizio ad arrivare a meta giugno, e a tutti parve chiaro, dopo qualche giorno che la cosa avrebbe preso il suo tempo"<sup>16</sup>. Sarebbe tornato anche prima se la Sposa giovane l'avesse aspettato veramente. Finalmente torna a casa e il suo arrivo puo essere percepito quasi come un richiamo biblico: il Figlio, che e l'unico personaggio di cui non si parla male, arriva a redimere i peccati della famiglia, del Padre. Come possiamo capire da queste brevi descrizioni e citazioni, i protagonisti baricchiani sono monotoni, fissi, immobili, inespressivi, privi di qualsiasi logica, delle marionette appunto in cerca di un destino fuori dal comune.

Ogni tanto, tra le pagine del libro, ci imbattiamo in delle riflessioni dell'autore che riguardano l'atto della scrittura in generale e in particolare *La Sposa giovane*:

tutto quello che scriviamo c'entra naturalmente con cosa siamo, o siamo stati, ma per quanto mi riguarda non ho mai pensato che il mestiere di scrivere si possa risolvere nel confezionare in modo letterario gli affari propri, col penoso stratagemma di modificare i nomi e talvolta la sequenza dei fatti, quando invece il senso piu giusto di quello che possiamo fare mi e sempre parso mettere tra la nostra vita e quel che scriviamo una distanza magnifica che, prima prodotta dall'immaginazione poi colmata dal mestiere e dalla dedizione, ci porta in un altrove dove risultano mondi, prima inesistenti, in cui quanto c'e di intimamente nostro, inconfessabilmente nostro, torna ad esistere, ma a noi quasi ignoto, e toccato dalla grazia di forme delicatissime, come di fossili o farfalle.<sup>17</sup>

E' una confessione che sembra quasi rimasta per sbaglio tra le righe, anche se poi ne troviamo un'altra in cui l'Autore stesso esprime la sua convinzione che sicuramente l'editor gli chiederà di cancellare queste parti e lui e molto convinto che non lo fara. Poi cerca di spiegare al lettore il cambiamento brusco della voce narrante, anche se non e nemmeno lui molto sicuro del perche: lo fa per ragioni tecniche, per complicare la vita al lettore o semplicemente perche ha perso anche lui la fiducia nella sua voce narrante. Nella nostra opinione l'Autore fa finta di coinvolgerci nell'atto della scrittura e di farci entrare nel suo laboratorio segreto, ma alla fine queste sue righe rimangono semplici virtuosismi letterari, per usare le sue stesse parole<sup>18</sup>.

#### Conclusione

Tutti i personaggi a cui abbiamo fatto riferimento nel presente articolo, danno forma e contenuto alla crisi dell'inizio del secolo a cui appartengono, ma allo stesso tempo anche ad un superamento di essa. I protagonisti di Pirandello



hanno il coraggio di andare alla ricerca di un autore che sia alla loro altezza, che dia loro un'identità, mentre quelli di Baricco superano i limiti della propria contemporaneità per farci capire quanto siamo privi di logica, di essenza, di identità. Forse anche per questo sono difficili da digerire. Forse i personaggi baricchiani non hanno la sostanza di cui godono quelli pirandelliani, sono meno tormentati, non sono sostenuti da una struttura narrativa sufficientemente forte, non hanno l'umanità dei primi, ma tutto questo è dovuto al semplice fatto che queste sono anche le caratteristiche del presente.

Più che una *querela tra moderni e contemporanei* o una rivalità tra un *pensiero forte e uno debole*, si potrebbe parlare di un cambiamento, di una mutazione dei punti di vista, di bisogni nuovi in tempi nuovi. Più che fare paragoni e mettere etichette abbiamo provato ad abbozzare un'analisi dell'essenza nel caso di Pirandello o della mancanza di essenza nel caso di Baricco dei sei personaggi delle due opere menzionate. Concludiamo con le parole del Padre pirandelliano:

Ma se è tutto qui il male! Nelle parole! Abbiamo tutti dentro un mondo di cose! E come possiamo intenderci, signore, se nelle parole ch'io dico metto il senso e il valore delle cose come sono dentro di me; mentre chi le ascolta, inevitabilmente le assume col senso e col valore che hanno per sé, del mondo com'egli l'ha dentro? Crediamo di intenderci; non c'intendiamo mai!<sup>19</sup>

I primi cercano di capire la differenza tra essenza ed apparenza, gli altri vogliono fare spettacolo. Pirandello si impegna a fare lo scrittore, il regista, l'attore, lo spettatore, mentre Baricco si diverte a fare il narratore. Pirandello mette in crisi i meccanismi narrativi, li demolisce e cerca di ricostruirli, Baricco li prende in giro, li racconta, ma non ha la forza e la visione profonda di Pirandello. Tutti e due fanno tutto questo per mostrarci chi siamo veramente. Proviamo quindi a capirci!

## Note

- 1 Cfr. Nino Borsellino, *Una modernità permanente*, introduzione al saggio *L'umorismo* di Luigi Pirandello (Milano: Garzanti editore, 2015), VII-XXXII.
- 2 Luigi Pirandello, *Teatro, con un saggio di Giovanni Macchia* (Milano: Garzanti editore, 2001), 337.
- 3 Cfr. Lucia Munteanu, *Poetica teatrului modern*, prefață de Antonio Patraș (Iași: Institutul European, 2011), 50.
- 4 *Ivi*, 35.
- 5 *Ivi*, 36.
- 6 Luigi Pirandello, *Teatro*, cit., 395.
- 7 *Ivi*, 397.
- 8 Nino Borsellino, *Ritratto e immagini di Pirandello* (Roma-Bari: Laterza Editori, 1991), 83.

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- 9 Alessandro Baricco, *La sposa giovane* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2016), 25.
- 10 *Ivi*, 23.
- 11 *Ivi*, 21.
- 12 Giulio Ferroni, *Profondità di superficie* in *Sul banco dei cattivi. A proposito di Baricco e altri scrittori alla moda* (Roma: Donzelli editore, 2006), 23-24.
- 13 *Ivi*, 24.
- 14 Tarantino, Elisabetta, *Alessandro Baricco e la totemizzazione della letteratura*, in Pellegrini Franca, Tarantino Elisabetta (a cura di), *Il romanzo contemporaneo: voci italiane* (Troubador Publishing, 2006), 79-92.
- 15 Alessandro Baricco, *L'anima di Hegel e le mucche del Wisconsin* (Milano: Garzanti, 2001), 91.
- 16 Alessandro Baricco, *La sposa giovane*, cit., 46.
- 17 *Ivi*, 51-52.
- 18 *Cfr.* Alessandro Baricco, *La sposa giovane*, cit., 52-53.
- 19 Luigi Pirandello, *Teatro*, cit., 364.

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# *Hard-Boiled...* Stylistic Adventures and *the End of the...* Millennial Literature: Haruki Murakami

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The present paper aims to identify Haruki Murakami's place in the millennial history of the Japanese Romanesque genius. Since the literary image of an epoch no longer describes only the present moment of creation, but also a cultural present and, therefore, also a certain face of the past through the way in which it was kept alive by posterity or the way in which it was revitalized by the respective epoch, the Japanese Postmodernism appears today to be a "return to Japan" or a reassessment of traditional Japan, as well as a need for "internationalism", a means to assimilate certain new international cultural forms. Seen from this viewpoint, Haruki Murakami is an iconic author of his time and he is considered to be the Japanese writer who managed to assimilate and to quickly adapt to the postmodern literary practices, surpassing the cultural barriers rigorously maintained by Japanese traditionalism throughout the years.

*junbugaku* ("pure" literature); *taishūbungaku* ("mass" literature); crisis of literature; postmodernism.

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone. "But which is the stone that supports the bridge?" Kublai Khan asks. "The bridge is not supported by one stone or another," Marco answers, "but by the line of the arch that they form." Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds: "Why do you speak to me of the stones? It is only the arch that matters to me." Polo answers: "Without stones there is no arch."

Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities*

VINCENT VAN GOGH'S DESIRE TO "SEE THINGS IN A JAPANESE MANNER" SHOWS that Japan entered the western world as a work of fiction mediated by art and the western world was ready to accept this image of Japan in its most aestheticised form. This is also the case of the Japanese literature.

The novel as a literary genre has a long history in Japan. Arbitrarily defined as an imaginary work of prose that surpasses one hundred pages, scholars<sup>1</sup> have

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stated that its history, shaped within a yet unbroken tradition, started in the Japanese archipelago in the 10<sup>th</sup> century with the appearance of the novel *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*), written by Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji* depicts the society of a civilisation that reached the peak of its development; the Japanese court – perhaps even a decadent one – of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and the obsessively repetitive occurrence of the concept of time in the novel determined western researchers<sup>2</sup> to compare the Japanese novel with Marcel Proust's *In Search of Lost Time*.

In her attempt to define the literary genre of the novel, Murasaki Shikibu, a lady-in-waiting of the Japanese Imperial Court, pointed out that the “key” in saving a story from oblivion is not only represented by the uniqueness, peculiarity and splendour of the narrated events, but also by their cathartic “weight”:

“Old stories in our own are different from new. There are differences in the degree of seriousness. But to dismiss them as lies is itself to depart from the truth. Even in the writ which the Buddha drew from his noble heart are parables, devices from pointing obliquely at the truth. To the ignorant they may seem to operate at cross purposes. The Greater Vehicle is full of them, but the general burden is always the same. The difference between enlightenment and confusion is of about the same order as the difference between the good and the bad in a romance. If one takes the generous view, then nothing is empty and useless.”<sup>3</sup>

The Heian period (794-1186) thus saved Murasaki Shikibu's name from oblivion, together with the name of another lady of the imperial court, a contemporary and a literary rival of the former – Sei Shonagon and her novel, *The Pillow Book* (*Makura no sōshi*), which was apparently written at the same time as *The Tale of Genji*. Seven centuries later, during the Meiji period (1868-1912), after 250 years of isolation because of the shogunate period, Japan opens its doors to other cultural horizons, which would deeply influence the spiritual and material evolution of the country, including its literary production.

At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Natsume Sōseki (1867-1916) and Mori Ōgai (1862-1922) mark the beginning of modernism in Japan, as a solution to the discontent caused by naturalism, which only emphasised the negative aspects of reality and neglected the ideal beauty of art<sup>4</sup>. The Japanese literary histories then mention Nagai Kafū (1879-1959), who tried to cultivate beauty in modern forms that had no connections to reality, Junichirō Tanizaki (1886-1965) who explored a “demonic” aesthetic and who defiantly promoted sensual lust, Shiga Naoya

(1883-1971), who mastered the *watakushi shōsetsu* genre (“first person novel”), Ryūnosuke Akutagawa (1892-1927), who created a literature encompassed by a “vague unrest”, followed by *Shinkankaku*, or the “New Sensationalist School”, whose aim was to revolutionise literary style, upholding the idea “art for art’s sake”. One writer from this group was the first Japanese Nobel laureate in literature, Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972), who explored avant-garde techniques and the heritage of the Japanese aesthetic conscience.

Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972), whose novels explore the outskirts of dreams<sup>5</sup>, in 1947, when the capitalist industrialisation began in the Japanese archipelago, stated that in such times, with which he could neither synchronise nor emphasise, his only option was to return “to the immemorial sadness of Japan”<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, in his books, he explores hallucinatory experiences, he tries to enter the “world of the devil”<sup>7</sup>, the very intimate area of these dangerous nocturnal fields, but, at the same time, he sees the simplest games of life in daylight, contemplating them in awe and delight, like gazing upon a miracle. In his Romantic condition, the prisoner of “the other” and of the “reality” he wished to transcend, Yasunari Kawabata finds the means to place this reality in parentheses – for example, in the novel *Snow Country* (*Yukiguni*, 1948), reality is never shown directly, but it is seen indirectly, through “mirrored”<sup>8</sup> images. Therefore, through *Snow Country*, in the eyes of the European reader, Japan becomes a beautiful, ephemeral and fragile place, thus resembling the Geishas from the novel. In his 1968 Nobel Prize acceptance speech entitled *Japan, the beautiful, and myself* (*Utsukushii Nihon no watashi*), Kawabata delivers an encomiastic homage to this mystic beauty. For Europe, who never directly faced the Japanese reality, but only in mediated ways, this “beautiful mirror” seems to have never been shattered... After World War II, the people who wrote about Japan – Martin Heidegger, Roland Barthes or Lévi Strauss – managed to merely project the western consciousness of the self onto an... absence. The Land of the Rising Sun therefore became a *snow country* from the other side of the mirror. A praise given to the ephemeral, fragile and beautiful Japan.

After World War II, as a predictable consequence of the economic evolution that transformed Japan into an industrial powerhouse and that modified its traditional value system, the Japanese prose could no longer be defined merely as a negation of the world built by Yasunari Kawabata<sup>9</sup>; researchers call today’s literary production the “literature of the period without myths”<sup>10</sup>. In the spirit of the contemporary world literature, Japanese literature also starts to gravitate around the postmodern question regarding the “end of myths” and “the mythical

end”: “fin des mythes ou mythe de la fin?”, a question to which it also struggles to provide answers.

The deeply industrialised consumer society of post-war Japan is faced with the unsettling prospect of the spiritual void that appears as a result of the material prosperity. The distinction between “pure” literature and “mass” literature is now increasingly vague. The “modern self” reveals its cracks and its existential drama: Osamu Dazai (1909-1948) writes about spiritual vulnerability, Ōoka Shōhei (1909-1988) notes his personal experiences during the war, Yukio Mishima (1925-1970) is obsessed with the idea of absolute beauty, Kōbō Abe (1924-1993) experiments with magical realism and Kenzaburō Ōe (1935), the Nobel laureate in literature of 1994, became a champion of the literature of commitment<sup>11</sup>.

There have been several attempts to classify the different literary forms that appeared after 1945, such as the “post-war generation” (*sengoha*), the “the third generation of postwar writers” (*daisan no shinjin*), the “generation of introverts” (*naikō no sedai*), or the “generation of immaturity” (*ao no sedai*), but these categories have not been protruded<sup>12</sup>. Regarding the literature produced by the writers of the ‘80s, although there have been attempts to characterise it through expressions such as “urban sensibility”, “literature in *katakana*”<sup>13</sup>, the “generation of emptiness”<sup>14</sup> by following the evolutions of the writers of this period, a point of convergence is hard to find; perhaps there is rather a break in tone.

The characteristics of the generation under scrutiny are marked by the impetuous and rakish accents of an absent-minded sensibility. Thus, they create an atmosphere that combines the description of the usage of the period’s marks through mental adventures with a subtle collage of new linguistic elements, fashionable words, transcriptions of foreign terms, proper names borrowed from music, cinema, comic books, advertising... which, in a postmodern manner, reminds us of the fact that the purpose of literature is not to transmit a positive message – (it is not a theatre of significances) –, but to show that the world represents an object that must be deciphered<sup>15</sup>.

