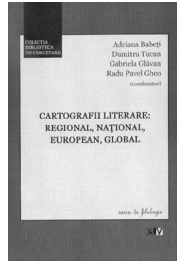


Book Reviews



Adriana Babeți, Dumitru Tucan, Gabriela Glăvan, Radu Pavel Gheo (éds.), *Cartografii literare: Regional, Național, European, Global*, Timișoara, Editura Universității de Vest, 2016



Cet ouvrage reprend les contributions présentées à l'occasion du symposium national organisé par l'ALGCR (Association de Littérature Générale et Comparée de Roumanie), *Regional, Național, European (euroatlantic), Universal (Global, Planetar)*, à Timișoara en 2015. Le volume comprend quatre sections principales : *Geometrii conceptuale : local – regional – global* (Géométries conceptuelles : local, régional, global) ; *Literatura națională – redefiniri funcționale* (Quelques tentatives fonctionnelles pour redéfinir la littérature nationale) ; *Arii marginale – periferii creatoare* (Aires marginales, périphéries créatrices) et *Umbrele totalitarismului* (Les ombres du totalitarisme). Les études réunies dans ce numéro revisitent l'idée de la littérature nationale à l'aune de la créativité des territoires périphériques.

La partie introductive met l'accent sur l'identité nationale par rapport à l'économie mondiale. La première étude appartient à Mircea Martin, qui place l'accent sur la question de la transnationalité. En ce sens, il insiste sur le fait que, dans le contexte de la mondialisation, les intellectuels ont besoin de faire un effort pour reconstruire l'identité. De son côté, Corin Braga met en évidence l'importance des représentations imaginaires dans les sociétés contemporaines, expliquant la dynamique de

l'identité culturelle de l'Europe à travers le terme « fractale » de Benoit Mandelbrot. Le chercheur milite pour la préservation des identités locales, régionales de même que nationales construites en Europe. À un niveau plus spécifique, l'étude de Catrinel Popa est fondée sur le concept de *balkanisme littéraire*. Dans la première partie de son travail, elle fait une histoire de ce concept qu'elle appliquera par la suite dans le roman de Mateiu Caragiale, *Craii de Curtea-Veche*.

La deuxième partie de l'ouvrage repose sur la redéfinition de l'idée de littérature nationale, en mettant en évidence le caractère idéologique de cette notion. Les articles qu'y sont réunis illustrent les flexibilités de la frontière littéraire qui se révèle d'autant plus importante. Radu Pavel Gheo souligne le caractère idéologique du concept de littérature nationale et en propose une redéfinition. Tout d'abord, il utilise une perspective contemporaine pour examiner les quatre critères pour définir une culture nationale. Le critère ethnique, linguistique, territorial et culturel sont présentés comme incompatibles en raison des changements produits dans le discours à long terme sur la nation et l'identité nationale.

Toute la littérature nationale a des zones de contact. Par exemple, l'étude de Mihaela Albu présente les intellectuels roumains qui ont travaillé sur le plan politique et culturel en exil après la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Pourtant, Ruxandra Câmpeanu repense la question de l'identité collective et souligne qu'avant tout il faut essayer de préciser le sens de cette notion complexe. Un travail axé sur l'étude de Mihai Ralea montrerait la vision descriptive et normative du phénomène



roumain dans la littérature et son impact sur le concept de nationalité. De sa part, Irina Roxana Georgescu s'intéresse au rôle joué par la revue *Secolul 20* dans les années 1960-1980, qui cherche à faire craquer le monolithe culturel du réalisme socialiste par des exercices critiques et des traductions.

La troisième section est consacrée à des études appliquées qui cherchent à cerner la dynamique de la géographie littéraire à partir des zones périphériques vers les zones centrales. Cette section est inaugurée par la présentation du programme « La Troisième Europe », par Adriana Babeți, un programme qui se penche sur l'histoire culturelle des communautés intellectuelles et artistiques à Timișoara. L'auteur y discute le concept d'Europe centrale. À cet égard, Cornel Ungureanu rappelle le lien culturel du Banat avec la culture de l'Europe centrale. Depuis un point de vue complémentaire, le chercheur explore la géographie littéraire du Banat et combine l'histoire culturelle et littéraire existante pour définir un sens de l'espace. Dans la continuité de ces travaux, Ilinca Ilian fait une analyse du roman historique de cette région, notant l'absence d'intérêt de la nouvelle génération d'écrivains pour des questions d'identité nationale et continentale. À un autre niveau, il y a des écrivains qui ont une identité transnationale. On a ainsi le cas de Matei Vișniec, écrivain à triple identité, à partir de qui Emilia David esquisse un travail sur l'esthétique du théâtre européen.

Le volume se clôt par un volet provocateur où les auteurs repensent la réévaluation des effets de l'histoire totalitaire de la culture roumaine en Europe. Dan Anghelescu fait ainsi une analyse de

l'acculturation littéraire spécifique pour la Roumanie depuis 1945 et met en évidence les provocations auxquelles le pays a dû se confronter au XX^e siècle. Selon lui, la Roumanie est une nation en détresse parce que le stalinisme a provoqué une destruction systématique de l'idée de culture. Depuis une autre perspective, Ligia Tudurachi repense le communisme en termes d'esthétique. Son travail trace les contours des cadres de la vie quotidienne et de la production artistique à l'époque du totalitarisme. En fait, elle analyse la situation culturelle marquée par le communisme d'un point de vue occidental. Le volume se termine par un article signé par Alexandru-Gabriel Soare qui examine certaines œuvres subversives rédigées contre les régimes dictatoriaux, son analyse de nature théorique s'appuyant sur des textes écrits par George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Evgueni Zamiatine et Ismail Kadare.

Les quatre volets de l'ouvrage font preuve d'une véritable passion interdisciplinaire. Dans le contexte de la mondialisation, les études y réunies repensent l'idée de littérature nationale, mettant l'accent sur la création périphérique, dont les problèmes font partie d'un circuit mondial. Les opinions des auteurs se rejoignent dans le point commun de la perspective historique, en particulier à l'époque du totalitarisme communiste.

Mihaela Vancea



Hugo Francisco Bauzá (ed.), *Problemas del imaginario en la cultura occidental*, Buenos Aires, Academia Nacional de Ciencias de Buenos Aires, 2010



The book is filled to the brim with wonderful things, although most of them are fashioned with academic tools of interpretation. Trying to make sense of the sublime and disturbing elements of the imaginary through the lens of mythology and its shaping of the cultural environment, these essays fall below a high level of scholarly intensity. This, along with useful detailed cross-cultural references and some insightful book reviews, make *Problemas del imaginario en la cultura occidental* a model handbook. Two things stand out. The first should strike aficionados of the concept as obvious. Few comparative studies could spawn and sustain such a work. Second, the book demonstrates that quantitatively – by virtue of the sheer number of works amassed within a fairly short number of pages – the mythological imaginary and its cultural roots can provide an object of study that only passionate researchers can do justice to.

Regarding the first point, there is a danger in overestimating the uniqueness of the concept, and in an effort to drive home a complex or scintillating academic point, it is tempting to overlook the fundamental things that have made mythology such a captivating subject. In no particular order, myths compel creative/productive values (including high-quality philosophical issues and a wonderful sense

of human consciousness), intelligent narrative, strong, archetypal characters, a superposing model of reality versus fantasy into a unique creation of the inner perspectives of the word, an evocative setting, moral and theological topics – all in a deliberately offbeat variation on a genuine verified format: the anthropological narrative of human genesis and man’s mysterious purpose in the Universe.