Throughout the 1970s and the 1980s, Japan seems to be an industrial powerhouse: the surpluses were stocked in foreign trade, the Tokyo Commodity Exchange reached an apogee and the Japanese investments abroad had a rapid expansion. The Japanese companies were strong and prosperous; the people were spending and they had a genuine desire to do so<sup>16</sup>. Japan became a great consumer society. In this context, a particular phenomenon stands out in the ‘80s, generated by the appearance of a new type of best-seller novel: Yasuo Tanaka, *Nantonaku kurisutaru* [1980] (*Crystal Feeling*), Haruki Murakami, *Noruei no mori* [1987] (*Norwegian Wood*), Banana Yoshimoto, *Kitchen* [1987]. There were some

interesting critical responses received by such novels which no longer respected the Japanese traditional canons:

“What these novels have in common are the young protagonists with no family connections, no economic concerns, who live in an abstract, almost artificial space, who show no sentimentality and who do not get involved in the destinies of others. Men and women who are selfish, often intelligent, often emotive and almost always melancholic, they lead aimless lives. They become passionate about novelties, about things provided by the trend: clothes, music, food, houses and, finally, the relation between the man and the woman. All they do is shop, make phone calls, meet with friends and make love. No amorous passions, no hate, no strong personalities, everything is *nantonaku* (‘random, without any particular reason’).<sup>17</sup>

This viewpoint has strong Marxist inclinations, a tendency that still influenced the Japanese literary criticism at that time, a viewpoint that cannot comprehend or accept the “uselessness” of the destinies of certain characters that lived hazardous and banal lives, never in the pursuit of any “noble” purpose. However, the critics could not ignore the reader responses to this type of literature that managed to speak to millions of people. The Japanese literary criticism<sup>18</sup> was compelled to try to understand this phenomenon and explained the unexpected success of these contemporary novels through the fact that the titles of these books captured “the readers’ imagination” and that, in the end, the readers found “some type of similarity or even some sort of affinity with [...] the state of mind from a certain story”, as well as an “inconsistent humour, that is sometimes cheerful, other times sad [...]”.

However, the Japanese literary history often noted that a “literary genre of the ‘80s”, in its true sense, cannot be established<sup>19</sup>. The writers of this period are often labelled by critics as “atypical” from the viewpoint of the usual classification criteria. On the one hand, some of them are included in the vaguely outlined “subculture” phenomenon, while, on the other hand, others are considered to be “the products of a new literary form”<sup>20</sup>. If they were to have something in common<sup>21</sup>, it would not only be their opposition towards the former generations, but rather their fairly loose outlooks, which shows a detachment from the previously dominant stylistic and narrative issues and the manner in which they approach the characteristics of the period.

For some literary historians, the consumer society seems to lead the population towards a “spiritual numbness disguised in bliss”<sup>22</sup>, while for others it represents

the context which facilitated the appearance of a new, postmodern novel. Undoubtedly, the consumer society created the period marked by the suspension of the clear distinction between the two types of Japanese literature: the solemn, elitist, literature – “pure” literature (*junbungaku*), and the accessible, common literature – “mass” literature (*taishūbungaku*)<sup>23</sup>. Ignoring the characteristic themes and style of the former, the latter type of literature tries to make its own way into the hearts of the contemporary public. One of the most controversial writers of this period, Haruki Murakami, who was initially included in the second category, is today considered to be an important figure of... the former<sup>24</sup>. The Japanese writer experiments a new style and, although he initially seemed to have abandoned the politically and socially responsible character, after ten years of literary activity, he includes it in his writings once again.

Haruki Murakami openly admits in his novels that the industrial society, beginning with its first phases of development, manifests a strong tendency to include human existence in a system of artificial things that gradually replaced life's natural structures. The Japanese novelist considers that a means of surpassing this crisis would be by returning to simplicity, to the essence of things and to spontaneity. From Haruki Murakami's viewpoint, a writer of this period must focus on the longing for adventure, the habit of leaving familiar places, the curiosity for unexplored horizons. Overcoming the tendency to take roots, Haruki Murakami's books assert the triumph of the temporary; they legitimise the temptation to bewilder, to create doubt, to lure the consciousness of freedom into an apparently meaningless existence.

Haruki Murakami was born in 1949 in the city of Kyoto, but he spent his childhood and adolescence in the cosmopolitan port town of Kobe. Fascinated by western values and perhaps due to a need to rebel against his traditionalist family, he started reading Russian literature and listening to jazz music. In high school, he was the editor in chief of the school paper, at which time, with the help of dictionaries, he started reading American literature in English. He graduated from the University of Waseda in Tokyo, where he studied literature and classical theatre. For eight years, beginning in 1974, he owned a jazz bar named Peter Cat in the suburbs of Tokyo. He translated F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Irving, Paul Theroux, Tim O'Brien, Truman Capote and Raymond Carver. These experiences transformed him into a modern writer in search for a new means of expression through which he could describe contemporary Japan, a post-industrial society in which the traditional values seem to be in agony. Murakami openly admits his interest in Raymond Chandler, Gay Talese and Stephen King and the influence that Kurt Vonnegut and Richard Brautigan had on his literary formation.



He debuted in 1979 with *Kaze no uta o kike* (*Hear the Wind Sing*, 1987) and his novel received the Gunzō award, which, as the Japanese writer himself admits, motivated him to publish a second novel the following year, entitled *1973 nen no pinbōru* (*Pinball*, 1973, 1985). His literary activity continues with the novel *Hitsuji o meguru bōken* (*A Wild Sheep Chase*, 1989) in 1972, for which he received the Noma Literary Newcomer's Prize, and the novel *Sekai no owari to hādo boirudo wandārando* (*Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World*, 1991) in 1985 which was awarded the Tanizaki Prize. The novel *Noruwei no mori* (*Norwegian Wood*, 2000) was published in 1987 and it was sold in over two million copies. In Japan, it changed the definition of a “best-seller” and the author's explanation for this success is that the Japanese public was nostalgic for “idealism”<sup>25</sup>. This very novel was afterwards translated into 20 languages and it made its author famous worldwide. In 1988, *Dansu, dansu, dansu* (*Dance, Dance, Dance*, 1994) appeared as a sequel of the novel *A Wild Sheep Chase*; thus, the first literary decade of Haruki Murakami's career ends with an eight volume edition of *Complete Works*, published between 1990 and 1991. In 1992, the novel *Kokkyō no minami, taiyō no nishi* (*South of the Border, West of the Sun*, 2000) is published, followed, in 1994, by *Nejimakidori kuronikuru* (*The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, 1997), which was nominated for the IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, and by *Supūtoniku no koibito* (*Sputnik Sweetheart*, 2001) in 1999. In 2002, he published *Umibe no Kafka* (*Kafka on the Shore*, 2005) and, two years later, *Afutādāku* (*After Dark*, 2007). Between 2009 and 2010, his three volume novel *1Q84* (*1Q84*, 2011) is published, and, in 2013, *Shikisai o motanai Tazaki Tsukuru to, kare no junrei no toshi* (*Colorless Tsukuru Tazaki and His Years of Pilgrimage*, 2014), followed, in 2014, by *Onna no inai otokotachi* (*Men Without Women*, 2017) and by *Kishidanchōgoroshi* (*Killing Commendatore*) in 2017.

The Japanese writer also published collections of short stories, out of which we must mention: in 1993, *Zō no shōmetsu* (*The Elephant Vanishes*, 2003), in 2000, *Kami no kodomotachi wa mina odoru* (*After the Quake*, 2002). In 2006, he publishes *Mekurayanagi to, nemuru onna* (*Blind Willow, Sleeping Woman*, 2006), and *Hashiru koto ni tsuite kataru toki ni boku no kataru koto* (*What I Talk About When I Talk About Running*, 2008) the following year. In 1997, he also published a collection of interviews, *Andāguraundo* (*Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, 2000), which approaches the 1995 sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway. A literary criticism establishment thus appears as a response to this phenomenon, carrying out numerous studies on Murakami's works, while different journals publish special issues and interviews, all of which lead to his repeated nomination for the Nobel Prize for literature.

Haruki Murakami was, at first, criticized by the Japanese literary establishment for his style, lack of inspiration or his indifference to political issues, an attitude which was completely different from the one manifested by his public, who was immediately receptive to the new type of fiction proposed by the Japanese writer, a novel form that requires active reading. In the case of Haruki Murakami's books, the act of reading through reinterpretation raises the issue of the relations between the word, the text and the discourses, between the discourses and the possible worlds created by the fictional text or between language and the author's and the interpreter's/ reader's subjectivities. These issues confront the reader with the matter of individual and national identity: what does it mean to be Japanese in this new society that is increasingly overwhelming and powerful, increasingly cynical and hypocritical?

At first, Haruki Murakami builds the trauma from his novels dominated by nostalgia and sentimentalism by placing them in the second half of the '60s, under the appearance of a negation of the political, social and cultural issues that marked this period<sup>26</sup>, but this attitude would change over time. At first, his novels try to capture the dissolution, the lack of connection and the confusion that lingered over the contemporary Japanese society. The Japanese writer then tried to explore the depths of these conditions and sensations, searching for their origins and, in the end, drawing his characters out of the indifference so often reproached by the critics: as solitary creatures, they confined themselves in a world of self-isolation. Nothing seems to be wrong in their lives but, somehow, something seems to be missing.

Haruki Murakami's novels deconstruct and redefine the notion of "opus", now governed by the strategies of the otherness, of the others' existence in an open/intertextual significant system through a relationship that allows a diachronic and synchronic glide, a random movement towards a nonexistent, or constantly flexible and unstable centre.

Through Haruki Murakami, the postmodern Japanese novel manages to end the previously uncontested hegemony of the global significance of the text, which leads to the "erosion" of the traditional dogma of "expressing" certain pre-established meanings through language. The postmodern literature, essentially defined by Ihab Hassan<sup>27</sup> as a "literature of silence", is brilliantly exemplified by Haruki Murakami's opus. This leads to a philosophy of nothingness, to the assumption that existence does not contain any meaning in itself and thus human reality is consequently compelled to invent these meanings and to be their reason. There is no unitary principle through which one would explain the world and the existence of a universal meaning is entirely unlikely. In his novels, Haruki

Murakami seems to assert that life just *is*, but this does not imply the fact that it also *signifies*. Therefore, it is up to us, the readers, whether we are creators or consumers, to draw the arch by identifying the stones that support the bridge...

### Notes

- 1 See Donald Keene, *Literatura japoneză* [Japanese literature] (Romanian translation by Doina and Mircea Oprea, foreword and compendium of Japanese literature by Sumiya Haruya, Bucharest: Univers, 1991), 159.
- 2 Cf. *Idem*, 79.
- 3 Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji* (Translated and introduced by Edward G. Seidensticker, New-York: Everyman's Library), 460.
- 4 Cf. Donald Keene, *Ibidem*, 126.
- 5 Jean-Jacques Origas, *Dans la lumière des jours ordinaires. Histoire et roman de l'après guerre*, in Patrick De Voss (ed.), *Littérature japonaise contemporaine. Essais* (Bruxelles : Editions Labor, 1989), 18.
- 6 "Depuis la défaite, il ne me reste qu'à m'en retourner dans la tristesse immémoriale du Japon".
- 7 Jean-Jacques Origas, *Ibidem*, 19.
- 8 Cf. Karatani Kōjin, *D'un dehors à l'autre. Kawabata et Takeda Taijun* (In Patrick De Voss (ed.), *Ibidem*), 33-34.
- 9 Donald Keene, *Ibidem*, 159.
- 10 Karatani Kōjin, *Ibidem*, 35.
- 11 See *Idem*, 125-164.
- 12 Cf. Jean-Jacques Origas, *Ibidem*, 9-11.
- 13 Katakana is the Japanese syllabary used to transcribe neologisms and foreign names.
- 14 Donald Keene, *Ibidem*, 190.
- 15 See Liviu Petrescu, *Poetica postmodernismului* [The poetics of postmodernism] (Pitești: Editura Paralela 45, 1996), 120.
- 16 See Shūichi Katō, *Istoria literaturii japoneze (De la origini până în prezent)* [A History of Japanese Literature: From the Manyōshū to Modern Times] (Vol. II, translated from the Japanese by Kazuko Diaconu and Paul Diaconu, Bucharest: Editura Nipponica, 1998), 892, and Patricia Welch, *Haruki Murakami's Storytelling World*, in "World Literature Today" (79, 1, Jan-Apr 2005), 55.
- 17 Shūichi Katō, *Ibidem*, 892. (our transl.)
- 18 *Ibidem*.
- 19 Jacques Levy, *Ibidem*, 189.
- 20 *Idem*.
- 21 Cf. *Ibidem*.
- 22 Shūichi Katō, *Ibidem*, 892.
- 23 See Yoshiko Fukushima, *Japanese Literature, or "J-Literature", in the 1990s*, in "World Literature Today" (77, 1, Apr-Jun 2003), 40-44, where the most representative names of the contemporary Japanese literature are approached.

24 Cf. Matthew C. Strecher, Beyond “Pure” Literature: Mimesis, Formula, and the Postmodern in the Fiction of Murakami Haruki, in “The Journal of Asian Studies” (Vol. 57, No. 2, May 1998), 373-374: “Even Shinchō’s recent Nihon Bungaku Jiten contain an entry on Murakami, albeit a short one, in which he is listed not as a taishūbungakusha („mass’ literature writer) but simply as a shōsetsuka (novelist)”.

25 See Sinda Gregory (et al.), It Don’t Mean a Thing, If It Ain’t Got that Swings: An Interview with Haruki Murakami, in “Review of Contemporary Fiction” (Vol.22, No. 2, Summer 2002), 117.

26 See Patricia Welch, Ibidem, 55, and Jay Rubin, The Other World of Murakami Haruki, in “Japan Quarterly” (39, 4, Oct. 1992), 499.

27 See Ihab Hassan, The Postmodern Turn. Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1987), 168-173.

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# Limit Testing in Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled*

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*The Unconsoled* is not your typical Ishiguro novel. It is not that the Nobel prize winning author disappoints, it is just that he leaves the much explored territory of post-imperial nostalgia to deal with another type of identity struggle. Through his main character Ryder, Ishiguro projects complex metaphors of displacement, memory and loss of identity only to amaze and at the same time confuse the reader whose limits are invariably tested throughout the novel.

identity; limit; time; place; dream.

PUBLISHED RIGHT AFTER THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE WINNING *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*, *THE UNCONSOLED* IS NOTHING SHORT OF EXPERIMENTAL AND BEWILDERING. Many reviewers were disappointed as they must have been expecting a sequel to Ishiguro's previous novel. Kellaway anxiously asked: "What has gone wrong? [...] It's almost as if the elegant butler in *The Remains of the Day* [...] has suddenly thrown his sleek, constraining waistcoat away, stripped off and gone on a dangerous, unruly bender<sup>1</sup>. Ned Rorem compares the novel to Chinese water torture<sup>2</sup>, while Wood thought the novel invented "its own category of badness"<sup>3</sup>.

In Salman Rushdie's view, there are three reasons for this negative feedback: the length of the novel, the fact that it frustrated expectations and the reviewers' not understanding Ishiguro's point. *The Remains of the Day* was thought too much in terms of being about "the fall of the British Empire"<sup>4</sup>, while the author suggested it was rather metaphorical. *The Unconsoled*, however, pushes the limits of the metaphorical to the extreme.

Positive feedback is not entirely absent though. The Archbishop of Canterbury thought *The Unconsoled* to be "a powerful depiction of the increasing sense of fragmentation and the loss of community experienced in many parts of the worlds today."<sup>5</sup>

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Such contrasting reviews are a result of a dramatic shift in Ishiguro's style as compared to his previous three novels. This new novel no longer deals with characters whose unhappy past experiences are repressed. It is more concerned with the eruption of peculiar experiences in the main character's present life.

Ryder, a musician known as "the world's finest living pianist [...], perhaps the very greatest of the century"<sup>6</sup>, arrives in this imaginary unnamed central European city without precise location to give a performance that may be the most important performance of his life. To confuse matters even more, Ryder is an amnesiac who cannot remember the exact nature of the performance he is supposed to give or the details of his extremely tight schedule. He seems to have visited the place before, he even discovers he has a wife and a boy in this city. Ryder is repeatedly startled by figures from his past who appear surreally in the town's labyrinthic streets. Much like in a dream, Ryder cannot remember what he or these people are doing there, but everyone remembers him. They visit him, peruse albums of clippings from his career and judge piano rehearsals. He, on the other hand, is expected to reconcile estranged families, plead the case of a disgraced orchestra conductor and even attend, as the guest of honour, the funeral of a perfect stranger. Or so the reader is lead to believe. In short, Ryder is expected to restore the morale of a community gripped by a deep despair, a suffering that affects the most intimate corners of the victims' lives. This is a community that idolizes its artists and suffers a collective breakdown when its idols fail.

As Ryder desperately attempts to fulfill his responsibilities, i.e. listen to all the characters' speeches, save the community from spiritual failure, it becomes clear that he is, just like the others, a tragically limited being, unable to communicate. A failing messiah. Much like Stevens, the main character from *The Remains of the Day*, he is obsessed with duty, a character both a beneficiary of social order and its victim.

Memory, one of the main themes of Ishiguro's fiction, is also brought to the test in *The Unconsoled*. Ryder is both an amnesiac and blessed with unusual extrasensory perceptions. He can access the memories of other people, he reads their minds, knows their thoughts, fantasies and disappointments and he can report conversations out of his listening range. Still, more often than not he fails to catch the essence of what is happening next to him. He can only access fragments, he does not have access to the whole.

"His memory does not work in the usual way, but I was trying to do something a bit odd here", says Ishiguro. "I was trying to compress the way most of us go through a lifetime just in those few days. So it's a bit like that experience of getting

to a certain point in your life and suddenly finding that you've got various people attached to you, wondering, not quite knowing, how you got into that situation. It's that sort of thing, except here it happens literally. I mean: the whole thing takes place. I wanted to use that kind of dream world to express it. It's not literally a dream, but I wanted to use some of the things that happen in dreams, which I thought most people will be – on some level – familiar with<sup>7</sup>.

From the very moment of his arrival, unusual things happen to Ryder. Bits and pieces of England intrude into the landscape and his hotel room turns out to be a room from his childhood. He comes across his parents' car and friends from his past – Saunders, Parkhurst, Fiona Roberts. Space and time are distorted. A broom closet opens into the kitchen of a restaurant that should be miles away and journeys that seem to take hours last only a few moments.

Barry Lewis interprets *The Unconsoled* using Freudian dream theory<sup>8</sup>. His analysis is based on the fact that both dreams and texts are open to interpretation on several levels. Both the psychoanalyst and the critic look for hidden symbols. Displacement and condensation are crucial concepts when analysing dreams. Displacement “serves to allay emotional anxiety by substituting one idea or object or person for another within the sequence of fantasised events. It does this in two ways, according to Freud. Firstly, a latent element is substituted for something not directly connected with itself. This is almost a form of allusion. Secondly, the item of psychic importance is transferred from a serious element to a trivial one, thus defamiliarising the dream and producing an off-centre effect<sup>9</sup>”.

To further support the possibility of reading the novel as a dream, each of the three main parts of the novel begins with Ryder waking up. It is almost as if one dreams one is awake. This further adds to the overall feeling of anxiety that the novel exudes, only to allude to art's inability to offer consolation in an anxious society that has lost its landmarks. The climax of the first part is one of the most deviant dreamlike sequences. Ryder is woken up in the middle of the night by Hoffman who asks over the phone to meet him in the lobby. Wearing his dressing gown, Ryder is given no choice but to attend a reception which, as it is later revealed, is meant to console Mr. Brodsky for the death of his dog Bruno, rather than to welcome the musician. In fact, the guests do not even seem to notice that Ryder is wearing his dressing gown, being much more concerned with giving bizarre speeches meant to comfort Brodsky who is hardly allowed to say a word in his defence: “Mr. Brodsky seems to wish to say a few words, but quite frankly -ha ha!- we've been trying to persuade him against doing so”, explains Hoffman<sup>10</sup>. Ryder's speech is the most confusing of all. After several failed attempts to begin, he climbs on his chair and delivers his opening line: “Collapsing curtain rails!

Poisoned rodents! Misprinted scoresheets!”<sup>11</sup>. That is his entire speech because Miss Collins engages him in a private conversation, while he is still standing on his chair. Most unexpectedly, the following day Ryder is greeted by Hoffman: “Ah, that was such a marvelous witty address! The whole town is talking of nothing else this morning!”<sup>12</sup>.

Illogical events (the reception in the middle of the night), exaggerated concern for trivial things (Brodsky’s dog) and fear of public exposure (Ryder’s wearing only his night clothes) all seem to work together to undermine the novel’s stability. In chapter 23, Ryder asks to be allowed to practice for the concert in a private place while Hoffman shows him into a toilet cubicle containing a piano. When Ryder complains, the hotel manager drives him to an “annexe” which is actually a shed on a hill, also with a piano inside. In chapter 25, Ryder meets Brodsky in a cemetery where the musician is recognized by some people attending a funeral. As he is invited to attend the ceremony and offered cake and peppermint, the open grave is totally forgotten. Much in the same manner, in chapter 30, Brodsky and his bicycle are caught up in an accident just before the concert he is supposed to conduct and thus prove to the whole community that he has quit drinking and that he is an honourable and respectable musician. A doctor amputates his leg with an old hacksaw and Brodsky appears on the stage with an ironing board serving as crutch. To take the absurd plot even further, it is later revealed that it was his artificial leg that was cut off and that the doctor did not even notice that.

As the novel turns into a surreal collage with misplaced individuals with little other concern than to get consolation from one another, the question remains: who is Ryder?

“To identify something is to locate it in space and time”<sup>13</sup>. Identity implies continuity across time and space. Giddens makes the distinction between identity and self-identity. While the former is given, the latter implies that the subject is self reflexive. “A person with a reasonable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity which she is able to grasp reflexively and, to a greater or lesser degree, communicate to other people”<sup>14</sup>.

As for space, Ryder has an unknown location. All we find out is that he arrives somewhere in a city in the centre of Europe. The space constructed in this ambiguous city is labyrinthic, directions are useless for they cannot be followed. In Ryder’s words, it is “perfectly possible that we could walk around in circles infinitely”<sup>15</sup>. As his name suggests, Ryder permanently rides in a space that is not his own, that he does not identify with. Time is also elusive. Events last more than they should, everything is relative. When he promises he won’t be long,



Ryder returns after three chapters to Boris who greets him “Where’ve you been? ... You’ve been ages”<sup>16</sup>.

Thus, Ryder’s identity is discontinuous and fragmented, almost un-narratable. The entire novel tests the reader’s (Ryder’s?) limits by constantly deconstructing what is being said to the extent that one can no longer trust time, space or anyone at all. *The Unconsoled* is Ishiguro’s way of doing away with rules, of taking metaphorical writing to a whole new level.

### Notes

- 1 Lewis, B. Kazuo Ishiguro. (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 2000).
- 2 id.
- 3 ibid.
- 4 ibid.
- 5 ibid.
- 6 Ishiguro, K. *The Unconsoled*. (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995).
- 7 Shaffer, B. W., Wong, C. F., eds., *Conversations with Kazuo Ishiguro*. University Press of Mississippi, 2008).
- 8 ibid.
- 9 ibid.
- 10 id.
- 11 ibid.
- 12 ibid.
- 13 Jenkins, R., *Social Identity*. (London, New York: Routledge, 1996).
- 14 Giddens, A., *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).
- 15 ibid.
- 16 ibid.

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# How the Game Talks...

A philosophical insight into the game stages of Nichita Stănescu's poems

*Maria-Zoica Balaban* \*

The game, as it was defined by Nichita Stănescu, will create a universe whose limits lie everywhere and whose center is nowhere. The game establishes ontologically but blocks itself in the absence of a general, which is why the game is dominated by doubtful actions. The game simulates a reality in the absence of a general meant to ground it.

being; game; player; clowning; memories.

*THE EVENTUAL BEING IS THE FIRST STAGE OF THE GAME, A GAME THAT WAS PERCEIVED BY STĂNESCU'S CRITICS AS AN EXTREMELY INTERESTING APPROACH.* The game, as an important part of the poetic discourse, has a special place in Nichita Stănescu's poetry, due to its overwhelming role as the internal construct of both the *eventual being* and the *possible being*. The concept of game will be detailed in this paper by taking into consideration *the eventual being*, the most comprehensive and risky being slot.

The game configures a being slot that is expanding and concentrating at the same time. The game establishes ontologically but blocks itself in the absence of a general, which is why the game is dominated by doubtful actions. The game simulates a reality in the absence of a general meant to ground it. The ontological situation of the *eventual being* brings novelty in the structure of the verb to be, more specifically- the presumptive, a time verb specific to the Romanian language that "seems to have felt the need of its own form for expressing doubtful actions."<sup>1</sup>

The game, as it was defined by Nichita Stănescu, will create a universe whose limits lie everywhere and whose center is nowhere. It is precisely the way in which Constantin Noica also tried to define the *eventual being* in the greater pattern of the *Being*. The game intervenes as an instance that makes possible a better assimilation of the being stages: "creation makes no sense without the assumption of someone who understands it, uses it and assimilates it in the way dreamed by the creator."<sup>2</sup>

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It is known that, from Constantin Noica's perspective, the entry to an order has always been looked for; we do not know to what extent Stănescu was the follower of such a theory, of putting it in order, but we must not forget that through the game, he managed to create some "states of being" that do not diminish the status of the great Being he spoke about in *11 Elegii*. Regardless of the game type (dance, mimics, gestures, or joyfulness state), this creates being slots that prepare the way to the Being model. The game, seen as a matrix in Nichita Stănescu's poems, sets up ontologically the joyfulness state in poetry, defined by Nichita Stănescu in the following terms: "a state of explosive, childish things, a euphoria expressing the desire to go on the street by humming fragments of songs, a happiness without reason [...] something about the lack of care and wandering, the overflow of youth's souls."<sup>3</sup>

In order to present the *eventual being* model, we will take into consideration three poems from the volume *Necuvintele: Râsu-Plânsu* (Mim), *Cina cea de taină*, and *Mă fac nevăzut*.

The poem *Râsu-Plânsu* identifies and outlines that joyfulness state specific to Nichita Stănescu. He defines it as a "dissimulated sense of humor, a joyful mixture of candor and sarcasm."<sup>4</sup> The subtitle of the poem (The Mime) highlights this uncertainty state and the inability before entering the order: "Prea repede se schimbă ceea ce numim/stări de spirit,/e ca și cum același mim/într-o cazarmă ar adormi mereu/în șirul nesfârșit de paturi suprapuse din lăuntrul meu"(Nichita Stănescu, *Râsu-Plânsu* in *Necuvintele*, p.611). This joyful state, suggested by the title of the poem, changes into an uncertainty attitude along with the emergence of the mime, the one known to be the initial and complex symbol of the determinations, through his mere silence, says more than the speech objectivation within the human being. The mime expresses values overthrow. The mime does not speak, therefore speaking is also denied at the level of the eventual being. The mime expresses a certain tendency of "it will be being" towards the superhuman condition and at the same time he wants to "signify the valuable freedom of those who have freed themselves from the ordinary conditions."<sup>5</sup> The mime is the one who best embodies this state of being, but the mime is not perceived in its state of existential completeness, he is no longer a jovial, exuberant mime, but on the contrary he is a "tired mime", a "mime without a precise limit", which is a basic characteristic of the eventual being, the one whose periphery is everywhere, always ready to replay the same story: "Blestem, oricând să poți să-ncepi de / la-nceput,/ viața ta de nenăscut" (Nichita Stănescu, *Râsu-Plânsu*, p.612). It is, moreover, a desperate attempt to identify a state of positive impulse. The lack of precise boundaries constrains the mime to non-action, and the joyful state turns from a euphoric state into sarcasm and lamentation.

It is time to draw a distinction between the person playing and the game itself, between the behavior of the person who's playing and the playing itself. In an essay on the game techniques, Hans Georg Gadamer explains the relationship between the player and the game/play in the following terms: "What is a simple game is not something serious. The play maintains a specific essential rapport with the seriousness."<sup>6</sup> In our poetry, however, the play does not take place, the mime, the player is too tired to get involved in the discourse from non-existence to full existence. And Gadamer continues, "the player knows that the game is just a game and is being played in a world determined by the seriousness of the goals. [...] The act of the game fulfills its purpose only when the player is assimilated by the game[...]. The one who does not take the game seriously damages its pleasure."<sup>7</sup> But in our case, the mime no longer plays, he is identifiable with himself and he does not look any further inside or outside. He is enough for himself, and the game as a manifestation of a process on the go is no longer accomplished.

The same attitude is rendered in *Cina cea de taină* poem, in which there is no reference to the biblical motive, but the syntax of the title is used to symbolize the mystery of the relationship between the non-word and the word or the one of the bride and the groom. This poem also reflects the eventual being, within the limits of *it will be being*, but this time the game appears as a dance. Not surprisingly, the music of the spheres comes to fill the dance between the bridegroom and the bride, the original pair detectable in this preexistence stage. The game is replaced by dance, an unorganized dance that takes place in a closed space delimited by the vault (Is it a repetition of the state of *being suspended* in which the word is threatened to fall again?): "Dă-mi mâna mireasă a mea, speriată,/ și să fugim, să fugim amândoi/ În curând va ploua cu trupuri, plonjată/ bolta va fi peste noi./ Va ploua cu trupuri decapitate/ Să fugim, să fugim, eu și tu, / din casa cu ziduri întruna mișcate/ unde cina noastră de taină se petrecu" (Nichita Stănescu, *Cina cea de taină*, p.629).

The last two lines of the poem are precisely the definition given to the unworded-word that can never remain identical to itself. Like the movements of dance that are never identical with themselves, so the status of the unworded-word is not identical to itself. The dancers (the bride and the groom) can only enter the dance narcosis, and not under its organized delirium, "and that is why they do not realize how right they are: they know how to delightfully set apart from everything, but they do not know in which they can catch themselves, as they do not know that there are bigger things that can surround them."<sup>8</sup> They want to forget through dance and running, the imponderability of the unworded-word, but this can not happen because this world of being out of existence is not forgotten, but it is inhabitable, an attitude, for now, rejected by the players.

The last poem we are going to consider is *Mă fac nevăzut*. The poem proposes another aspect of the game, this time, a game of naivety, too childish, using the symbolism of Aladin's lamp, the relationship between materiality and immateriality, between real and unreal. The poem no longer creates the image of the man-slot, but of the stars slots that function in the game as windows of the world: "stars with teeth, stars with tail / stars with an eye in the forehead". Everything is doubtful, from the categories of the real to those of the abstract: "anti-existence", "anti-time". The game, in its childish naivety, is willing to be played, but the player, the only instance that gives credibility to the game, "turns unseen": "Mă fac nevăzut frecând lampa lui Aladin/ Mă rarefiez cu cuvinte cu tot" (Nichita Stănescu, *Mă fac nevăzut*, p.623). The player does not play, but simulates a game in which the players can not be caught in any determination: "Unseen I pass through nobody, through others". There is no question, at this level of the eventual being, of a revelation; no real leap has yet been made towards something else, a leap that would put a balance between "anti-short ones" and "anti-tall ones" or "anti-time" with "anti-existence". In fact, revelation is what Stănescu defined in the *Antimetaphysics*: "Revelation is that instant and lucid jump that balances the inner truth with the objective one. It has no time, no space, it is simultaneous with the beginning and the end of time, and simultaneous with any point in the universe. In order for it to occur, it is necessary to lift the scaffolding first, to polish the hub, to come the executioner, clothed with a hood, and, with a single bang, to cut the long and unconscious throat of the stupidity that holds bound the star from the other stars".<sup>9</sup>

The game is not a positive way of exiting and living in language. The eventual being, in all its expansion, is only a limited situation. The game itself is, in fact, a risk to the player and Stănescu assumes that risk. "We can only play with real and effective possibilities", says Gadamer, and the player, this time, is no longer an effective option. If he does not play the game seriously and becomes unseen, he spoils his game's pleasure. Stănescu's poetry is thus an attempt within the word, an attempt to see if something goes, if it succeeds and if it succeeds once again. In fact, this is also the charm of the game. Stănescu's poetry, regardless of the being stages we are considering, is a game that fascinates the player, immerses him deeply in the game, and, most importantly, keeps him at stake.