The essence of the imaginary in mythology is assessed in a round-table like discussion included in transcript form, as the pieces in the collection proper are the subject matter of a conference regarding the same topic. The contributors try to come to terms with “mythology” as “imaginary.” No matter how tendentious your definition of that term, it seems intuitive to apply it to the “mythological imaginary” like no other concept. One essay contributor, Patricia Hebe Calabrese, connects the two facets of the “imaginary” I have mentioned by arguing that we should not overlook how well the “expected” is rendered because it makes the subverting, ironic, referential qualities of the concept so effective, by superposing archetypal images to restore split, hidden identities or complexities.

In her essay, “Homo universalis: literatura, arte y ciencia desde el humanism clásico al Renacimiento,” Gabriella Albanese looks at historians’ global method of investigation and puts her finger on the issue of the modernity of historical approaches by discussing the sense of *homo universalis* in the context of today’s globalization. This notion is crucial to any use of the term global humanism. Put plainly, *homo universalis* was a strong concept to assess, especially for those willing to explain the actuality of history, those who



could reference what was referenced in ancient ideologies, or appreciate the degree to which ancient Greek thinkers (Plato, Aristotle, Ptolemy), Renaissance artists (Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci) and scientists (Johannes Kepler, Galileo Galilei, Nicolaus Copernicus, Tycho Brahe, Paracelsus, Francastoro, Erasmus of Rotterdam, among others), and their various interpreters were irrepressibly guided by the need of a totality beyond any disciplinary borders. For them, the academy was a concept, an ideal place for the expansion of humanism and human global culture, as well as for identity and unity within diversity.

Although mythology and anthropomorphized mythological entities are central components of human culture, many concepts are meant to be reinterpreted and not simply analyzed or examined. This quality is apparent in the best essays in the book. They confront mythology on its own level by reinterpreting and celebrating myths in a way that makes us want to resonate with their sense of imaginary, i.e. go back and revisit ancient myths. They read mythological episodes with almost the same conceptual intensity exhibited by its creators, which has the advantage of accounting for many different readers' experience and not just for that of the academic theoretician. And a recitation of the myths developed in ancient cultures is not the same thing.

José Carlos Bermejo Barrera sets the stage in his introduction by giving an orientation to the ancient Greek interpretive community and sampling some of the ways in which the myth of the sea, with all its entities and genealogies, has been developed in order to shape the Greek religious

perspective. Eduardo Grüner then offers a stunning assessment of the Freudian psychoanalytical theory tied to a view of ancient Oedipus's sacrificial role. While he has a high opinion of the myth of Oedipus as a channel for expressing the orientation of human beings into the symbolic universe of culture – drawn by articulated language, law, social order, the sense of human subjectivity (humans see themselves as creative subjects of their own symbolic universe) – Grüner views some theological developments of the myth as a puritanical burden with a regressive nostalgia for the worst of an era of original crime.

In her essay, María Gabriela Rebok wants to understand the demise of the human by offering an intricate analysis of the myth of Antigone and its strong points *vis-a-vis* various interpreters' expectations about various kinds of moral development and means of imposing a new order in nurturing consciousness against individual death. Jorge Eduardo Fernández examines the usefulness of the "archetypal figure" incarnated by Faustus for analyzing Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He uses the figure of Faustus as a case study and claims Hegel monitored the nets and shaped his philosophy in response.

Anyone who feels that the interference between science and fantasy works is rarely given its due will like Alejandro Riberi's succinct essay about the common origin of scientific and artistic approaches in the process of representation, applied to Borges's writings. Marcelo Gorga looks at social behavior in today's era and makes the unassailable observation that biology and technology are keys to a new perspective on the expansion of consciousness. His approach relies on Marshall McLuhan and

Daniel Dennett. New comparative perspectives upon finitude and infinitude are offered by Mirta Camblong in her contribution regarding the archetype of the Labyrinth and its symbolic seduction.

“La katábasis del alma. Imaginario órfico en Proclo” by Graciela L. Ritacco de Gayoso offers a highly academic and, at the same time, a most confessional reading on the myth of Orpheus. Her approach gets to the heart of the myth and includes one of the best lines in the book.

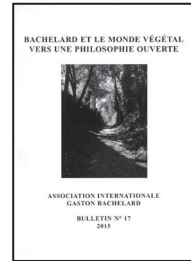
Martín A. Menniti’s passionate essay deals with the crucial issue raised by Oedipus’s myth: the conflict between the obsession for objectifying the human body in perverse ways and the skill with which this can be done. He acknowledges the beauty of the myth’s pure aesthetic appeal (to whatever extent that exists) and derides its implicit morality. He considers the myth powerful enough to make its interpreters transcend any objections to its sexual ethics. Just as Eduardo Grüner sees a division between Oedipus’s nature and manifest culture (language, thought, morality, and justice), Menniti can grasp the mythical hero’s dignity on moral grounds and reveal its archetypal impact in the form of a split destiny.

And finally, *Problemas del imaginario en la cultura occidental* is a treasure trove not least because of its five book reviews: “David García Pérez – *Prometeo. El mito del héroe y del progreso*,” “Fedra. *Versioni e riscritture di un mito classico*,” “Juan Signes Codoñer – *Escritura y literatura en la Grecia arcaica*,” “Alberto Bernabé and Francesc Casadesús (eds.) – *Orfeo y la tradición órfica*,” and “*Seconde Odyssée. Ulysse de Tennyson à Borges. Textes réunis, commentés et en partie traduits par Évanghélia Stead*,” which

provide accurate information on the matter. This should be a source of comfort to both the aspirant and the theoretician in everyone.

Cristian Pașcalău

Bulletin de l’Association Gaston Bachelard, n° 17 : « Bachelard et le monde végétal. Vers une philosophie ouverte », Dijon, Association Internationale Gaston Bachelard, 2015



Paru en 2015, sous la direction de Jean Libis, le dix-septième numéro du Bulletin de l’Association s’intitule « Bachelard et le monde végétal. Vers une philosophie ouverte » et contient quatre grands volets.

Le premier volet s’intéresse à la présence du monde végétal dans l’œuvre de Gaston Bachelard ; le végétal, non pas comme simple élément de décoration, mais comme un inducteur de rêverie, comme l’expression d’un monde et d’une cosmologie complexes. Dans l’article « Vivre comme un arbre », Jean-Philippe Pierron observe que « [s]ans élaborer un travail de cosmologies comparées entre cosmologie occidentale et cosmologie chinoise » (p. 16) visant la reconnaissance de cinq éléments, dont le végétal, Bachelard n’ignorait, pourtant, pas cette possibilité, en y voyant une véritable présence ontologique. Bachelard envisage le végétal dans sa dynamique existentielle. Pour lui, l’arbre est à la fois, tel qu’il affirme dans *La terre et les rêveries du repos*, « un objet intégrant », « l’arbre cosmologique, l’arbre qui résume un univers, qui fait un univers » et « une grande image



[...] un connecteur sensible dont on peut suivre, en imagination [...] les tensions qui le traversent et qui rehaussent la vie psychique de tout existant » (p. 21). Richard Bernaer, quant à lui, choisit d'illustrer le végétal dans *L'air et les songes*. Botaniste, il réfléchit sur la nomenclature des fleurs et sur la relation entre celle-ci et la réalité matérielle, tout en illustrant l'importance que Bachelard attribue aux « puissances végétales brutes », aux « organes vitaux des plantes » (p. 33) et donc à l'image primaire. L'étude de Jean Libis, intitulée « De l'exubérance végétale à la prédation animale », met en évidence deux pôles antithétiques présents dans le *Lautréamont* de Bachelard : le végétal(isme), « symbole de la vie confiante et tranquille » ou « substance d'une rêverie voire une philosophie du repos » (p. 49) et l'animalité, reliée à l'humanité et à l'idée d'agression : « Soumis à ses fonctions spécifiques d'agression, l'animal n'est qu'un assassin spécialisé. À l'homme le triste privilège de totaliser le mal, d'inventer le mal » (Bachelard, *Lautréamont*). Tout en empruntant les instruments d'analyse du végétal de Bachelard, Michèle Pichon illustre la richesse des rêveries matérielles dans la littérature, telles qu'on les trouve dans l'œuvre romanesque de J. M. G. Le Clézio. Cette démarche est vouée à la présentation des analogies établies entre l'homme et le végétal, mais aussi de la rêverie poétique, qui trouve la source de ses images dans des archétypes originels (p. 67).

La deuxième partie de cette livraison réunit plusieurs études critiques signées par des chercheurs bachelardiens. Julien Lamy parle de la philosophie bachelardienne comme d'une philosophie majeure du XX^e siècle, « intégrale et complète, qui présente

des enjeux à la fois théoriques et pratiques » (p. 73). Guillaume Bécart se penche sur la notion d'intimité qui, selon lui, représente le centre de gravité de la pensée de Bachelard. Plus exactement, l'œuvre du philosophe français met en scène une véritable métaphysique de l'intimité, qui est comme « un creuset dans lequel se déploient les rêveries du repos, source d'un hédonisme fragile » (p. 10). Jean-Claude Gens analyse la rencontre entre Bachelard et le psychiatre phénoménologue, Eugène Minkowski, dont les résonances se reflètent dans l'œuvre de Bachelard (surtout dans *L'air et les songes*). Le dernier article de ce volet appartient à Marta Ples-Beben, qui étudie le *Lautréamont*, trouvant que Bachelard y développe sa propre interprétation de la psychanalyse, une approche en marge de la psychanalyse classique (p. 117).

Bachelard était un grand épistolier et nombre de poètes ont été les destinataires de ses lettres. Ainsi le troisième volet de ce numéro est-il consacré à des échanges épistolaires et des documents authentiques fortement imprégnés par la rêverie végétale : il s'agit du témoignage de Pierre Connes, des lettres de Bachelard adressées au poète Jean Stiénon du Pré et à la poétesse Andrée Appercelle.

Le quatrième et dernier volet est un ensemble littéraire réunissant trois poèmes de Louis Guillaume. Ce volet garde intacte l'atmosphère créée par les études critiques des volets antérieurs, invitant le lecteur à une analyse de textes écrits sous la fascination du végétal. Le premier, « L'Éclair », illustre la fusion entre le végétal et l'être humain (« Homme pareil aux branches », « Arbre pareil aux hommes »), que Bachelard crayonnait, lui aussi, dans *La terre et les rêveries du repos*. Le deuxième poème, « Le



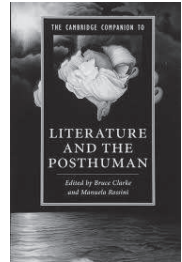
Feu mouillé », est dédié à Bachelard et (re) présente le monde de celui-ci, comme une synthèse d'éléments végétaux ou une apparition inouïe résultant de correspondances, de paradoxes et d'associations inédites. Lire ce poème comme un prolongement du travail du philosophe, c'est un exercice qui fait sens, d'autant plus que la poésie est la matière première des réflexions de Bachelard. Le dernier poème publié dans ce volet, « L'Arbre des morts », dédié à Luc Estang, romancier et poète dont la création littéraire est baignée d'un onirisme végétal, gravite autour des quatre éléments (terre, eau, air, feu), qui sont également le centre de l'« imagination matérielle » envisagée par Bachelard.

Par la qualité de ses articles, le dix-septième numéro du Bulletin de l'Association Gaston Bachelard n° 17, « Bachelard et le monde végétal. Vers une philosophie ouverte », s'adresse aux lecteurs curieux de s'initier aux dimensions multiformes et énigmatiques de l'œuvre de Gaston Bachelard, mise en relation avec le monde végétal et avec la philosophie. Le lecteur, qu'il soit chercheur ou simple curieux, trouvera assurément dans cet ouvrage matière à enrichir ses connaissances et à stimuler sa réflexion sur les enjeux de l'œuvre de Bachelard. Mais pourquoi « vers une philosophie ouverte » ? En fait, Bachelard s'est attaché davantage à une phénoménologie de l'imagination qu'à la détermination de sa place dans une philosophie générale de la destinée humaine. Il n'est pas soucieux d'édifier un système ; sa pensée est à l'œuvre et « s'élabore au contact des œuvres humaines et de la résistance du réel, qui nous confrontent à des problèmes qui stimulent l'idée de comprendre » (p. 81). Pour reprendre une idée du directeur de l'édition, « [a]u fond Bachelard nous

donne le désir d'une investigation, non pas de la Nature, parce que la Nature comme telle n'existe pas pour lui, mais bel et bien des matières et substances qui sont des objets de fascination intarissables » (p. 45).

Daniela-Anastasia Pop

Bruce Clarke & Manuela Rossini (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman*, Cambridge University Press, 2017



The Cambridge Companion to Literature and the Posthuman, published in 2017 by Cambridge University Press, is an excellent academic adjutant that rectifies the lack of well-organized criticism in the pluralist, multifaceted field of posthumanism. While trying to provide structure to a complex interlace of characteristics spread across mixed media might have presented itself as a challenge, this issue's editors, Bruce Clarke and Manuela Rossini, prominent figures of the European Society for Literature, Science and the Arts, have successfully united with a group of authors whose essays make for enjoyable reads, relevant contributions and complementary pieces in a puzzle of contemporaneity's continuous mutations.

Focused on the now apparent instability and incoherence of the human as concept, the Companion responds to a rising interest in what has come to be known as "the posthumanities." After establishing that the posthuman is the result of a coupling between human and nonhuman characteristics, the book traces its figurations

throughout history and several types of media (literature, philosophy, films, comics, e-lit), while taking into account the role of technological development and confronting the “specters of humanist modernity” (p. 20): gods, angels, monsters, premodern animals. The division of the Companion into three major parts (Literary Periods, Posthuman Literary Modes and Posthuman Themes) makes it the perfect student handbook, easy to use thanks to its neat sequencing.

It might be shocking to unseasoned readerships to discover that the first chapter is dedicated to the Medieval, seeing how we generally associate posthumanism with cyborgs and futuristic landscapes. Karl Steel argues that there are certain aspects of Medieval thinking that link this period to a “proto-posthumanism”: the human body, human language and the problems that come with human free choice. In order to demolish scholarly claims that aimed to set humanity apart from other living beings, Steel compellingly brings forth solid examples: sequences from the Bible, the Icelandic *Saga of Hrolf Kraki*, the Old Norse work *The King’s Mirror* and Marie de France’s “Bisclavert” reveal ambiguities in linguistic distinction between man and animal, plus an affinity for hybrid characters that are in no way demonized, but rather exert fascination. While medieval scholars argued that rational behavior is what attested the superiority of man, Steel balances such claims with abbot Ratramnus of Corbie’s “Letter on Cynocephali,” in which the author deems dog-headed creatures to be human and in need of missionary aid.

Chapter two, focused on Early Modern literature, sets out to reiterate the omnipresence of interdependence between humans and their environment, while also

revealing “literary instances of networked intelligences” that anticipate devices such as the Echo or Alexa. Kevin LaGrandeur begins his essay by analyzing the Aristotelian conception of machines as enhancers of human capability and points out a highly relevant lexical overlap: the same word is used for tools and body parts, *organon*. From there on, he begins a wonderful postulation about how Prospero’s Ariel and Faustus’ Mephistopheles act as interfaces in complex systems that simultaneously help their masters and threaten to flip the power balance of their rapport. LaGrandeur also reveals that Marlow’s play makes use of the notion of avatar: the devil disguises himself as a Franciscan monk when speaking to Faustus in order to hide the complex processes he is in charge of beneath a friendly face.