In the game, the player is transcending. From this point of view, Stănescu is the great transcender, and the word grabbed, even in its inner side, carries out the transcendence regardless of the being situations we are considering. "The one who transcends does not want to be recognized, but to appear and to pass like someone else. He no longer wants to go into the eyes of others as himself, but wants to be taken as someone else. He does not want, therefore, to be discovered or recognized. He does

it as someone else, but in the way we mime something in concrete relationships, that is, pretending only, dissimulating and producing a certain impression. Apparently, the one who plays in this way denies the continuity with himself. In reality, however, this means that he keeps for himself this continuity by refusing it to others he is playing for.”<sup>10</sup> Here is the rupture from metamorphosis. While metamorphosis still retains continuity, transcendence, within the game, breaks itself off. It is perhaps what Stănescu attempted at this level of the eventual existence, a certain expansion that would have been possible only in the transcended image of the word and the speaker, be it a mime, an arlechin, an actor or a generic player.

The game itself attracted the speaker and filled him with his spirit. The game has always been perceived as a superior reality to struggle. The game turns into a show where the spectators are missing, only the actors keep playing, mixing euphoric states with despair states, loneliness with imponderability.

### Notes

- 1 Noica, Constantin, *Sentimentul românesc al ființei*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1978, p.38.
- 2 idem, ibidem, p.40.
- 3 Stănescu, Nichita, *Antimetafizica* in *Opere*. Vol.IV.Proză. Traduceri, ediție alcătuită de Mircea Coloșenco, Editura Academiei Române, Univers Enciclopedic, București, 2003, p.75.
- 4 Ștefănescu, Alex., *Îngerul cu o carte în mâini*, Editura Mașinii de Scris, București, 2005, p.17.
- 5 \*\*\* *Dicționarul de simboluri*, vol.1, Editura Artemis, București, 1995, p.68.
- 6 Gadamer, Hans Georg, *Actualitatea frumosului*. Traducere de Val.Panaiteșcu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2000, p.86.
- 7 idem, ibidem, p.86.
- 8 Noica, Constantin, *Ce nu știe Zorba Grecul?* in *Viața Românească* nr.2 februarie 1980, p.57.
- 9 Stănescu, Nichita, *Antimetafizica*, ed.cit.,p.654.
- 10 Gadamer, Hans Georg, op.cit.,p.93.

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Varia



# Les universités roumaines face aux enjeux de la communication. Le discours de l'université – masques et réalités

The University Discourse – Mask and Reality

*Adela Drăgan* \* & *Florinela Șerbănică* \*\*

The competition among universities, also determined by financial constraints, influences the university discourse as identifiable in the Rector's address, published online, or in the discourse uttered in various contexts, such as the inauguration of the academic year or the graduation ceremony. The discourse in question undergoes various alterations, in the sense of a lack of balance in the valuation of the institution or the potential candidates, the university face being thus unavoidably threatened. Given the high stakes of attracting candidates, it is obvious that there are consequences on the relation generated, which replaces the formal style (as a classical form) by a more informal one (as a contextual form). The present analysis makes use of Goffman's theory of face and the informative-argumentative aspects of discourse, applied on the corpus provided by the Rector's address or other official addresses of Romanian universities, published on their respective sites.

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communication; face; mask; politeness; informative-argumentative.

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## Préambule

De nos jours, la communication virtuelle est déjà une habitude consacrée dans la vie privée et professionnelle. Comme beaucoup d'autres institutions, les universités sont amenées à s'en servir, contraintes par les besoins d'information des étudiants, ou de tout autre public, et par leur obligation professionnelle d'employer des outils qui répondent aux attentes du public.

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Vu que la logique du marché qui caractérise notre vie actuelle transforme les universités en véritables vendeurs de services d'éducation, soumis aux règles de marketing quasi classiques, la communication virtuelle devient l'espace de mise en place des stratégies d'image et de vente qui assurent aux universités le nombre d'étudiants attendu et par conséquent, le financement de la part du ministère dans le cas des établissements d'État.

Dans notre approche, nous essayons de mettre en évidence les stratégies discursives utilisées par les universités, à travers le « mot du recteur » ou des discours occasionnels, en vue d'attirer un nombre sinon élevé, au moins suffisant d'étudiants et de se construire une image.

L'impact du contexte économique actuel sur l'activité des universités roumaines

### 1.1 Aspects de dynamique de la ressource humaine

L'enseignement universitaire roumain connaît actuellement une baisse importante du nombre d'étudiants, dont les raisons démographiques et de mobilité géographique sont les plus importantes, alors que pour des raisons économiques et sociales, on essaie de ne pas licencier des enseignants. Les statistiques récentes montrent que l'état de l'enseignement en Roumanie et celui des universités en particulier est loin d'être réjouissant. Entre 2010 – 2015 (année du dernier rapport officiel), le nombre d'étudiants a baissé de presque 50% - de 775319 à 411229 - alors que le nombre d'enseignants est resté presque le même - 31103 en 2010, 27672 en 2015) (<https://www.edu.ro/starea-invatamantului>, <https://www.edu.ro/raport-privind-starea-invațământului-superior-în-românia-2015>).

Cette situation a comme effet une concurrence accrue entre les universités, ce qui les oblige à mettre en œuvre des stratégies diverses, y compris discursives, destinées à attirer les candidats.

### 1.2 L'évaluation des universités

Les efforts administratifs nationaux pour réglementer la qualité de l'activité universitaire ont conduit à la création en 2005 de l'Agence Roumanie de l'Assurance de la Qualité dans l'Enseignement Supérieur, connue sous le sigle ARACIS (v. <http://www.aracis.ro/>) dont la mission est entre autres d'évaluer périodiquement les curricula proposés par les universités, en vue de leur autorisation et accréditation.

L'activité d'évaluation périodique de l'ARACIS constitue un enjeu important en raison des conséquences sur le financement des universités. En prenant comme critères des aspects tels la visibilité internationale, assurée par les collaborations avec les universités étrangères, ou les articles publiés dans des revues de prestige, cette agence utilise dans ses évaluations une échelle des « degrés de confiance ».

Comme on le verra plus tard, le qualificatif de l'ARACIS passe pour argument sur les sites des universités, dans leur stratégie de communication.

À part cette évaluation périodique, l'AUE (Association des Universités) a réalisé en 2011 sa propre évaluation des universités roumaines, selon des critères européens. La conséquence en fut la redistribution du financement, à savoir l'augmentation du financement pour les quelques universités les mieux classées et le maintien ou la baisse du financement pour les autres. Par conséquent, de nombreuses universités se sont retrouvées dans la situation d'attirer les étudiants par d'autres moyens, parmi lesquels la communication virtuelle, assurée par les sites.

Le site de l'université comme moyen de communication

Les sites permettent aux universités de mener une activité de communication permanente, gérée en fonction des objectifs institutionnels. Dans la relation qui s'instaure entre l'université et son public, même si de nature virtuelle, certaines universités choisissent de présenter un discours de la part du recteur, selon le modèle des entreprises, qui comptent sur un message de la part de leur PDG. Toutes les universités roumaines ne proposent pas un tel discours, mais là où il est pratiqué, il a dans les grandes lignes une valeur stratégique pour l'institution et il assure le contact entre la direction/l'institution et les étudiants ou les autres catégories de public intéressées.

En dehors du mot du recteur ou de la présentation de l'université, divers discours occasionnels liés à des événements officiels se donnent le rôle de valoriser l'institution et ses étudiants et de créer une relation bénéfique pour les deux partenaires. Ces discours constituent la source de notre corpus.

Repères théoriques et présentation du corpus

## **2.1 Directions d'analyse - repères théoriques**

Dans notre analyse, nous nous sommes intéressées à deux classes d'aspects : communicatifs et relationnels (notamment les implications théoriques du concept de « face » et de politesse) et argumentatifs, c'est-à-dire le maniement des arguments en vertu des objectifs poursuivis. Notre étude relève donc de trois domaines se trouvant en étroite liaison : l'analyse du discours, la pragmatique et l'étude de l'argumentation. S'agissant d'une analyse sur le corpus, nous nous sommes rapportées à des travaux synthétiques, de référence, qui donnent une image relativement stable des concepts véhiculés dans ces trois domaines, plutôt que de soulever des polémiques ou d'avancer des points de vue innovants (Moeschler, J., Reboul, A., 1994, Ducrot, O., Schaeffer, J.-M., 1995, Tuțescu, M., 1998, Perelman, Ch. Olbrechts-Tyteca, L., 2008).

En nous appuyant sur ces repères conceptuels, nous avons procédé à un repérage attentif des phénomènes pertinents dans le corpus et nous avons établi une classification, selon leurs caractères récurrents. Comme une sélection était absolument nécessaire, nous avons examiné de plus près les phénomènes présents dans l'ensemble du corpus, en laissant de côté ceux qui ne nous ont pas semblé jouer un rôle essentiel dans l'ensemble des textes sélectionnés.

La sélection et l'organisation de ces phénomènes rendent compte plutôt de leurs poids dans le corpus ; nous avons donc suivi avant tout la logique des textes. De plus, le regroupement des faits discutés dans les différentes parties de notre travail est dicté surtout par la nécessité d'une organisation interne ; en réalité, ils relèvent de plusieurs phénomènes à la fois.

Étant donné le statut social important de l'université, qui lui impose de se nourrir une image adaptée et actuelle pour le rôle qu'elle assume, une analyse de l'impact de son discours sur sa « face » est également possible et nous l'avons ajoutée à notre démarche. Définie comme « la valeur sociale positive qu'une personne revendique effectivement à travers la ligne d'action que les autres supposent qu'elle a adoptée au cours d'un contact particulier », la face est également décrite comme « une image de moi délinée selon certains attributs sociaux approuvés, et néanmoins partageable, puisque (...) on peut donner une bonne image de sa profession ou de sa confession en donnant une bonne image de soi » (Goffman, E. 1974 : 9). Perçue comme un être vivant par la société à laquelle elle appartient, une entité physique qui réagit de façon affective à travers les personnes qui l'animent, l'université se préoccupe de son image et s'expose telle une personne aux menaces potentielles venant du discours qu'elle pratique – via le discours des représentants officiels ou les discours exposés dans divers contextes et supports. Ces menaces sont encore plus évidentes dans le contexte de sa situation fragilisée, en raison des contraintes économiques et de diminution du nombre de candidats.

Développé principalement par les travaux sur la politesse linguistique de Penelope Brown et Steven Levinson(1987) ou Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni(1996), le concept de « face » nous a permis d'examiner les stratégies de valorisation développées par les universités, dans leur effort de se construire une image favorable et de bien gérer la relation avec leur public, quelle qu'en soit la nature. Ainsi, nous avons pu tirer quelques conclusions sur l'impact du discours de l'université sur les faces impliquées, sur le statut de l'université, vu qu'elle arrive à se placer parfois dans une position d'infériorité par l'acte de demander, plus ou moins directement, ou par un rapprochement anormal de son interlocuteur, auquel elle modifie le statut, comme l'attestent nos exemples. Disposée à divers

compromis, l'université se voit accepter un discours auto menaçant, avec différents degrés de gravité, mettant en jeu un souci de valorisation centré surtout sur son interlocuteur. Des menaces telles l'offre, la promesse, parfois des aveux, des excuses et des autocritiques, qui affectent l'université, et des requêtes adressées au public, qui le menacent mais la menacent en même temps, sont à identifier.

Recouvrant « tous les aspects du discours qui sont régis par des règles, et dont la fonction est de préserver le caractère harmonieux de la relation interpersonnelle » (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C, 1996 : 8), la politesse se manifeste dans les discours analysés dans le même esprit d'harmonie et de profit réciproque. Le contexte de communication qui concerne la relation entre l'université et son public semble privilégier des actes de la politesse positive (*ibid.*, 54), comme les remerciements ou les compliments.

Tous les aspects argumentatifs et relationnels que nous avons pu déceler dans l'exercice de communication des universités se réunissent pour composer un masque social dont la représentation connaît des transformations radicales les dernières années, à cause des contraintes d'efficacité financière que nous venons d'évoquer. Perçus comme plus sincères autrefois et en tout cas, beaucoup plus rares, ils tiennent aujourd'hui à une logique économique qui pèse sur l'activité d'ensemble de l'université. Ces aspects discursifs sont peu spectaculaires du point de vue de leur originalité et leur efficacité ne pourrait être discutée qu'à travers des sondages effectués parmi les étudiants.

## 2.2 Présentation du corpus

Pour notre analyse, nous avons retenu 35 discours de provenances diverses : messages de bienvenue affichés sur les sites des universités, mots des fondateurs, discours prononcés lors de différents événements – rentrées universitaires, remises des diplômes, serments militaires, produits à partir de 2009, dans des universités de toutes les catégories, aussi bien d'État que privées qui présentaient ces discours sur leur site au moment de notre analyse.<sup>1</sup> Il s'agit de 16 universités publiques et 9 universités privées, de 6 villes, représentant toutes les régions de la Roumanie.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. Le discours de l'université entre exercice de communication et discours stratégique

Le discours actuel de l'université marque un moment de prise de conscience concernant son identité par rapport aux autres universités, déclenchée par le contexte délicat que traverse l'enseignement universitaire roumain. Cette

réflexion sur sa propre valeur et ses particularités conduit à une découverte de ses points forts et de ses points faibles, l'obligeant à trouver des stratégies pour mettre en valeur les premiers ou pour masquer les seconds. Un jeu plus ou moins subtil d'étalage de la composante positive de son propre masque sera doublé d'un étalage de la composante négative du masque des autres.

### **3.1 L'informatif et l'argumentatif**

Si la thèse est la même dans chacun des discours examinés (*Choisissez notre université, c'est une bonne université !*), les arguments mobilisés pour la soutenir sont divers. Nous avons décelé dans notre corpus deux grandes catégories de faits, les uns consistant à apporter des informations, les autres à construire une argumentation. Nous avons donc choisi d'utiliser la terminologie proposée par Anscombe J.-C, et Ducrot O. (1983) pour discuter ces faits, en distinguant, à notre tour, entre les aspects informatifs et les aspects argumentatifs des discours analysés. Concernant leur poids quantitatif, nous avons constaté que dans la plupart des discours examinés, l'informatif l'emporte largement sur l'argumentatif, n'empêchant pas qu'il y soit, en fait, subordonné. Ainsi, nous avons remarqué aussi bien la présence d'informations qui servent vraiment l'argumentation, tout comme l'emploi d'informations inutiles, banales, ou incompréhensibles pour un large public.