In the third chapter, Ron Broglio familiarizes the reader with typically Romantic constructions of self, which are “privileged interiority” and “the inside of the mind turned outwards through poetry” (pp. 108-109). The author then proceeds to exemplify using Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey,” presented as an illustration of the simultaneous existence of the poetic persona across several timelines. Interestingly enough, he pairs these lingering humanist conceptions of rich interior life with the late twentieth century philosophy of Michel Foucault, who “deflates” Romantic ideas of self, reducing them to a mere social construct. This apparent historical incongruence is resolved using an analysis of Mary Shelley’s “Frankenstein,” whose monster character is human, animal and technological all at once, but stripped of so-called natural rights and subjected to the abuse of society.

The fourth chapter deals with the Modern and its partial allegiance to posthumanist



ideals using the works of Friedrich Nietzsche as starting points. Although Jeff Wallace believes the Übermensch to be admirable in its showcasing of human overcoming, he admits that this model falls short and then proceeds to discuss the fallible figure of a Zarathustra that is marked by age and uncertainty. Further on, the author formulates two modes of the modernist posthuman, as found in dichotomies such as heroic/anti-heroic, egotistic/post-anthropocentric, conflictual/peaceful, loud/quiet, which he exemplifies on Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love* and *Sons and Lovers*. By referencing Marinetti and Eliot, the author ties in the poetics of impersonality with the modern anti-hero's transgression of the status quo for the sake of aesthetic autonomy. Wallace successfully underlines the posthuman connotations of the modernist agenda of "destroying the 'I' in literature" (p. 138), thus reminding the reader that ego could in fact be taken as a sign of the death of anthropocentrism. The Modern age also faces a redefinition of ethics, now deemed to be "an understanding of agency and codependency distributed across complex networks or fields of relations," instead of the mere actions and decisions of humans. Wallace exemplifies using Virginia Woolf's animistic and "intra-active" prose in *The Waves* and *Jacob's Room*. This chapter ends on an affectionate note, quoting Latour's compositionist manifesto in which he expresses his hope that the world will be rebuilt of heterogeneous elements that will never form a whole, but rather remain diverse composite materials.

The last chapter belonging to this section is of course dedicated to the Postmodern. Stefan Herbrechter begins his essay with an endearing anecdote, comparing his

experience of understanding the postulations of Lyotard with the class experience of the children in Swift's novel *Waterland*. Naturally, more serious aspects make their way through the light-hearted tone of his introduction: history is now subjective and demystified; children represent an instance of "inhumanity." Students will most definitely appreciate the clear manner in which Herbrechter approaches explaining the paradoxical "post-" that comes both before and after the same time, in accordance to Lyotard's theory. Not only does postmodernism function through anamnesis, but it also relies on intertextuality, blurred or lacking distinctions between framed and unframed and metafictionality, all aspects which the author clarifies and discusses extensively. Moving on to Derrida's "hauntology," Herbrechter insists on the fleeing nature of the present and the challenge of its representation. Ultimately, this chapter ends on an optimistic note regarding the future of literature, relishing on the dominance of so many innovative elements (using elite and popular culture, "intermediality," and hypertext) that have paved the way for the posthuman.

The next section of the companion, *Posthuman Literary Modes*, is also comprised of five sub-chapters, each presenting genres and mediums in which posthumanism, as a theme, motif or influence has flourished. Seducing enough even at a furtive glance through the table of contents, this part offers researchers and students invaluable resources and extensive details regarding science fiction, autobiography, comics/graphic narratives, films and even e-literature.

The chapter on science fiction, written by Lisa Yaszek and Jason W. Ellis, testifies to over two centuries of storytelling centered around "the mutability and multiplicity of



the human condition” (p. 176). Our body becomes a medium to be manipulated according to will, producing thousands, if not millions, of genetically modified or technologically enhanced variants that are all valid representations of the posthuman. The birth and rising popularity of this genre is closely connected to the threatening pace of technological advancement during the Enlightenment. In the light of WWII, it comes as no surprise to the reader that man was seen as necessary material in a gruesome scientific endeavor set on creating a master race (here, once more, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is extremely relevant). Sci-fi refuses the limitations of the body, offering interesting alternatives regarding reproduction, the representation of personality and memory as downloadable data and atypical social hierarchies that give rise to moral dilemmas. Yaszek and Wellis’ chapter discusses a wide variety of key texts (by Philip K. Dick, Ursula K. Le Guin, Octavia Butler to name a few) in a successful attempt to properly cover this diverse and imaginative genre. It definitely makes for a delightful read, considering it also tackles the controversial nature of AIs and vengeful female cyborgs.

Kari Weil begins the seventh chapter, centered on autobiography, by referencing an episode of the British TV series *Black Mirror* called “The Entire History of You.” This is very effective in establishing an immediate closeness between her and readers that have seen the show, but also highly illustrative of the main idea of her essay. What Weil wants to point out is that we are compelled to contribute to the ever expanding “archive without an archivist” (p. 201) that is the Internet, remaining perpetually bound to the things we have said and done. Moving on, she discusses a series of novels

that fall under the ambiguous category of “life writing,” which is explained as “extended authorship across a human and non-human world” (p. 203). The first novel explored is Temple Gardin’s *Emergence*, which uses several narrative techniques evocative of cinema in order to convey how the influence of calves and cows helped her understand the world as an autistic child. H el ene Cixous’ autobiography *Animots* is a testimony to the reflection of the “I” in the animal other, translating the perceived gestures of her pets into captivating literature. Weil also examines a video by Bill Viola in which he uses several shots of wild and domesticated animals in an attempt at self-definition.

Lisa Diedrich’s chapter on comics and graphic narratives is a joyful experience for any professed super-fan of this hybrid art form that co-mixes words and images. While she does mention the famous *Maus*, *Persepolis* and *Are You My Mother?*, the author chooses Ellen Forney’s *Marbles: Mania, Depression, Michelangelo, and Me* and Martina Schl under, Pit Arens, and Axel Gerhardt’s collaborative graphic narrative *Becoming Bone Sheep* to exemplify instances of posthumanism, admirably promoting these indie publications. One of the most endearing sections of her essay is definitely that in which she discusses how a comic panel is a failed attempt at representing a moment frozen in time: “the desire to encapsulate an individual’s ‘experience’ in history and the impossibility of doing so” (p. 223).

The ninth chapter focuses on posthuman representations in film and Anneke Smelik loses no time when it comes to captivating the attention of her readership: she unexpectedly begins her essay by describing the music video for the viral hit *All Is Full Of Love*, by Icelandic singer Bj ork, in



which two female robots make love. From there on, after going through various other examples (*Her*, *Ex Machina*, *RoboCop*, *Terminator*), she focuses on recurrent elements in posthuman filmography. First on the list is cyborg POV, a shot that has been edited to demonstrate improved vision and infinite obtainable knowledge through a mere gaze cast upon a subject. Smelik then moves on to discuss the philosophical implications of cyborgs having instances of self-reparation in the mirror, a type of scene that communicates both their physical superiority to human beings and their all too human self-awareness. She then writes about mediated and digitized memory, commenting on instances in which robots endowed with human memories have expressed pain when realizing their predicament and instances in which human subjects have voluntarily chosen to erase or modify their own memory when presented the technological alternative. Her chapter culminates with a philosophical conundrum regarding the possibility of love between a human and a cyborg. Reading it, one must be willing to subject themselves to a constant state of fascination and satisfaction in having discovered so much force and significance... present even in Hollywood productions.

The final chapter of this section is dedicated to E-Literature, with authors Ivan Callus and Mario Aquilina set on paradoxically dissecting this online residing genre on paper. E-Literature's affinities to the posthuman are quite obvious, considering that it makes use of text generators, recombinant algorithms, user interaction, multi-tiered feedback and feedforward loops to deliver its final product. In fact, both authors consider it to be a form of transcribing the human into code and archiving memory,

turning consciousness into something that can be rewritten. Callus and Aquilina stress the fact that the autopoiesis of this version of the posthuman lies in self-creation, self-maintenance and self-adaptation of a system. They offer the concrete example of generative poetry, which is executed based on user interaction: it is a narrative performance with infinite permutations enabled by an algorithm that reacts to human choices. This essay also raises questions regarding authorship by forcing a reader "to contemplate forms of being literary that may have needed nonhuman agency" (p. 275), which definitely challenges anthropocentric claims upon literature. The authors conclude by deeming digitality "the condition of the 21st century" and leave their readers decentered, but nonetheless enthralled.

The final major section of the companion, entitled *Posthuman Themes*, is yet again divided into five subchapters, most likely for the sake of symmetry and convenience. It focuses on broader topics: the nonhuman, bodies, objects, technologies and futures, which make it easier for readers to use the following essays as theoretical support for a variety of research. The following chapters also effectively fill in any gaps of knowledge that might have remained regarding posthumanism.

Bruce Clarke's essay on the nonhuman dives head first into the dark side of human morality to make clear-cut theoretical statements that may leave one disheartened. As a species, we have always coexisted and even become confused with the nonhuman, mainly because the nonhuman takes on the identity of whoever is deemed to be the weakest link. Transitioning from Grusin's emotionally taxing quote about how "we have never stopped building our



collectives with raw materials made of poor humans and humble nonhumans” (p. 299) to the nonhuman trait of aspiring for the aesthetic sublime might seem shocking and sudden, but it is also what makes Clarke’s style incredibly gripping. The author also points out that our perception of the cosmos is what has defined it as a nonhuman space (seeing how its origin lies in a nonhuman mystery), from which we expect the emissaries of superior, enlightened beings to come into contact with us. The sad conclusion to this chapter lies in the very classification of nonhumanism: an alter ego of posthumanism, “its only positivity rests in the denial of human form” (p. 308).

Manuela Rossini’s chapter on the body comes as no surprise taking into account the recent advances in medicine, the likes of “tissue and organ transplants between human beings and across species” and the rapid development of prosthetics that comes with “cyborg subjectivity” as a side effect. According to Rossini, posthumanism seeks to dismantle the idea of ideal human form (i.e. Da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man), seeing it as the foundation that helped build an androcentric system of oppression that has legitimated “the torture, eating and killing of beings not falling into the category ‘human’” (p. 320). She then proceeds to discuss Jean-Luc Nancy’s *The Intruder* as an illustration of the transformative philosophical implications of heart transplant. Rossini stresses the importance of the human body seen as “another knot in the web of interspecies or intersubjective dependencies” and reiterates time and time again how humans are undividable from otherness.

Chapter number thirteen, simply titled “Objects,” is Ridvan Askin’s theorization of things and objects in their own right.

Quoting from Viktor Shklovsky’s famous essay “Art as Device,” Askin deems literature to be a double aesthetic object, which is to say that a book is the very process of aesthesis and the object disclosed by means of aesthesis. Using two texts from extremely different time periods as illustrative examples of literature’s capabilities (Margaret Fuller, *Summer on the Lakes* and Charles Olson “The Ring Of”), the author aims both to solidify his initial claims and to demonstrate how literature “opens up fissures in the bulwark of representation” (p. 364) in order to let otherness and nonhumanism seep in.

R.L. Rutsky’s chapter concerning technologies encompasses humanity’s fear and fascination when facing the mechanical. The author explains that the anxiety and paranoia one experiences when facing a form of technology is a projection of humanity’s worst traits, although he admits that digitalization means instrumentalization and thus liability to being controlled. According to Rutsky, it is “human empowerment” that keeps the vicious technological circle going: that is, when sensing reduction by means of restrictive or invasive procedures, a human being will always attempt to modify the system, thus fueling a destructive cycle. The author also has an interesting opinion regarding technological bodily enhancements, reducing them to the level of glasses or sports shoes.

The final chapter of the companion, entitled “Futures,” postulates various scenarios regarding what lies in store for humanity and the planet. As Claire Colebrook takes into account previously discussed aspects, she divides possibilities according to the death or survival of anthropocentrism. Flaunting a wide theoretical background that takes us through Nietzsche, Deleuze

and Leibniz, to name a few, she then proceeds to choose, in postmodern fashion, to affirm the dichotomies of survival/extinction, technology/its annihilation and humanity/its non-being. It should be crystal clear to the reader, at least by now, at the very end, that this Cambridge Companion in particular does not offer any theoretical closure, but rather incites us to pay close attention to our surroundings and rethink everything we have been raised to believe about ourselves.

Diana Dupu

Marius Conkan, *Portalul și lumile secundare: tipologii ale spațiului în literatura fantasy*, București, Tracus Arte, 2017



The human imaginary (with its literary, video and cinematographic products) tends to be seen as a structural field constructed by separate laws that can be deciphered and analyzed by researchers. The fantasy world is no longer just the expression of a free transgression of reality, but the result of a specific relation between possible worlds and our referential world, modulated by a semantic inter-dependency. In other words, the fantasy world turns from a simple play of the imagination to a serious object of study for those who see the way in which *fantasy* re-writes our world as much as it dissociates itself from it. This is the tradition inside which Marius Conkan inscribes his recent research about the cartography of imaginary worlds inside fantasy literature.

Portalul și lumile secundare: tipologii ale spațiului în literatura fantasy (Tracus Arte, 2017) brings into focus a disregarded element of the internal and external delineations of fantasy worlds: the portal.

First of all, Marius Conkan underlines the cognitive and religious functions of the threshold inherited by the developed concept of portal. Following Corin Braga's research about the way in which the territory of magical thinking becomes, with Romanticism, the psychological field of human abyss, Conkan understands the function of the portal as a gate towards different levels of reality and perception, marked by their intersection with our own reality. Portals are camouflaged borders between the possible and the impossible and also written margins of aesthetic and cultural significances.

Space and the spatial play a significant part in the mental map that Conkan wants to draw, sometimes using illustrated diagrams to situate its reader on the right angle of the axis *primary world-portal-secondary world*. Claiming, in the footsteps of Foucault's *Des espaces autres*, the importance of space as a sacral shell after the desacralization of time, Conkan turns to the function of the portal as an autonomous third space, both real and imagined. This leads to Marc Augé's *non-lieux*, which define the places that are not anchored in identity or history (like airports and supermarkets) and which have the same transitory function as the portal.

Applying Shklovsky's defamiliarization theory, Conkan talks about the distance the portal orchestrates between worlds, being able, in the end, to negotiate the relation between the known and the unknown inside our own reality. The theory of possible worlds, starting from Toma Pavel and Lubomír Doležel, is applied to fantasy

literature in trying to observe how fictional fantasy worlds are configured. Relations of hybridization, opposition and depth are all mediated by the concept Conkan develops following the *rabbit wholes* inscribed on the surface of our symbolic reality at the borders of the quotidian. The theoretical endeavor of the book, in extracting the dialectical schemes of fantasy worlds, is always supported by examples and close-readings of fragments from C. S. Lewis, Tolkien, Lewis Carroll and J. M. Barrie.

Rejecting the classical opposition between the real and the impossible, the book proposes and illustrates its own concepts that explain the way in which the miraculous and the monstrous are written and shaped by different types of frontiers. Marius Conkan's book manages to offer us a detailed map of these fantasy literary worlds which are both opened and closed by their portals.

Călina Părău

Études Littéraires
Africaines, Vol. 40,
“Retentissements des
Guerres mondiales,” 2015



Besides various thought-provoking articles and reviews that focus on literary and artistic representations that either come from or concern the Francophone literary world, the 2015/40 edition of the journal *Études Littéraires Africaines* dedicates a series of articles to “Retentissements des Guerres mondiales.” The purpose of the collection is to highlight the particularities that define the active involvement of the

African and Caribbean colonies in the two World Wars, and how this experience is rendered through specific literary works and films. The articles successfully achieve their aim of providing a plural perspective that coalesces the experiences of artists of different backgrounds and different relations with the events that they depict, and which manages to answer comprehensively the question of how representations of conflict should function.