#### *3.1.1 L'informatif au service de l'argumentatif*

La plupart des éléments informatifs fournis - historique de l'université, facultés, programmes, étudiants, dotations, partenariats, publications, projets, etc. - constituent autant d'arguments épistémiques venant appuyer la thèse soutenue, celle de la qualité de l'université, raison pour laquelle les candidats devraient la choisir. De plus, sur certains sites, on trouve des rubriques destinées aux catégories de public anticipées, proposant des informations en concordance avec leurs intérêts et besoins - étudiants, candidats, partenaires actuels ou potentiels. Par exemple :

*Pour ceux qui s'intéressent et sont passionnés par la cryptographie, la Faculté de Mathématiques et d'Informatique organise la compétition Cryptochallenge UBB*

*Tu as besoin de l'application ELEARNING ? Tu peux télécharger sur GOOGLEPLAY*

En ce qui concerne la manière d'introduire ces informations, nous avons constaté qu'elles apparaissaient aussi bien au niveau du contenu posé qu'au niveau du contenu présupposé<sup>3</sup>:



L'Institut Pédagogique de Bacău a été fondé en 1961, par la Décision du Conseil des Ministres et par l'Ordre du Ministre de l'Enseignement et de la Culture. En 1976, il devient l'Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur de Bacău, qui développe principalement les filières techniques.

... je ne vais pas vous énumérer tous les chiffres éloquentes, le nombre élevé d'étudiants et d'enseignants, les centaines de milliers de volumes de la bibliothèque, les laboratoires, les résidences universitaires, les bourses, les cliniques performantes ...

La tradition ou la valeur symbolique peuvent également être évoquées, ainsi que les noms de personnalités historiques, scientifiques, artistiques se trouvant en rapport avec l'université, les noms des universités-mêmes ou la réputation de certaines régions de la Roumanie (la Transylvanie, la Moldavie). Ces éléments informatifs constituent en fait autant d'arguments d'autorité venant appuyer la thèse :

... l'existence de cette université au cœur historique de la Roumanie, un espace privilégié de l'idée même de nation ...

... l'orientation humaniste et humaine de notre université, l'hospitalité, la douceur moldave ...

Parmi les arguments d'autorité utilisés, nous avons remarqué également l'emploi de citations célèbres ou de structures latines, qui mobilisent un savoir encyclopédique du public, avec des effets valorisants :

Il est long le chemin jusqu'en Itaque.

Il s'agit ici de l'implication de tous car nous avons quelque chose de fondamental qui nous unit : nous aimons Alma Mater Napocensis et nous nous impliquons !

### *3.1.2 L'informatif au détriment de l'argumentatif*

Bien que pouvant servir admirablement à l'argumentation, la composante informative s'avère souvent exploitée dans une mauvaise direction. Ainsi, les lieux communs ou les banalités sont fréquentes, tout comme les informations superflues, difficiles à comprendre par un large public car formulées avec un lexique appartenant au discours administratif et institutionnel, proche de la langue de bois :

Nous avons fait des pas importants qui nous ont permis de présenter un type différent d'offre éducationnelle sur le marché des services éducationnels, en adoptant un système sur deux niveaux - licence et master.

L'université prépare de futurs diplômés dans les domaines fondamentaux et la certification dans les domaines et les programmes de licence.

Il arrive également que les universités introduisent dans leurs discours des informations relatives aux résultats de leur hiérarchisation et de la classification, accessibles uniquement à un public universitaire, familiarisé avec ces procédures :

L'Université du Bas Danube de Galați Tradition dans la performance, *Université ayant reçu le haut degré de confiance de la part de l'ARACIS en 2008 et 2013.*

L'Académie d'Études Économiques de Bucarest compte parmi les 12 universités d'élite de Roumanie et se retrouve dans la catégorie des universités de recherche avancée et d'éducation, ayant tous les domaines d'études classifiés dans la première catégorie au niveau national.

### **3.2 Place et rôles assignés aux interlocuteurs**

Le site de l'université fonctionne comme une instance émettrice de discours qui contribuent à consolider l'identité de l'université et à renforcer ses liens avec son public. Parmi les discours qui constituent notre corpus, le « mot du recteur » occupe une place de premier rang. En tant que représentant au plus haut niveau de l'institution, le recteur est perçu comme la personne la plus autorisée à exprimer la vision de celle-ci et le plus en mesure de proposer un message mobilisant et de cohésion, parfois selon le modèle des entreprises. Empreints de subjectivité, les discours sont assumés directement par le recteur ou bien par une autre personnalité représentative de l'université (fondateur).

L'indice le plus évident de la subjectivité est constitué par les pronoms personnels de la 1<sup>ère</sup> personne, qui présentent une très haute fréquence dans notre corpus, notamment les formes du pluriel, avec deux lectures : 1. nous = les représentants de l'université (moi + enseignants, etc.) « notre université », « la tradition de notre établissement », « notre école », « notre travail » ; 2. nous + vous (le destinataire - étudiants ou étudiants potentiels) :

... nous espérons que tant qu'on va travailler ensemble, nous réussirons à établir une liaison étroite, à collaborer ...

Une autre marque de la prise en charge est représentée par les phrases exclamatives, qui couvrent à la fois une valeur expressive et directive, ayant pour but d'influencer le public à assumer la charge émotionnelle du moment.

C'est un moment unique et solennel !

Vous avez choisi une profession qui rend les gens heureux !

En ce qui concerne le destinataire, il est le plus souvent interpellé d'une manière directe (« vous »), à l'aide d'appellatifs qui transmettent l'affection : « chers amis », « chers collègues, chers étudiants », « chers diplômés ».

Les slogans plus ou moins originaux et d'impact réel ou discutable sont également présents pour essayer de créer un sentiment de cohésion ou d'adhésion :

Ensemble vers l'avenir

*Notre université vous va bien !*

Des appels à l'implication dans la vie de l'université sont des essais de créer un lien entre l'institution et ses membres :

Viens soutenir l'équipe de l'UBB

De même, les teintes affectives sont fréquentes, le jargon pédagogique est présent, les métaphores liées au domaine concerné se mélangent parfois, en créant une véritable complicité, comme on peut le constater dans les exemples suivants :

Bon vent arrière !

Soyez les bienvenus, chers étudiants, sur *le territoire des racines amères !*

#### 4. Jeu des faces et effets discursifs

Le type de discours qui nous intéresse compte sur une valorisation en même temps de l'institution, de ses enseignants et des autres partenaires – étudiants, futurs candidats, familles des étudiants – ce qui peut avoir un impact notable chez le public et contribuer à la construction de la relation qui les met en contact, même si elle reste au niveau virtuel. Ainsi, le souci pour la politesse est une constante et se manifeste principalement par l'intérêt d'offrir un statut valorisant au partenaire de communication. Elle compte sur la mise en évidence des mérites intellectuels et relationnels et une relative modestie personnelle. À côté de ces aspects classiques, on retrouve les situations où le discours trop recherché échoue dans le but poursuivi et on arrive à un effet contraire - les structures sont maladroites et ne peuvent pas convaincre.

##### 4.1 La valorisation de l'université et des étudiants

Vu la dépendance de l'université du choix de son public, le discours sert d'instrument dans l'essai d'instaurer une relation de partenariat, de collaboration, voire d'égalité, en respectant un équilibre des deux côtés ou en exagérant par erreur ou par manque d'inspiration. Dans les relations envisagées comme des relations d'égalités, les futurs étudiants ont la capacité de dérouler une activité de qualité ou d'obtenir des résultats à des standards élevés. Par exemple :

... une renommée internationale ... que nous souhaitons perpétuer *avec l'aide de nos étudiants* ...

*Ensemble nous réussirons!*

Les actes de discours typiques de la politesse positive, les félicitations et les compliments surtout, peuvent assurer la qualité du discours et l'effet d'image poursuivi mais certains compliments risquent d'être perçus comme exagérés et relativement manipulateurs, comme dans les exemples suivants :

*Félicitations* chers bleus pour avoir passé l'examen d'admission !

... La grande famille Cantemir, qui compte maintenant 50 000 diplômés, étudiants, masterants, enseignants, avec leurs proches, environ 1 million de personnes - c'est-à-dire les parents, les frères, les grands-parents, les époux, les enfants - *réunit des personnes intelligentes* ...

Malgré la présence importante des énoncés valorisant de façon excessive l'université, comme nous verrons plus loin, on rencontre assez souvent des valorisations équilibrées, dans l'esprit de la politesse. L'université choisit des formules pour atténuer ses mérites, ce qui peut être profitable dans le jeu d'image qu'elle fait. Dans les deux exemples suivants, les structures utilisées en ce sens permettent la lecture « Ce n'est pas nous qui croyons ... » :

Les plus de 50 ans d'existence de l'Université Vasile Alecsandri de Bacău *nous autorisent à croire* que nous sommes un bon partenaire de dialogue.

ou « Nos mérites existent, mais ils ne sont pas parfaits ... » :

*Nous sommes conscients* que nous avons encore des lieux à parcourir et beaucoup de périls à affronter.

Tout de même, en essayant de répondre aux exigences de la modestie, le corollaire de la politesse (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C., 1996 :62), le discours risque parfois de devenir interprétable et même auto menaçant, tel qu'on le découvre dans l'exemple ci-dessous, où la compétence apparaît de façon paradoxale comme hésitante, ce qui est contraire à la réalité, car mener un processus d'enseignement universitaire ne se fait que de manière certaine.

... j'espère que nous nous dirigerons ensemble dans la bonne direction...

Étant donné la représentation de la relation entre l'université et ses partenaires, affectée par la forte dépendance des universités du nombre d'étudiants, elle glisse parfois vers la familiarité et le sentimentalisme voire même la naïveté, comme on peut le constater ci-dessous :

... nous vous invitons à passer le seuil de notre université et à *devenir nos amis*...

... nous vous attendons *avec amour* ...

Cette préoccupation pour la construction d'une bonne relation peut conduire à des excès, dans les deux sens : la valorisation excessive des étudiants (position inférieure de l'université) et la valorisation excessive de l'université (manquement à la règle de modestie). Ceci ne fait qu'attester les conséquences offensantes involontaires ou indésirables du discours d'image, destiné à apporter une solution au problème du financement.

## 4.2 La valorisation excessive des étudiants (position inférieure de l'université)

Dans l'essai discursif d'atténuer les différences entre l'université et les étudiants, on peut rencontrer des menaces assez fortes, assumées par l'université - les étudiants sont considérés comme des collègues des enseignants, avec le risque de changer complètement leur perception sur la relation :

*... nos collègues de première année ...*

L'acte de reconnaissance exagéré va dans cette même direction et devient très menaçant par les accents humiliants qu'il transmet :

*... je vous attends avec gratitude à passer le seuil de notre institution et à nous faire l'honneur de vous trouver parmi les futurs bénéficiaires de l'offre éducationnelle proposée par l'Université George Bacovia de Bacău.*

Normalement, on n'exprime pas la gratitude pour un acte hypothétique qui nous est favorable, réalisé par des inconnus dont on suppose que les connaissances sont bonnes, en dehors d'une évaluation. Être honoré dans ce contexte est encore plus dégradant.

Préoccupés par les effets gratifiants du discours, les auteurs laissent échapper des maladroites dans l'évaluation positive qu'ils font (évaluation des candidats dans l'exemple ci-dessous), qui comptent finalement comme des menaces de leur face en annulant au moins partiellement l'effet recherché :

*Dans cette situation, nous espérons que les générations des futurs étudiants auront les habiletés, la sensibilité et la culture générale nécessaire pour nous appuyer dans cette démarche.*

L'interprétation de l'interlocuteur se joue entre l'espoir réel du locuteur et son doute vis-à-vis des compétences attendues de la part de l'interlocuteur, ce qui risque d'être perçu comme offensant.

### **4.3 La valorisation excessive de l'université (manquement à la règle de modestie)**

Non seulement la valorisation du public peut poser problème, mais la valorisation de l'université comporte aussi ses propres risques car elle peut devenir excessive et affecter la qualité du discours et l'impact recherché. Comme l'on peut voir, le manquement à la règle de modestie est inévitable et peut fonctionner, selon la perception du public, comme un contre argument :

Sur le plan national, la place et le prestige de la SNSPA *sont incontestables*.

Je ne peux qu'exprimer ma satisfaction pour le dévouement manifesté envers l'institution qui vous a créé un statut de spécialiste de haut niveau, mais, surtout, pour *votre capacité à cerner le bien et le mal*, à toujours choisir la valeur, *comme vous l'avez fait lorsque vous nous avez choisis, nous*.

Telle qu'elle apparaît dans les exemples que nous avons évoqués, la relation qui se construit entre l'émetteur et le destinataire est une relation plutôt menaçante pour la face de l'université car malgré son offre, elle doit surtout se préoccuper de la valorisation de la face de son destinataire et en faire un jeu en fonction de son but commercial. Ce n'est qu'*a minima* qu'elle évoque sa valeur professionnelle, la composante principale de sa face positive.

### **Conclusions**

Le discours actuel des universités roumaines, tel qu'il apparaît sur les sites ou lors des cérémonies académiques, est un discours soumis aux enjeux de l'image institutionnelle ainsi qu'aux contraintes financières pesant sur son activité. Il doit convaincre les étudiants et surtout les futurs étudiants, qu'ils peuvent faire confiance à l'offre éducative proposée.

La relation entre l'université et ses étudiants ou son public en général perd ses traits académiques en faveur de la convivialité, avec des déséquilibres fréquents dans la valorisation des partenaires de communication et avec des arguments peu originaux, dont l'impact est subjectif.

Le masque assumé par l'université se dote de détails transparents, indiquant une identité sociale assez fragile, dans un contexte socio-économique dramatique pouvant basculer à tout moment.

## Notes

1 Notre analyse date de 2015. En 2015, conformément au rapport dressé par le ministère, il y avait en Roumanie 101 universités, dont 55 universités publiques (nous avons également trouvé le nombre de 56) et 46 universités privées. (*Rapport sur l'état de l'enseignement supérieur en Roumanie*, 2015, <https://www.edu.ro/starea-invatamantului>, <https://www.edu.ro/raport-privind-starea-invatamantului-superior-in-romania-2015>, source consultée le 18.02.2017). Dans le même document de référence, le Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale procède à la répartition géographique sur le territoire de la Roumanie de 48 universités publiques, sans expliquer leur choix sur l'ensemble des 55 ou 56 établissements. Sur les 41 départements administratifs de la Roumanie (auxquels on ajoute également la ville de Bucarest), il y en a 21 (répartis dans toutes les régions) qui possèdent au moins une université publique, le maximum se trouvant à Bucarest (12 universités publiques).

2 Universités – sources du corpus

**Alba-Iulia**

L'Université 1 decembrie 1918 Alba-Iulia

Arad

L'Université « Vasile Goldiș »

**Bacău**

L'Université Vasile Alecsandri

L'Université George Bacovia

**Bucarest**

Université de Médecine et de Pharmacie Carol

Davila

L'Université de Bucarest

L'Académie d'Études Économiques

L'Université Nationale des Beaux-Arts

L'Université Nationale de Musique

L'École Nationale d'Études Politiques et Administratives

L'Académie Technique Militaire

L'Université Chrétienne Dimitrie Cantemir

L'Université Româno – Americană

Le Service roumain d'informations

L'Université Nationale d'Éducation Physique et

Sportive

**Cluj-Napoca**

L'Université de Médecine et de Pharmacie Iuliu

Hațieganu

L'Université Babeș-Bolyai

**Constanța**

L'Académie Navale « Mircea cel Bătrân »

L'Université Ovidius

**Galați**

L'Université du Bas Danube de Galați

L'Université Danubius

**Iași**

L'Université de Médecine et Pharmacie Gr. T. Popa

L'Université Al. I. Cuza

**Oradea**

L'Université d'Oradea

3 Les concepts de *posé* et *présupposé*, élaborés par Oswald Ducrot (1972, 1974, 1984) et présents dans l'ensemble de ses travaux relèvent de la problématique plus large du *dit* et du *non-dit*, qui se retrouve, à son tour, abordée de plusieurs perspectives par les différents auteurs qui s'y sont intéressés : sémantico-pragmatique (Oswald Ducrot), logico-sémantique (Robert Martin, 1987, 1992), interprétative (Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1986). Globalement, on pourrait dire que l'opposition entre le dit et le non-dit correspond à l'opposition classique entre le contenu explicite et le contenu implicite ou bien entre le sens dénotatif et le sens connotatif. Ainsi, le dit désigne le sens de l'énoncé, ce que l'on dit lorsqu'on parle, alors que le non-dit désigne ce qui est dit d'une manière

cachée ou détournée, tout ce que le locuteur aurait voulu dire, sans pour autant s'exprimer explicitement par des mots ou par d'autres signes. Les contenus posé et présupposé font partie dans la même mesure du domaine du dit, les deux étant pris en charge par l'énonciateur. Ce qui les distingue, c'est la focalisation, seul le contenu posé étant focalisé et soumis à la négation. Ainsi, dans la célèbre phrase „Le roi de France est chauve.‟, l'existence d'un roi de France est un contenu présupposé, le contenu posé étant qu'il a une calvitie. Si l'on nie la phrase : „Le roi de France n'est pas chauve.‟, la négation atteint uniquement le contenu posé, alors que le contenu présupposé résiste à la négation.

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# Estrategias de persuasión utilizadas en las revistas destinadas a las mujeres

## Persuasion Strategies in Women's Magazines

*Timea Tocalachis* \*

Starting from various senses of publicity, on the one hand, this article sets out to investigate comparatively the argumentative strategies employed in product advertisements targeted at women from two different cultural backgrounds (Romanian and French) and, on the other hand, we aim to determine to what extent the advertisements featured in this analysis fit in with the publicity types mentioned.

advertising; product; magazine; message; strategy; argumentation.

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NO PRETENDEMOS PASAR REVISTA POR TODAS LAS ESTRATEGIAS DE PERSUASIÓN empleadas en las revistas dirigidas a las mujeres, ya que, por su abundancia en el discurso publicitario, el espacio de la revista resulta muy restringido a tales efectos. Por las mismas razones, nos es imposible adjuntar las imágenes de los anuncios presentados, pero intentaremos describirlas con palabras lo más adecuadamente posible. Hemos elegido para este artículo dos anuncios de la prensa escrita, uno publicado en la revista francesa *Elle* y otro en la edición rumana de la revista *Cosmopolitan*. Nuestra opción es una temática, dado que ambos anuncios promueven productos cosméticos. Intentaremos interpretarlos tanto desde perspectiva icónica, como también desde el punto de vista del mensaje.

Criticada de una manera vehemente, en el siglo pasado, por Paul Valéry y Georges Duhamel, quienes la consideran un instrumento de «embrutecimiento» del ser humano, la publicidad ha generado desde hace siempre reacciones de las

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más contradictorias. Esta percepción ha perdurado hasta nuestros días; a menudo encontramos personas que se declaran molestos por la avalancha publicitaria transmitida por tantos medios, pero nadie puede negar el papel primordial de la publicidad, el de vender.

Para empezar, consideramos que sería útil presentar algunas de las definiciones más relevantes de la publicidad. Según Daniela Roventça Frumuşani, que, de hecho, comparte la opinión de muchos otros investigadores, la publicidad es un fenómeno cultural. Combina la *ciencia* (la semiótica, la sociología), con el *arte* (la invención) y con lo *lúdico* (los juegos de palabras). Debido al hecho de que hace uso tanto de la imagen, como del texto, la publicidad depende tanto del dominio de la lingüística (el mensaje publicitario crea esloganes que son generadores de clichés), como de lo estético (plasmando cierta imagen, como la juventud o la comodidad - para cierto grupo o sociedad). La autora identifica tres tipos de publicidad<sup>1</sup>:

1. *la publicidad referencial* (el dominio de la realidad descrita a través de una estructura narrativa);
2. *la publicidad oblicua* (llamada de esta manera porque se desvía de la «normalidad» de la realidad), la de la creatividad y de las sutilezas, a la que frecuentemente se le reprocha la ambigüedad o el hermetismo;
3. *la publicidad mítica*, la que revaloriza los símbolos y los arquetipos universales.

Armand Dayan<sup>2</sup> considera la publicidad como un aspecto de la comunicación comercial. Según el mensaje publicitario, Dayan destaca una publicidad «denotativa», que únicamente informa e intenta argumentar para convencer y una publicidad «connotativa» que sugiere y se dirige a la afectividad y no a la razón. Desde el punto de vista de la modalidad de expresión, el autor distingue entre la publicidad «dura», que tiene como propósito influir al público-meta por medio de mensajes claros, directos, de tipo «X rebaja los precios» y la publicidad «tierna», la cual, además de dar a conocer el producto y la marca, crea también un ambiente, una imagen típica, un símbolo que permanece en la mentalidad colectiva y que acude a las motivaciones profundas del comprador potencial.

Para Bernard Cathelat<sup>3</sup> la publicidad representa la expresión de una cultura, de los modos de vida. A su turno, identifica varios tipos de publicidad: la publicidad «persuasiva», la cual correspondería a la publicidad «dura» en la visión de Dayan, puesto que su objetivo se enmarca en la fórmula A.I.D.A. (llamar la atención, despertar el interés, inducir el deseo de compra y al final la acción de compra). Pero este tipo de publicidad es poco frecuente hoy en día, sustituyéndose por la publicidad «mecánica», que se caracteriza por imágenes-choque o esloganes

que se repiten obsesivamente, su objetivo siendo más bien el de asombrar en vez de convencer. El tercer tipo de publicidad, la «sugestiva», se puede asociar a la que Dayan denomina «tierna». Mediante esta, se induce la acción de compra, aludiéndose a las necesidades o a las aspiraciones profundas del consumidor. En el marco de este tipo de publicidad Cathelat identifica la publicidad «puzle», en la que el producto se destaca como un pedazo que falta del rompecabezas que representa el mensaje publicitario; en este caso la solución para volver a encontrar el equilibrio es el consumo de dicho producto. La denominada publicidad del «deseo» se basa, según Cathelat, en el estudio de las motivaciones cuyo origen remonta más allá de la conciencia, en las necesidades fundamentales del consumidor, en su experiencia de vida, en su historia personal, aspecto relevado también por el psicoanálisis. A pesar de esto, se le ha reprochado a la publicidad sugestiva la tendencia de dirigirse con preponderancia al individuo, ignorando su pertenencia a un grupo social, a un entorno. Y un último tipo de publicidad, la «proyectiva», tiende a armonizar el aspecto comercial con el social, cultural, reflejando un modo de vida.

Los anuncios que analizaremos han sido publicados en las revistas *Cosmopolitan* de enero de 2006 y *Elle* de noviembre de 2004, respectivamente. Ambas publicaciones se dirigen a un público de género femenino y que dispone de una renta mensual por encima del promedio. Los anuncios se enmarcan en el mismo patrón en cuanto a las características espaciales, a saber, se componen de dos páginas unidas, prevaleciendo la imagen sobre el texto. Tanto la parte derecha del anuncio, como también la parte de abajo de la página de la izquierda se constituyen de imágenes representando tres tipos de mujeres, en el caso de la revista *Cosmopolitan*, pero un solo rostro en la revista francesa. En la parte de abajo de la página de la izquierda encontramos la imagen del producto (la crema y la base de maquillaje, respectivamente). En la parte de arriba de la página de la izquierda se halla un bloque de texto, y en la parte de la derecha abajo estamos ante el eslogan del producto y de la marca: «Estée Lauder - la beauté par définition» (Estée Lauder - la belleza por definición). En el caso de ambos anuncios, tras una primera recepción de la imagen, el lector se da cuenta del público objetivo al que se dirigen los anuncios, a saber, el segmento femenino de población. La imagen se organiza en dos planes paralelos, sin embargo, la imagen del plan visible no es el del producto, sino la imagen de la derecha del tablero. Tal como hemos notado anteriormente, el tipo de discurso es el publicitario, y el género de discurso lo representa la publicidad para productos de belleza. En lo que concierne el mensaje lingüístico, se puede hablar de *ethos* en el caso de ambos anuncios; el texto de la revista rumana engloba las características propias al comportamiento

y a las necesidades, a las aspiraciones del sexo femenino: el discurso se constituye de términos como *arrugas*, *brillo*, *hidratación*, *ojerás*. El enunciado se realiza a través de un *ethos* de la mujer moderna, cuya desiderata es permanecer joven con la ayuda de la ciencia, coqueteando, también, de alguna manera, con el lenguaje científico:...*la tecnología de la célula Vector*. Analizaremos a continuación algunas marcas lingüísticas para el texto de la revista rumana. En lo que concierne los participantes al discurso, el referente de *vosotros* o de *Ustedes* es el co-enunciador, es decir, la persona que lee el anuncio en ese momento; tal como el enunciador, este último solo está presente de una manera indirecta, por medio de una parte del cuerpo (la piel), por lo tanto podemos afirmar que cualquier persona que tiene piel está involucrada en el mensaje del anuncio. El texto enuncia hechos y leyes de la naturaleza, sin interpelar a las consumidoras, esta desaparición de la relación enunciativa yendo hasta el final, cuando se vuelve a la fórmula de introducción hacia las lectoras por medio del imperativo. Los verbos utilizados en indicativo presente hacen referencia a un momento ulterior. Se trata del presente con valor de futuro, la situación de enunciación siendo la que funciona como un referente para el tiempo de los verbos. Aparece una tercera persona, que no es ni el enunciador, ni el co-enunciador y la cual funciona como *non-persona*. Tal como cada enunciado tiene marcas de modalidad, estos están también presentes en este texto publicitario: mediante la modalidad de los verbos empleados el enunciador establece la relación que se instituye entre este y el co-enunciador. Por medio del acto de enunciación, la realidad solo se puede reproducir si el enunciador hace sentir su presencia de una manera directa o indirecta. Hemos elegido traducir del francés y del rumano al español las formas verbales correspondientes a la segunda persona plural, tanto por las formas que corresponden al pronombre personal de segunda persona plural (*vosotros*), como por las formas verbales correspondientes al pronombre *Ustedes*, puesto que, en francés, el pronombre de cortesía se expresa de la misma manera como el pronombre de segunda persona plural (*vous*); en rumano, igualmente, el pronombre personal de segunda persona plural (*voi*) se acompaña de las mismas formas verbales como el pronombre de cortesía (*dumneavoastră*). En el marco del enunciado, el imperativo del eslogan realiza una acción directa del enunciador sobre el co-enunciador: *olvidad/olvidense*, *mejorad/mejoren*. No aparecen marcas deícticas espaciales, pero sí están presentes marcas deícticas temporales, empezando con *ahora*, la cual, por el hecho de que abre la secuencia textual, hace la distinción entre el momento anterior y el momento de la enunciación. También se consideran elementos deícticos temporales las marcas del futuro que acompañan los infinitivos de los verbos, en este caso, *van*, *va*.

El eslogan publicitario presenta ciertas similitudes con el refrán, por ser una fórmula breve, que se dirige a un número ilimitado de locutores, a menudo lleva rima y permanece en la mentalidad colectiva. Sin embargo, si el proverbio puede funcionar fuera de cualquier contexto, el eslogan solo se puede interpretar solo en relación con la situación de enunciación. ¿Cuál es el significado del eslogan? Como la mayoría de los eslóganes actuales, el tipo de eslogan elegido en este caso es una secuencia textual causal: *Si olvidáis/olvidan el pasado y mejoráis/mejoran el presente, el futuro será perfecto*. El lazo temporal pasado-presente-futuro se realiza a través del eslogan, siendo difícil su realización solo por la imagen.

Refiriéndose a las funciones del mensaje publicitario, Cathelat distingue la función *utilitaria*, la función *obsesiva*, la función *imaginaria* y la función *simbólica*; cada una de ellas le corresponde a un tipo de publicidad mencionada anteriormente. Desde esta perspectiva, consideramos que el anuncio presentado responde tanto a la función simbólica, como a la imaginaria, combinando connotaciones simbólicas de valores y de modelos sociales con la sugerencia de una imagen propia idealizada. Los símbolos utilizados son los intencionales, que describen el objeto y presentan las cualidades del mismo.

El anuncio de la revista francesa nos parece más sutil. Hablando en los términos de la distinción entre las funciones del lenguaje operada por Jakobson<sup>4</sup>, consideramos pertinente la afirmación que el anuncio publicado en la revista rumana responde solo a la función connotativa del lenguaje, mientras que en el anuncio de la revista *Elle* el discurso publicitario acude tanto a la función connotativa, como también a la función poética. El enunciador no está presente de manera directa, como tampoco lo es el co-enunciador. La única referencia a la persona se realiza por la presencia del pronombre indefinido en francés *on*, el cual no alude a ninguna entidad específica en la mayoría de sus usos y hace desaparecer las diferencias entre la primera, la segunda y la tercera persona. En este caso representa el referente al enunciador y al co-enunciador, con el sentido de *nosotros*. La ausencia de los verbos no excluye la coherencia o la cohesión del discurso, al contrario, lo hace más emblemático. La elección del publicista corresponde a la estrategia adoptada, a saber, la transmisión de la idea de que, si uno/a adquiere dicho producto, es capaz de evadirse de la cotidianidad e integrarse en el universo de la eternidad, de la perfección. Tampoco aparecen marcas deícticas espaciales o temporales, en cambio, lo que diferencia este anuncio del rumano es la presencia de las metáforas. La más significativa nos parece la metáfora cognitiva del camino: «*Il commence mousse et finit poudre*» (*comienza espuma y acaba polvo*). Los adjetivos *ligero*, *tierno*, *mate* representan la pertenencia de este anuncio a la publicidad *tierna* que mencionaba Dayan.

El mensaje central que sobresale del texto es el de perfección expresada por los adjetivos y los adverbios *perfecto*, *idealmente*, *absolutamente* o por el eslogan mismo de la marca al que hemos aludido anteriormente. El demostrativo *este* designa un referente cercano al acto de enunciación. Asimismo, se opera la distinción entre el referente del cual se habla y otros referentes de la misma categoría: *este cutis*. El artículo indefinido del final tiene un valor genérico: lo que se afirma es válido para todos los tipos de cutis que utilizan dicha base de maquillaje. En el sintagma *teint mousse* (*tez espuma*), de *fond de teint* (*base de maquillaje*) se ha guardado *teint*, pero el locutor juega utilizando el equívoco entre los términos *teint* - masculino en francés (*tez*) y *teinte* - femenino en francés (*color*, *matiz*). El producto para la *tez* (*teint*) es llamado *matiz* (*teint mousse*). Mediante la metonimia se ha denominado la base de maquillaje por el efecto que este provoca (la matización de la *tez*). Sin embargo, una vez añadida la palabra *mousse* (*espuma*) se pierden los rasgos semánticos de la palabra *base*, que supone algo sólido. Esta es la razón por la cual el locutor ha acudido a este «recorrido», a saber impedir al receptor a quedar en el sentido inicial de *espuma*, lo que llevaría al hecho de que el producto pierda parte de sus características y deje de ser vendible. Por medio de esta substitución no se persigue el cambio de la denominación de la categoría, sino que, ya que el lector/receptor sabe desde el principio que se trata de una base de maquillaje, el publicista juega con la pertenencia a esta categoría para distinguir esta base de maquillaje Estée Lauder de las demás. Los símbolos utilizados son tanto intencionales, como interpretativos: el receptor es provocado por ciertas sensaciones agradables de ternura y frescura por las que se identifica y que responden a sus aspiraciones y necesidades fundamentales. En lo que se refiere al área temática, el registro del elemento *aire* es igualmente expresado de una manera explícita por la presencia del nombre *plumas*. Asimismo, existe un entrelazo entre el elemento humano y el vegetal por la presencia de la fruta *melocotón*, las propiedades de lo vegetal transfiriéndose sobre lo humano. En este caso la elección de la fruta tiene un doble valor: por un lado su uso se debe al hecho de que tiene el mismo color que el producto, y, por otro lado, la misma textura fina del melocotón. La figura de expresión utilizada es la comparación, el autor asociando elementos del registro vegetal con las propiedades del producto.