The literary and artistic works that fall under scrutiny in this edition perform an essential role as cultural documents of the individual and collective memory but, at the same time, they are not simple testimonies (nor do they involve the direct experience of the artist in all cases). As the studies demonstrate, some of the works pursue aesthetic congruence rather than faithful representations of history. The launching premise of the articles is that historical fictions are generous with the material that they provide for interpretation and analysis because they sustain, despite all their inaccuracies and sometimes precisely because of them, the idea that the past must be continuously scrutinized and its controversies always open to debate. Moreover, the present itself forges new relations and paradigms that change the outlines of the past, and art is the only medium that can preserve the past in its multiplicity while also defending our memory from being crystallized by official discourses and political agendas.

Historical fictions also perform an ethical role, in the sense that they confront human consciousness with a profusion of perspectives and possibilities where dichotomies (good-evil, false-true) are inadequate. Unlike historical discourses that



dwell on great events and the destinies of the powerful and the influential, historical fictions favor the individual, personal experiences of minor actors on the scene of history. By doing so, historical fictions create a habitat for moral sensibility and awareness. The reproach that they contain deformations of truth or actual errors ignores the fact that it is the intention of historical fictions to focus firstly on cultivating an aesthetic form.

Relying on the theoretical framework presented above, the collection covers several topics united under the common intention of presenting how literary works and films relate to themes such as history, memory, war, and truth, while fiction is the tool that mediates these relations. A first article by Anthony Mangeon reveals how the role that Africa played in the war was minimized in the works of French and Francophone African writers, to later being acknowledged by African writers in rather vague or downright ironical ways. The only accurate accounts of Africa's implication in the war and in the resistance movement come from contemporary writers. Robert Fotsing Mangoua explores the boundaries of reality in fiction and the role of imagination in building memory by analyzing the figure of a Black fighter of the French Resistance in the novel *Le Terroriste noir* by Tierno Monenembo. Another fictionalization of a historical figure, the *Tirailleur*, is analyzed by Nathalie Carre in her article about *Le Nègre Potemkin* by Senegalese author Blaise N'Djehoya. Carre successfully carries her demonstration that the novel functions as a reinterpretation platform of the established French national narrative.

In another article, Abdoulaye Imorou makes a solid stance against manufactured

memories, showcasing how, despite the fact that France and its African colonies were fighting on the side of the Axis powers, two massacres that occurred on the African territory during the same period are omitted from the collective national memory. The memory of the massacres resurfaces in the films *Camp de Thiaroye* and *Le Vieux Fusil*, which succeed in evoking a common, shared past.

Sabrina Parent's article is one of the most intriguing studies of the collection because it brings forth the idea of using fiction as a trigger to re-thinking the past in critical terms, whether one talks about the colonial power or the colony. Reflecting on the film *Emitai* by Ousmane Sembene, Parent argues that an aesthetic representation of historical material accounts as a valid starting point for critical apprehension. Further on, Tina Harpin deals with the historical fictions of Gisele Pineau in which the author resorts to using female narrators to convey the futility of war, the falseness of patriotic discourses, and mostly, the despair and alienation caused by war. Pineau's pacifist works evolve into bitter reproaches to France and mark a separation from national history, as Harpin suggests.

Xavier Luffin makes a comparative study of two novels by Egyptian author Naguib Mafuz' and Sudanese author Adil Sa'ad Yusuf. Despite being written fifty years apart, the novels illustrate the glaringly common political fate of Egypt and Sudan, both occupied by the British. Luffin manages to direct his demonstration to highlighting the key features of imperialism.

Along the extensive "Retentissements des Guerres mondiales", the journal includes several articles of great interest, with

topics such as the transition of Louis-Ferdinand Céline from author to character in Francophone contemporary fiction (Suzanne Lafont), Africa as depicted in the travel accounts of Russian writers (Aboudacar A. Maiga), and the need of restoring the concept of “L’Africanisme” (Alain Richard). The journal also features a comprehensive study on the works and life of Sony Labou Tansi.

Andreea Drobotă

Graphé, n° 25, J.-M. Vercruyse (éd.), « La destruction de Sodome », Arras, Artois Presses Université, 2016



Fondée en 1992, *Graphé* est une revue qui a pour but d’explorer l’horizon intertextuel de la Bible et son influence sur les cultures, littérature et les arts. *Graphé* réunit des spécialistes du texte biblique, des chercheurs en littérature moderne et des historiens d’art en leur offrant un champ d’étude commun, dans cette livraison s’agissant de l’histoire de Sodome. L’épisode qui comporte les marques de la tragédie est examiné à l’aune d’une perspective littéraire et artistique, mais aussi herméneutique. *L’hybris* punie par la destruction de la ville est traitée d’une manière chronologique à partir de l’analyse du texte biblique pour arriver jusqu’à des textes contemporains ayant comme thème la réécriture de ce mythe.

Régine Hunziker-Rodewald suit les traces de cet événement jusqu’au Tanakh (la Bible juive). Les textes qui font

référence à cette ville saturée de péchés sont analysés de manière comparative avec les réalités perçues par les auteurs, les échos de la tragédie de Sodome ayant acquis un statut de tradition. Frédéric Chapot continue avec l’analyse de cette tragédie qui fait l’écho dans les récits des premiers pèlerins qui vont à la mer Morte. Il se penche ainsi sur l’interprétation chrétienne de cet épisode de Genèse 19, une interprétation qui s’est principalement axée sur le personnage de Loth et ceux qui l’entouraient pour en faire des figures exemplaires.

Les analyses de Géraldine Roux et Mireille Demaules se focalisent sur la présence de ce mythe dans la littérature médiévale. La première étude s’intéresse aux versets 18, 20-33 de la Genèse en s’appuyant sur les commentaires talmudiques et médiévaux. Le conflit insoluble entre justice et miséricorde est décrit à travers la négociation entre Abraham et Dieu, l’auteur analysant avec finesse l’interprétation de ce procès. De son côté, Mireille Demaules examine le changement de perspective sur le récit de la Sodome qui se produit dans la littérature religieuse et profane du Moyen Âge. La métamorphose de la femme de Loth, qui devient la figure centrale des récits du XIV^e siècle (*Ci nous dit*, *Chevalier de la Tour Landry*, *Le Mesnagier de Paris*, *Le livre du Voir Dit*) est intégrée dans des livres d’instruction destinés aux femmes. Elle devient la figure de la désobéissance où elle est placée en contrepoint avec l’image de la dame courtoise.

Annie Noblesse-Rocher étudie l’image de Sodome dans le cadre d’un recueil de vingt sermons sur Genèse 18 et 19 : *Les funérailles de Sodome et de ses filles*. Écrit à l’aube du XVII^e siècle par le pasteur Robert le Maçon, ministre des huguenots



français, il offre une réinterprétation de cet épisode dans le cadre de la tradition protestante, l'œuvre proposant un petit traité de gouvernance politique.

Pierre-François Gorse se place du côté de l'histoire de l'art pour offrir une interprétation du tableau de J.M.W. Turner *The Destruction of Sodom*. L'artiste réunit dans ce tableau deux scènes : la destruction et la fuite dans une harmonie que l'auteur appelle furieuse. Le tableau, caractérisé par l'ambiguïté, porte les traces du modernisme et peut aussi être vu comme une métaphore de la Révolution française et d'un changement d'épistème.

Le romantisme anglais jette une lumière nouvelle sur cet épisode. Frédéric Slaby analyse ainsi un texte particulièrement révélateur de Thomas De Quincey, *Suspiria de Profundis*. L'histoire de la ville de Jamaïque, Savanna-la-Mar, engloutie sous les eaux incarne l'archétype de la tragédie de Sodome. Ce bref texte offre à Quincey l'occasion de s'interroger sur la justice divine. Le naturalisme français, représenté par Zola apporte une nouvelle perspective sur Sodome dans *La Faute de l'abbé Mouret*. L'espace du roman, à la fois mythique et contemporain, présente une humanité en crise et Julie Müller surprend avec finesse les similarités que le village des Artauds partage avec la tragédie antique.