Con referencia al eslogan, en el texto de la revista rumana no aparece el nombre de la marca, en cambio, en el anuncio de la revista francesa, la marca está presente y no de cualquier manera, sino que se convierte en el prototipo mismo de la belleza. El propósito del uso de cierta marca hace que esta cumpla una función testimonial. Jean-Michel Adam y Marc Bonhomme<sup>5</sup> interpretan la marca de la manera siguiente: «A través de la marca, el fabricante toma posición con respecto

a su anuncio, garantizando la autenticidad y asumiendo la responsabilidad de este.» (traducción propia).

En cuanto a la imagen, llena de significado, mediante la presencia de las tres mujeres de razas distintas se acude a la universalidad del producto: la crema se usa por todas las mujeres del mundo, y los vestidos blancos sugieren la pureza, el carácter angelical de las que utilizan dicho producto, que roza la perfección, igual que los ángeles. El fondo sobre el cual se presentan los productos en la revista rumana es también blanco, instituyéndose de esta manera una correspondencia entre la imagen de la derecha del tablero y la de la izquierda. En cambio, la imagen de la revista francesa alude a un misterio que espera descodificarse por medio del producto. La imagen de la derecha se centra en la mirada, emblemática y provocadora al mismo tiempo, de verdad una belleza clásica, tal como lo es igualmente el producto. La idea de que dicho producto y la marca representan la quintaesencia de la hermosura es acentuada por la correspondencia entre el eslogan y la imagen. Las pulseras hacen referencia a la belleza oriental (y, de nuevo, a ese toque de misterio, como si existiera un velo que se debería levantar a fin de que el producto pudiera ser valorizado). El fondo negro sobre el cual se presenta el producto contrasta con los matices claros del mismo y confiere un toque de elegancia y misterio, sensación que se desprende de todo el anuncio.

## Conclusiones:

Las estrategias argumentativas utilizadas en los anuncios de los dos países recurren a los arquetipos universales del universo de la mujer, a saber la belleza, la juventud.

Aunque se trata, en ambos anuncios, de productos para belleza, la modalidad de transmitir el mensaje es muy distinta: en el anuncio de la revista rumana se acude más a marcas deícticas temporales, tanto explícitos (*pasado, presente, futuro*), como implícitos, mediante el uso de las formas verbales, mientras que en el anuncio de la revista francesa la adhesión del lector/receptor se realiza a través de metáforas y símbolos interpretativos, en lugar de los símbolos intencionales presentes en el anuncio rumano.

Mientras que la publicidad de la revista rumana hace referencia al concepto de universalidad más por la imagen que por el texto, mediante la presencia de tres mujeres de razas distintas, la alusión a una comunidad amplia se efectúa en el anuncio francés por medio del pronombre impersonal *on*, cuya función es la de borrar las diferencias entre las personas.

A pesar del hecho de que ambos anuncios pertenecen a la denominada publicidad mítica, o del *deseo*, en términos de Bernard Cathelat, el texto francés

pertenece también a la publicidad sugestiva, acudiendo a las necesidades intrínsecas del sexo femenino (juventud, perfección), por medio de términos que remiten a la llamada *publicidad tierna*, según Dayan.

Una vez desplazado el mensaje publicitario desde lo informativo a lo afectivo, el producto ha venido perdiendo su utilidad objetiva, la adhesión, a saber, la venta, en definitiva, realizándose debido a los símbolos asociados con el producto. De esta manera, podemos afirmar que la publicidad vende modos de vida, llegando a ser un vehículo de nuestras pulsiones primarias fundamentales. La propensión hacia el mito y el sueño representa la solución salvadora de la cotidianidad estresante y consideramos que el éxito de la publicidad, sin importar el soporte, se debe precisamente a este papel mesiánico.

### Notes

- 1 Daniela Roventă-Frumușani, *Analiza discursului: ipoteze și ipostaze*, (București, Tritonic: 2005), 154.
- 2 Armand Dayan, *La publicité*, (Paris, Presses Universitaires de France: 2003), 7 – 28.
- 3 Bernard Cathelat, *Publicitate și societate*, (București, Editura Trei: 2005), 93 – 95.
- 4 Roman Jakobson, *Essais de linguistique générale*, (Paris, Minuit: 1963), 213 – 222.
- 5 Jean-Michel Adam; Marc Bonhomme, *L'argumentation publicitaire : Rhétorique de l'éloge et de la persuasion*, (Paris: Armand Colin, 2005), 57 – 58.

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# Les Terminologies professionnelles de la gastronomie et de l'œnologie : entre sens et expériences – Reims

The Professional Terminologies of Gastronomy and Oenology:  
between Sense and Experiences – Rheims

*Alexandra Viorica Dulău* \*

The following lines present the international colloquium *Les Terminologies professionnelles de la gastronomie et de l'œnologie : entre sens et expériences* (The Professional Terminologies of Gastronomy and Oenology: between Sense and Experiences) organized by the University of Rheims (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne), in France, on the 21<sup>st</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 2017.

champagne; gastronomy; terminology; tourism, wines.

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À LA SUITE DE LA PREMIÈRE ÉDITION QUI S'ÉTAIT DÉROULÉE À DIJON EN septembre 2016, ce colloque a eu lieu les 21 et 22 septembre 2017 toujours en France, mais à Reims (la ville des sacres, surnommée aussi la cité des rois), au Lycée Gustave Eiffel (lycée des métiers de l'hôtellerie). La coordination scientifique en a été assurée par Madame Anne Parizot (Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Maître de Conférences HDR, URCA) et par Monsieur Benoît Verdier<sup>1</sup> (Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Maître de Conférences, URCA). Le Comité Scientifique a été formé de Jean-Jacques Boutaud (Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, UBFC), Laurent

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Gautier (Sciences du Langage, UBFC), Jocelyne Perard (Géographie, Chaire UNESCO « Culture et Traditions Vin » de l'UBFC), Joël Candau (Anthropologie, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis), Theodore Georgopoulos (Droit, URCA), Richard Marchal (Chimie, URCA), Kilien Stengel (Sciences de l'Information et de la Communication, Université de Tours), Loïc Depecker (Délégué Général à la Langue Française, Société Française de Terminologie), Aurélie Melin (Ethnologie, Villa Bissinger), Germain Bourré (designer et coordinateur du master design et culinaire de l'ESAD de Reims), Emeline Eudes (Responsable recherche, ESAD), Edwige Regnier (Institut des Hautes Études du Goût de la Gastronomie et des Arts de la Table).

La très bonne organisation du colloque a supposé la collaboration avec certains partenaires : tout d'abord URCA (Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne) et puis CEREP (laboratoires), Champagne Taittinger, Villa Bissinger, Mission Coteaux, Maisons et Caves de Champagne – Patrimoine mondial, Institut Georges Chappaz de la Vigne et du Vin en Champagne, ESAD (École Supérieure d'Art et de Design de Reims), Syndicat Général des Vignerons, Grand Reims (Communauté Urbaine), Maison Fossier (célèbre biscuiterie de Reims), Chaire UNESCO « Culture et Traditions du Vin » de l'Université de Bourgogne, Lycée Gustave Eiffel – Section hôtelière.

Selon les organisateurs du colloque, la gastronomie et l'œnologie sont au cœur de la notion de Patrimoine immatériel grâce à l'inscription en juillet 2015 des « Coteaux, maisons et caves de Champagne », ainsi que « Les climats du vignoble de Bourgogne » au patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO, qui ont poursuivi la reconnaissance d'une autre richesse patrimoniale déjà consignée en 2010 le « repas gastronomique des Français ». Les échanges scientifiques auraient dû être centrés sur quelques dimensions, dont : celle hédonique (Comment rendre compte de l'expérience de dégustation, entre plaisir et bien-être, bien manger et manger sain ?) ; celle identitaire d'un chef, d'une maison, d'un chef de cave, d'un œnologue ; le discours expert/non expert entrant en relation avec les interactions de la relation client et plus particulièrement autour des produits, des techniques et des gestes ; la créativité artistique, importante dans l'esprit des créateurs et des consommateurs ; l'imaginaire culturel (Comment au travers d'une terminologie et des discours renvoie-t-on à des dimensions intangibles de la dégustation ?) ; les Œnotourisme et « Gastrotourisme » (Qu'est-ce que ce tourisme de l'expérience et comment est-il mis en contexte et en discours ?) ; l'éco-alimentation, la gestion durable de l'espace, le mode de distribution durable, etc. Tous ces domaines sont marqués du sceau de l'évolution historique, sociale, culturelle et artistique et ils ont laissé entrevoir des analyses synchroniques et/

ou diachroniques, mais également des analyses comparatives. Conformément à *Framonde*<sup>2</sup> (Lettre électronique des départements de français dans le monde) du 22 décembre 2016, les meilleures communications seront publiées. Cependant, deux personnes ne sont plus arrivées à temps au colloque international de Reims à cause de la grève générale des transports en France...

Après les discours d'ouverture, il y a eu la conférence plénière de Monsieur Jean-Jacques Boutaud (Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, France), sur « Le goût : de l'expérience à l'existence », suivie de deux ateliers en parallèle. Des sujets intéressants dans le programme ont été celui de Madame Isabelle Daussaint-Donneux (Haute école Robert Schuman, Belgique) sur l'œuvre de Duras, là où la nourriture et la boisson se font « être » ou « non être » ; celui sur l'inventivité linguistique et la création gastronomique – Madame Fabienne Boissieras (Université Jean Moulin Lyon 3, France) ; celui de Nancy Basso (Université de Limoges, France) sur le goût du terroir et du paysage ; et celui de l'architecture des chais de Madame Véronique Anderlini-Pillet (Université Côte d'Azur, France). Ensuite, Eva Lavric (Innsbruck University, Autriche) et Sylvain Farge (Université Lumière Lyon 2, France) ont eu pour sujet de leur communication les cartes des restaurants gastronomiques français et allemands. Dans le programme, il y a eu également Frédéric Zancanaro (Université Toulouse – Jean Jaurès, France), et Gérard Allemandou (Restaurateur La Cagouille, Directeur revue *Papilles*, France). Anne Parizotet Benoît Verdier (les deux de l'Université de Reims Champagne Ardenne, France) ont mis en discussion la question du vin qui se fait chair : entre matérialité et immatérialité du sacré au profane.

Madame Liliana Foşalău (Université Al. I. Cuza de Iaşi, Roumanie) a ouvert la troisième session avec une communication concernant la terminologie œnologique en contexte traductif. Une approche contrastive de la terminologie français-slovaque du traitement de la viande a été proposée par Madame Monika Kostekova (Université Matej Bel de Banska Bystrica, Université de Picardie Jules Verne, France), tandis que l'équipe formée de Ketevan Djachy (Université de Séville, Espagne), Lolita Tabuashvili (Académie de Langue Anglaise, Géorgie), Inga Tkemaladze (Université d'État Iacob Gogebashvili, Université Internationale de la Mer Noire, Géorgie) avait proposé l'étude comparée du concept de « vin » en géorgien et en français. Le programme a compris également la proposition de Madame Rita Maria Ribeiro Bessa (Université Fédérale de Bahia, Brésil) concernant les termes de la gastronomie française employés par la gastronomie brésilienne et celle d'Éléonore Obis (Université Paris Sorbonne, France) et de Jean Szlamowicz (Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, France) : « *Word*

*Tasting*. La terminologie œnologique à l'épreuve de l'anglais dans les notes de dégustation ».

Dans la session parallèle, on a pu écouter l'exposé de Weiwei Guo (Université Lumière Lyon 2, France), concernant les discours œnologiques sur les réseaux sociaux chinois et celui de : Ewa Gwiazdecka (Aspekty Ldt, Pologne) et Michal Marcinczuk (Wroclaw University, Pologne) regardant l'impact des avis offerts sur les vins polonais sur la prise de décision des clients. Madame Camille Brachet (Université de Valenciennes et du Hainaut Cambresis, France) a présenté la terminologie des vins biologiques et Madame Inka Wissner (Terre des Hommes, Lausanne, Suisse) a parlé des représentations littéraires de la gastronomie paysanne en Vendée.

Le premier jour du colloque s'est terminé par la visite des caves Taittinger où des guides nous ont fait découvrir l'histoire, les méthodes de travail et les caves de cette célèbre maison familiale. On a visité les vestiges de l'abbaye Saint-Nicaise datant du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, puis à 18 mètres de profondeur, des Crayères gallo-romaines faisant partie des Coteaux, Maisons et Caves de Champagne inscrits sur la liste du patrimoine mondial de l'UNESCO. Les bouteilles de champagne y reposent pendant des années pour les amateurs du monde entier. Les expériences gustatives autour des Champagnes de Vignerons et du design culinaire ont continué pendant la soirée de gala organisée à la Demeure des Comtes de Champagne<sup>3</sup>, Champagne Taittinger.

Le lendemain, les travaux ont été repris par la conférence plénière de Monsieur Joël Candau (Anthropologue à l'Université de Nice Sophia Antipollis) : « *Cultures sensorielles* : Existe-t-il des conditions d'adversité ou de félicité culturelle ? (l'effet Theuth) », suivie – à son tour – de deux ateliers en parallèle. On peut noter des approches contrastives, comme celle de Jia Peng (Wine Trotter, Chine), « Thé et vin : Dialogue, similitude et art de vivre entre Asie et Occident » ou, bien, de Madame Evelyne Resnick (ISG, France), « Les grands vins, de l'histoire au *story telling* : création d'une expérience ». Puis, Monsieur Laurent Gautier (Université de Bourgogne Franche Comté, France), a eu comme sujet d'étude une question intéressante (« La sémantique sensorielle peut-elle être autre chose qu'une sémantique expérimentale ? »), et Monsieur Tong Yang (Université Paris 3, France) a décrit la réalisation d'un corpus de collocations nominales dans la cuisine française. Une autre intervention plénière, soutenue par CNIEL-FFF-Ministère (DEGESCO)-Rectorat, a clarifié la *Mise en place du référentiel CAP Crémier Fromager*. Dans ce contexte, il faut souligner que, plus tard, un fromager MOF (Meilleurs Ouvriers de France) a parlé de ses fromages et les a

mis en relation avec le vin et les types de pain et de champagnes adéquats, dans le but de réaliser la dégustation parfaite de tous les points de vue.

La Session n° 7 a suscité des discussions en marge des communications sur l'émergence et la construction historique des discours œnologique et gastronomique ; sur la vendange aux Vins de Champagne ou, bien, sur les documentaires et la représentation des expériences gustatives du vin ; sur l'« *Esperienza toscana* », une visite touristique dans une exploitation vitivinicole ; et, finalement, sur le tourisme roumain : le vocabulaire spécialisé du vin et de la gastronomie en tant que produits touristiques. Pendant ce temps, la dernière session prévoyait dans le programme le travail de Madame Tatiana Musinova (Université Haute Alsace, France) sur la dimension culturelle et interculturelle des emprunts terminologiques dans les recettes de cuisine ; celui de Madame Hélène Burzala-Ory (Université de Bourgogne Franche-Comté, France) sur les mots et imaginaires des légumes au restaurant ; ainsi que celui de Monsieur Patrick Leroyer (Aarhus University, Danemark) sur le cas de la minéralité dans les dictionnaires du vin et de la vigne ; et, non pas en dernier lieu, celui de Kilien Stengel (Université de Tours, France) : « Le BON aliment pour une BONNE alimentation », un sujet vraiment adéquat puisque placé tout juste avant la Synthèse finale et la Clôture du colloque.