Édouard Rolland suit l'évolution de la traduction picturale de l'épisode biblique qui s'est focalisée plutôt sur l'intervention divine que sur les motifs du châtement. Rolland passe de la chute physique de la ville à celle morale. Luc Fraisse interroge, quant à lui, le texte de Proust, *Sodome et Gomorrhe I*, qui met en exergue l'invocation de la destruction de Sodome relatée dans la Genèse. Il examine cet ajout que

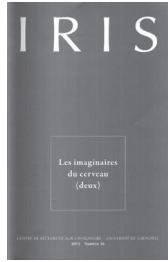
l'auteur fait dans le texte et l'emploi de l'épisode biblique dans plusieurs chapitres de son magnum opus.

Danièle Henky fait une analyse du texte de Michel Tournier, *Gaspard, Melchior et Balthazar* qui sera repris dans une version pour la jeunesse, *Les Rois mages*. Le récit biblique sera inséré dans une œuvre inspirée par l'Évangile de Matthieu. La transcription de cette tragédie dans le domaine musical est analysée par Beat Föllmi. La dernière œuvre du musicien munichois Karl Amadeus Hartmann, *Gesangsszene* a été inspirée par le texte de Jean Giraudoux, *Sodome et Gomorrhe*. Cette version musicale reflète l'exil intérieur de l'auteur et ses craintes envers les nazis et la bombe atomique. À la fin du volume, Florence Bernard analyse *Sodome, ma douce*, une pièce de Laurent Gaudé datant de 2009. L'originalité de cette lecture se trouve dans la description d'une Sodome intemporelle et le dialogue féminin qui déconstruit le traditionalisme de ce mythe.

La présente livraison de la revue *Graphé* nous offre une perspective interdisciplinaire sur l'épisode biblique de la Sodome. L'influence que ce récit a eue à travers les âges et sa métamorphose après différents changements d'épistème sont analysées avec précision et érudition dans ce beau volume réalisé sous la direction du professeur Jean-Marc Vercruyse.

Mădălina Timu-Mândrilă

IRIS, N° 36,
« Les imaginaires du
cerveau (deux) »,
Centre de recherche sur
l'imaginaire, Université
de Grenoble, 2015



Le 36^e numéro de la revue *Iris*, publiée par le Centre de recherche sur l'imaginaire de l'Université de Grenoble, débute par un éditorial qui rend hommage à Philippe Walter, fondateur et dirigeant du CRI et de la revue, en 2013 et 2014.

Le texte de Blanca Solares ouvre le premier volet intitulé « Mythologies » par une étude sur « La poétique mythique de Philippe Walter ». Elle révèle comment les sources des analyses bachelardiennes et durandiennes s'appliquent à l'imaginaire médiéval simplificateur du christianisme. Les publications du professeur Philippe Walter soutiennent la nécessité de telles approches. De son côté, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger investigate dans son étude, à partir des recherches de Gilbert Durand, la relation entre la liberté apparemment sans entraves de l'imaginaire humain et les contraintes symboliques. Dans son article, « Les 'eutopies' à l'Âge classique », Corin Braga tente de retrouver les influences de la littérature de voyage sur le genre utopique, en étudiant les mutations rhétoriques, les procédés de construction ainsi que les choix qui ont configuré les utopies de la civilisation classique. Hyacinth Madondo, dans « *'Peculia non olet'* : la louve et la mammalité ambivalente », examine l'ambivalence féminine séductrice et nourricière de la louve, en traçant une correspondance dans la légende de Rémus et Romulus de saint Ailbhé.

Pour faire le passage des travaux théoriques et littéraires vers les recherches en psychologie, l'étude d'Hervé-Pierre Lambert étudie, depuis une perspective interdisciplinaire, le phénomène neurologique de la synesthésie. À continuation, cette approche interdisciplinaire est enrichie par l'étude de Didier Coureau, « Les métaphores filmiques du cerveau », centré sur le concept de *forme* « *pensante* ».

Les études suivantes sont consacrées à « l'objet-cerveau », se dirigeant dans la direction de l'imaginaire scientifique fonctionnel (le cerveau imaginant) dans lequel les manières de compréhension au sein des sciences du cerveau gravitent différemment. Clément Pélissier caractérise ainsi le personnage de Superman à travers la série *Smallville*. L'analyste met l'accent sur les rites de passage et les interprétations plurielles : celle de la biologie imagée et celle contre-intuitive, conjuguant la thématique de la mémoire et les théories « hors-du-corps ». Nicolas Abry fait une excellente analyse du travail contrôlé par le bûcheron auquel il crée une aura existentielle, en faisant appel, entre autres, à Homère. Une analyse de modélisation clôt le volet par des interrogations sur les échelles multiples du cerveau. Yve Citton prend la modélisation de Gilbert Simondon et dirige son discours vers des pièges post-humains qu'il déjoue.

La perspective historique reste privilégiée dans le volet « Facettes ». Monika Salmon-Siama se penche ainsi sur l'imaginaire vexillologique des étendards associatifs polonais. De l'immigration et de la littérature nationale, on passe à la recherche des images, symboles et archétypes présents dans les mythes canaques, qu'Hélène Savoie Colombani examine dans

les mystères précoloniaux, optant pour une dichotomie visible/invisible pour en rechercher les fonctionnalités. De son côté, l'approche de Santiago Guevara s'attaque à la typologie des images des personnages de Bolaño. Abolghasem Ghiasizarch s'arrête, lui, sur une critique de la notion de mythe littéraire chez Philippe Sellier et Pierre Brunel.

Le numéro se clôt par un volet regroupant cinq comptes-rendus consacrés à des ouvrages comparatistes, des traductions et des parutions récentes.

Ion Pițoiu

Scott Jeffery, *The Posthuman Body in Superhero Comics*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016



In light of the recent technological advancements that have revolutionized the modern world, it is perhaps necessary to speculate not only on the effects that it has had on the environment but also on the consciousness of society and its driving force: the individual. Certainly, it would be no exaggeration to claim that in a climate so technologically-driven, the idea of mechanical enhancements has never been more relevant or achievable and by default neither has the posthuman. Discussed, analyzed, discredited and glorified, this hybrid between machine and human seems to have earned a spot at the forefront of social consciousness and as a result been placed under academic scrutiny in order to better assess the subject's importance

in the development of humanity. Sociology Professor Scott Jeffery is amongst such academic thinkers and through his book *The Posthuman in Superhero Comic Books: Human, Superhuman, Transhuman and Post/Human* he tackles the portrayal of the concept of a state beyond humanity from a rather unexpected, but inspired angle: that of superhero comic books.

Jeffery states that though this particular medium has not been offered much attention by theoreticians in the past it has nevertheless been influenced and in its turn influenced the representation of the posthuman in the consciousness of the masses. He explains that starting with the appearance of Superman in the first issue of *Action Comics* in 1938, superheroes have had quite an impact on pop culture and its consumers, yet have only recently been filtered through the lenses of academic discourse. Indeed, as Jeffery mentions comic books, though a medium that has dealt quite extensively with the concept of posthumanity, has been mainly ignored or subjected to gross misinterpretations inspired in part by ideologically motivated readings. Thus, in order to dispel antiquated prejudices held against comic book culture, the author intends to demonstrate its value by addressing the medium's portrayal of posthumanism and its influence in a technologically infatuated society.