En guise de conclusion, il ne nous reste qu'à féliciter Madame Anne Parizot et Monsieur Benoît Verdier pour la manière impeccable d'organisation du colloque, et qu'à les remercier de leurs efforts dans ce sens.

## Notes

- 1 C'est Monsieur Benoît Verdier qui est le Rédacteur en chef et qui forme tout seul l'Équipe de rédaction du site du colloque d'où proviennent les informations comprises dans cet article. [En ligne]. 03/05/2017. URL : <<http://terminopro.hypotheses.org/>> (Consulté le 15 septembre 2017).
- 2 [En ligne]. URL : <<http://framonde.auf.org/>> (Consulté le 31 octobre 2017).
- 3 [En ligne]. URL : <<http://www.tourisme-champagne-ardenne.com/voir-faire/visiter/sites-de-visites/demeure-des-comtes-de-champagne-628557>> (Consulté le 31 octobre 2017).

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# Book Review





*The Definitive Book of Body  
Language* by Allen & Barbara  
Pease, Orion Books Ltd, London  
2005

*Maria-Zoica Balaban* \*

The Definitive Book of Body Language isolates and examines each component of body language and gesture in simple terms to make it accessible to all categories of public. The book seeks to give the general public a greater insight into communication with our fellow humans, so that we can have a better and deeper understanding of other people and, therefore, of ourselves.

body language; non-verbal communication; cultural differences; space invaders; rapport.

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AS THE AUTHORS POINT OUT, “THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALL PEOPLE WHO have good eyesight but who cannot see”. The book is the result of many years of research in the study of non-verbal communication along with new scientific disciplines, such as evolutionary biology and evolutionary psychology as well as technologies such as magnetic resonance imaging which shows what happens in the brain. Moreover, the authors state that they have written the book in a style that means it can be opened and read on almost any page at random. According to the authors The Definitive Book of Body Language will make the general public “more aware of your nonverbal cues and signals and will show you how to use them to communicate effectively and how to get the reactions you want”<sup>1</sup>. Initially thought of as a body language dictionary intended as a working manual for sales people, managers, negotiators and executives, the present book is the result of over 30 years of cumulative knowledge and involvement in the field of body language providing the basic vocabulary we need to read attitudes and emotions. The book is made of 19 chapters plus an introduction and references section: 1. Understanding the basics 2. The power is in your hands 3. The magic of smiles and laughter 4. Arm signals 5. Cultural differences 6.

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Hand and thumb gestures 7. Evaluation and deceit signals 8. Eye signals 9. Space invaders – territories and personal space 10. How the legs reveal what the mind wants to do 11. The 13 most common gestures you'll see daily 12. Mirroring – how we build rapport 13. The secret signals of cigarettes glasses and make up 14. How the body points to where the mind wants to go 15. Courtship displays and attraction gestures 16. Ownership territory and height signals 17. Seating arrangements - where to sit and why 18. Interviews, power plays and office politics 19. Putting it all together.

In the first chapter, *Understanding the Basics*, the authors present a short history of the term body language pointing out the fact that it became a science in the early '60 and people became aware of its existence in 1978 when the book *Body Language* was published. Yet, most people believe that speech is still our main form of communication. The authors present briefly the most influential works in the field of body language: Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, Albert Mehrabian's *Silent Messages*, Ray Birdwhistell's *Kinesics and Context*. Most of the researchers mentioned above agree that words are used primarily for conveying information, while body language is used for negotiating interpersonal attitudes and, in some cases, is used as a substitute for verbal messages. As a conclusion of the first chapter, the authors state that body language is an outward reflection of a person's emotional condition<sup>2</sup> and the key to reading body language is being able to understand a person's emotional condition while listening to what they are saying and noting the circumstances under which they are saying it<sup>3</sup>.

In chapter two, *The Power is in Your Hands*, the authors try to describe in details how the palms and handshakes are used to control in different cultural environments. There are 3 main palm command gestures: palm up position, palm down position and palm closed finger pointed position. Different handshake styles are also deeply analysed with the help of examples from politics, business environment and daily life situations. In order to be successful in the business environment authors also highlight the world's 8 worst handshakes: the wet fish, the vice, the bone crusher, the finger tip grab, the stiff-arm thrust, the socket wrench, the pump handle and the Dutch treat.

Chapter 3 deals with the magic of smiles and its impact on building up relationships in both the professional environment and the daily life. An in-depth analysis of the most common types of smiles that we are likely to see every day is presented: the tight-lipped smile, the twisted smile, the drop-jaw smile, sideways-looking-up smile and the George W. Bush Grin. The authors conclude that the older we became, the more serious we become about life. An adult laughs an average of 15 times a day, a pre-schooler laughs an average of 400 times.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present arm signals, hand and thumb gestures and the cultural differences they might lead to. Any crossing of the arms in front of the body is seen as negative and the message is as much in the mind of the receiver as the sender. As far as it

concerns cultural differences, the authors point out the implications of 3 common hand gestures: the ring, the thumb up and the V-sign. The ring means ok to a westerner, money to a Japanese, 0 to the French and insulting to the Turks and Brazilians.

In chapter 7 the deceit signals and the most common lying gestures are detailed with specific examples from different cultural backgrounds: the mouth cover, the nose touch, the itchy nose, the eye rub, the ear grab, the neck scratch, the collar pool and the finger in the mouth. As J.K. Jerome stated “It is always the best policy to speak the truth, unless of course you are an exceptionally good liar”. The difficulty with lying is that the mind acts automatically and independently of our verbal lie, so the body language gives us away.<sup>4</sup> Throughout history researchers have been preoccupied with the eyes and their effect on human behaviour which is the main focus in Chapter 8. Eye contact regulates conversations, gives cues of dominance being a vital part of reading a person’s attitude, emotions and thoughts. When people meet for the first time they make a series of quick judgements about each other based largely on what they see. The implications of the personal space, how people react when it is invaded and the importance of sometimes keeping an arms-length relationship are presented in Chapter 9. Edward Hall’s contributions to the study of man’s spatial needs and its effect on understanding the relationships with each other are of relevant importance in the field of body language. Chapter 10 refers to the role of legs and feet when reading someone’s attitude in the business environment and in daily life situations. The four main standing positions are detailed: the attention stance, the legs apart, the foot forward and the leg cross. Moreover, human beings when they begin to feel more comfortable in a group and get to know others they go through a series of movements taking them from the defencing crossed arms and legs position to the relaxed open position. Chapter 11 details the 13 most common gestures you’ll see daily starting with the head nod going on with the head shake, moving on to the head shrug, moreover to the cowboy stance and the legs spread. Not only it is important to understand the significance of these signals, it’s vital to good communication that you eliminate any negative gestures and practice using the things that will give you positive results.

Chapter 12 refers to the ways in which people can build rapport with the help of mirroring the other person’s body language and speech patterns. Mirroring someone’s body language makes them feel accepted and creates a bond and is a phenomenon that occurs naturally between friends and people of equal status.

The next chapters 13, 14 and 15 present the way in which cigarettes, glasses and make up help to spot a positive or a negative decision and gives people an opportunity to perform several revealing gestures in a business context. The more of these objects we use the more we signal our intentions or emotions. Chapters 16 and 17 focus on the significant impact that height and power have on building relationships along with the sitting arrangements. More specifically, chapter 17 describes in detail the table test based on the corner position,

the cooperative position and the competitive/defensive position. Special attention is given to King Arthur's concept which is applied to a round table that creates an atmosphere of relaxed informality and is ideal for promoting discussion among people who are of equal status as each person can claim the same amount of table territory. Nowadays business executives use rectangular, square and round tables. In the business environment seating positions shouldn't be accidental, placing certain people in specific positions can affect the outcome of a meeting.

The last two chapters stand for a conclusion for the whole book, highlighting the fact that at an interview the first impression count more than the real stuff from the CV and people should be aware of the nine golden keys to making great first impression: in the reception area, the entry, the approach, the handshake, when you sit, seating areas, your gestures, distance, your exit. First impressions are "the love at first sight" of the business world.

In a nutshell, learning how to read people based on their gestures, mimics, body language, tone of voice puts you in the best light. "Without effective body language, you can be like a spaghetti western – the leaps don't match the words and the viewers are constantly confused or switch channels"<sup>5</sup>.

### Notes

- 1 Pease, Allan & Barbara (2005), *The Definitive Book of Body Language*, Orion House London, p.5.
- 2 idem., p.11.
- 3 idem., p.15.
- 4 idem., p.147.
- 5 idem., p.381.

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# Compte rendu de lecture : poèmes de Liliana Foşalău dédiés au vin

Review of Liliana Foşalău's Poems Dedicated to Wine

*Alexandra Viorica Dulău* \*

This article presents two volumes of poems dedicated to wine that are created by Liliana Foşalău and some of the most important Romanian poets, which were translated into French by the author of the selection.

anthology; French language; poems; translation; wine.

MADAME LILIANA CORA FOŞALĂU EST PROFESSEUR DE LITTÉRATURE FRANÇAISE (XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle), à l'Université « Alexandru Ioan Cuza » de Iaşi. Elle donne également des cours d'introduction à la théorie de la littérature, d'analyse du texte littéraire, de littérature francophone moderne et des cours concernant les Institutions de la Francophonie, étant aussi préoccupée par la traduction des textes provenant de la presse. En ce qui concerne son activité de recherche – à côté de la recherche dans ses domaines d'enseignement –, elle accorde beaucoup de son temps au vocabulaire de spécialité et à l'approche culturelle ou interdisciplinaire de la vitiviniculture et, non pas en dernier lieu, à la traduction du texte littéraire. Cela n'est pas étonnant parce que la poésie moderne et celle contemporaine font partie non seulement de ses préoccupations scientifiques, mais aussi de celles personnelles, Liliana Foşalău étant un poète de qualité (à voir, dans ce sens, au moins les appréciations de Marc Gontard<sup>1</sup> et de Daniel Cristea-Enache<sup>2</sup>).

Les deux volumes que Liliana Cora Foşalău a fait récemment publier (*Poeme de vreme și vin. Le Vin. Le Temps*<sup>3</sup>, le premier paru en 2015 et le deuxième en 2016, une anthologie bilingue *Vinul lumii. Le Vin du monde*<sup>4</sup>) sont dédiés au

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vin. À retenir que ses vers sont écrits soit en roumain, soit en français et repris également dans l'autre langue de l'anthologie bilingue.

Pourtant, d'où cet intérêt particulier d'une femme pour le vin ? Mention doit être faite qu'elle appartient à un groupe international d'enseignants chercheurs qui étudient, au sein de l'Université de Bourgogne, « les implications, la place et les vertus du vin dans la littérature »<sup>5</sup> sous la direction de Madame Jocelyne Pérard, « fondatrice de l'unique Chaire UNESCO au monde sur des thématiques vitivinicoles »<sup>6</sup>.

Pour revenir aux publications en discussion, on doit souligner que la belle présentation graphique de ces deux volumes est due à des artistes de Iași : au peintre Daniela Sălăjan, qui a réalisé les illustrations en couleurs des poésies de Madame Foșalău, et à Madame Antonela Corban (docteur en philosophie et peintre d'icônes), qui a illustré l'anthologie par d'élégants dessins à l'encre.

Dans l'anthologie, on retrouve – à côté des œuvres de Liliana Foșalău – des vers appartenant à des poètes importants de la littérature roumaine, comme : Al. Macedonski, Tudor Arghezi, Ion Pillat, Ștefan Augustin Doinaș, Horia Zilieru, Lucian Blaga, Vasile Voiculescu, Nichifor Crainic. Elle a trouvé des solutions intéressantes autant afin de traduire l'idée d'un poète<sup>7</sup> ou de l'autre, que de garder la musicalité de ses vers :

Original	Traduction
Și, ca poet al viei, serbîndu-i sfîntul hram, Închini pentru Horațiu, Virgil și Francis Jammes. Ion Pillat, <i>Undrea</i>	En poète de la vigne et grand prêtre du vin, Tu lèves la coupe aux poètes – roumains, français, latins! Ion Pillat, <i>Nivôse</i>

Il est dommage que Păstorel Teodoreanu en soit absent, car avant le milieu du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, il n'a manqué aucune occasion d'exprimer son admiration pour le vin de Cotnari, ce qu'il a fait même en vers<sup>8</sup>, écrits autant en roumain qu'en français ; en voici les deux variantes :

Original	Traduction	Original	Traduction
<i>Află, bînd paharul Mic, dar venerabil, Că nu-i vin Cotnarul, E soare potabil.</i>	[Apprends, buvant le verre Petit, mais vénérable, Que ce n'est pas de vin le Cotnar, C'est du soleil potable.]	Cotnar, vieux conétable Et seigneur palatin, Mais, ce n'est pas du vin, C'est du soleil potable.	[ <i>Cotnar, bătrîne conetabil Și senior palatin, Dar nu este vin, Ci soare potabil.</i> ]

Sur ses traces, mais au XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle, ce sont les vers de Liliana Foșalău qui rendent hommage aux qualités du vin de Cotnari en roumain et – dans sa propre traduction

– en français ou, bien, uniquement en français à celui de Bordeaux – qu'il soit rouge ou blanc ; mais, le tout est lié par le même mot latin *Ave* :

Original	Traduction	Original
Cântec solar cu sclipire de har, soare răsfrânt în al țării pământ și întors în pahar chihlimbar, curgătoarei pecete moldave spun Ave, Ave Cotnar ! <sup>9</sup>	Chant solaire où essaime l'esprit, soleil labourant la terre du pays, retourné ambre dans le verre ébloui, au liquide sceau moldave je dis Ave, Ave Cotnar ! <sup>10</sup>	Source divine où la joie traluit [sic], soleil caressant les terres du pays – pourpre ou ambre dans la coupe rejaillit, à ces mystères des Graves je dis Ave, Ave Bordeaux, vins bénis ! <sup>11</sup>

De longueurs différentes, les vers que Liliana Cora Foșalău dédie au vin couvrent une gamme de sujets extrêmement variés qui vont des souvenirs d'antan (« Le Vignoble de l'enfance »), à la foi (« Fête partagée ») ou à l'amour (« Inscription sur une feuille »), que voici en guise de très courte conclusion :

L'été qui passe  
Le vin qui vient  
Mon cœur vers toi  
En pèlerin.<sup>12</sup>

## Notes

- 1 In Liliana Cora Foșalău, *Poeme de vreme și vin. Le Vin. Le Temps*, ilustrații de Daniela Sălăjan, Prefață de Marc Gontard și Daniel Cristea-Enache (Iași: Editura Junimea, 2015), 6-7.
- 2 In *idem*, 7.
- 3 Liliana Cora Foșalău, *op. cit.*
- 4 *Vinul lumii/Le Vin du monde. Vinul în Poezia românească/ Le Vin dans la poésie roumaine. Antologie bilingvă/Anthologie bilingue, Ediția a doua, revizuită și adăugită/ Deuxième édition révisée et complétée, Selecția, traducerea textelor, preambul și postfață de Liliana Cora Foșalău (Iași: Editura Timpul, 2016).*
- 5 Liliana Cora Foșalău, « Préambule », in *op. cit.*, 9.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 In *id.*, 68-69.
- 8 Al. O. Teodoreanu, *Inter pocula*, Ediție și prefață de Titus Moraru (Cluj: Editura Dacia, 1973), 92.
- 9 Liliana Cora Foșalău, *Poeme de vreme și vin. Le Vin. Le Temps*, 46.
- 10 *Id.*, 47.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 48.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 51.

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