To achieve this, he utilizes academic literary techniques of analysis as to identify fundamental concepts pertaining to posthumanism and thus elevating the role of "low" culture comic books in regard to their position in social consciousness and literary canon. The first aspect that he discusses is thus the role of philosophy, making references to notions such as the Deleuzian and Guattarian rhizome, which he considers critical due



to the fact that it allows for the apprehension of multiplicities. He explains that the rhizome presupposes an entity which cannot be easily defined as it has no stability and is by nature decentered, yet the few traces that remain cause a continuous process of de-territorialization, as well as of reinvention. This, he reveals, stands at the basis of the posthuman as well as of the superhero archetype constructed by comic books, as the rhizome comes “from three overlapping yet distinct discursive realms” (p. 2): fictional representations, the philosophy and practice of human enhancement, Friedrich Nietzsche’s concept of the *Übermensch*, while simultaneously having roots in Donna Haraway’s concept of the cyborg, making the comic book superhero posthuman thanks to its blend of technology and humanity.

Nevertheless, Jeffery cautions the reader not to confuse the union of machine and man for transhumanism, as it would undermine the entire concept of the posthuman in the comic book medium. As transhumanism focuses more on the mechanical aspect of the union, it detaches itself from the human body, thus creating a new type of being which cannot be called human anymore. Here lies the second fundamental concept which demonstrates the involvement of posthumanism in comic books: the attention given to the body.

Referring back to Haraway’s cyborg, the author makes clear that the notion of posthumanism is meant to disrupt conventional ideas of what it means to be human. There is no more uniformity regarding the body; instead, it becomes an assemblage that integrates itself into the rhizome. The world of comic books, Jeffery explains, is in essence a rhizome in the same vein as Borges’ Aleph: a point in space and time that contains all

other points with which creators and readers alike freely interact, creating what the author refers to as a creator-text-reader assemblage. It is in such an environment, which is simultaneously the real world and an imaginary one, that Jeffery identifies the appearance of three representations of the posthuman: the Perfect Body, the Cosmic Body and the Military-Industrial Body.

Though they represent different interpretations of the posthuman body, the concepts have two connecting threads: a) that at their core they are a re-territorialization of the figure of the circus freak, acting on the public fascination with oddity and reinforcing their status as a spectacle through their unusual powers, ridiculous names and flashy costumes; and b) they are all human-machine assemblages. Whether it be due to eugenics (as in the case of the Perfect Body), the use of magic, occult tinges and evolutionary mysticism fusing magic and science (the Cosmic Body) or merely a merging of military and superhero culture into a human weapon of mass destruction (as in the case of the Military-Industrial Body, which explores the effects of technology), the focus is kept on this assemblage of animal and artificial bodies. Yet, the question stands: in the dichotomy of the mind and body, where does the human lie?

For the comic book readers that he has interviewed the answer they seem to prefer is the mind, but Jeffery is not convinced that it is necessarily the correct one. Instead, he suggests that, in fact, the essence of posthumanism as represented in the comic book medium lies in its rhizomatic nature. Superhero comics are representations of themselves, not of the real world, yet at the same time they raise questions regarding issues pertaining to reality, such as: in a world that

struggles between the mechanical need to systemize and the inherent affinity for disorganization, can the posthuman hybrid be recognized as human?

Though Jeffery abstains from providing a definitive answer, it is nevertheless impossible not to remark, as he has, that “when considering the promises and pitfalls that await us, and our bodies, in the posthuman future, we could do worse than the ethical template of the Superhuman, which thrives on teams consisting of alien, robot, cyborg, mutant, and human bodies working together, and which recognises the human as a verb and not a noun and whose every existence is premised on becoming rather than being, always To Be Continued...” (pp. 236-237).

Adina Dragoș

Karl Ove Knausgård, *Lupta mea. Cartea a treia: Insula copilăriei (Boyhood Island: My Struggle 3)*, București, Litera, 2016



Karl Ove Knausgård (b. 1968) is a well-known contemporary Norwegian writer who made his literary debut in 1998 with the novel *Ute av verden (Out of the World)* when the author was awarded the Norwegian Kritikerprisen (Critics Prize for Literature). The second novel entitled *En tid for alt (A Time to Every Purpose under Heaven)*, 2004) was nominated for Nordisk Råds Litteraturpris (the Nordic Council's Literature Prize) and for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. What made this author famous

was the autobiographical series of six novels, entitled *Min kamp (My Struggle)* and published in Norway between 2009 and 2011. *Min kamp 1 (A Death in the Family: My Struggle Book 1)*, *Min kamp 2 (A Man in Love: My Struggle Book 2)*, *Min kamp 3 (Boyhood Island: My Struggle Book 3)*, *Min kamp 4 (Dancing in the Dark: My Struggle Book 4)*, *Min kamp 5 (Some Rain Must Fall: My Struggle Book 5)* and *Min kamp 6 (My Struggle Book 6)* are the titles of Karl Ove Knausgård's autobiographical volumes which together comprises almost 3500 pages. This series of six novels presents several episodes from different stages of Knausgård's life. The books comprise descriptions of people and events, together with philosophical thoughts and reflections, accompanied by various emotions and feelings which reflect the writer's private life. To put it differently, from a Norwegian perspective, this writing technique, in which the narrator presents his life in depth, can be considered an unusual way of writing. In other words, the Scandinavians are not very confident when they have to talk about their lives, including intimate details about their family and friends. However, Karl Ove Knausgård's books became very successful, this type of autobiographical fiction being much appreciated especially in the United States of America.

Going further to the subject of the third book entitled *Min kamp 3 (Boyhood Island: My Struggle 3)*, the first thing worth mentioning is the fact that it contains almost five hundred pages which are not structured into chapters. Instead of being divided in small parts, the whole book is formed of several sections which are separated by blank spaces and sometimes by an asterisk. In this sense, the third book



contains one hundred and fourteen sections which comprise Knausgård's childhood beginning with his early years of boyhood, followed by the years spent as a student in *barneskole* (*primary school*), including stories since he was a first-grade student until his last day at school before holiday, as a seventh-grade student.

The third book begins by presenting the time (August 1969) and the place (an island in Southern Norway), together with a detailed presentation of Karl Ove's young parents, Kai-Åge, a cruel teacher at Roligheden School and Sissel Norunn, a nurse at Kokkeplassen sanatorium, in Arendal, Norway. Besides these, the narrator informs the reader that, after five years, the whole family, his father, his mother and his elder brother, Yngve, moved from Oslo to Hove where they rented a house since their new house was built in a housing complex on Tromøya Island. When referring to the way in which the events are related, the narration is often interrupted by short flashbacks, through which the narrator depicts the thoughts and feelings that cross his mind. For instance, he presented the 50s and the 60s in Norway, and reflected on memory and its importance in the first years of a child's life.

It is important to remark the way in which the narrator presents his childhood using so many details. When referring to his neighbours, he uses almost a page to enumerate their names: Dag Lothar, Steinar, Leif Tore, Rolf, Edmund, Geir and Gro Håkon, Kent Arne and Anne Lene, Ingrid Anne, Unni. In addition, in order to make the narration more vivid, the writer uses details and descriptions of different objects, places and people. The whole book can be interpreted as revealing the father's

authoritative figure which dominates the sensitive personality of his younger son, Karl Ove. The behaviour of his father and his presence make him feel uncertain and even intimidate him. His father's method of interacting with his younger child makes him feel weak and frightened. Whenever he was in danger or threatened by the presence of his father, he used to repeat a short prayer.

However, the book presents the first twelve years of the protagonist, since he was an eight-month-old baby until he became a seventh-grade student. In this sense, it is worth noting that at the beginning of the book Karl Ove is presented as being a naive boy, who believed in goblins and trolls, followed by the active and sensitive boy who played with his neighbours, Dag Lothar, Steinar, Leif Tore, Rolf, Edmund, Geir Håkon, Kent Arne. After that, there is a period in which the protagonist was preoccupied by football (footballer at Trauma football team), by music (he listened to Beatles, McCartney II), and nonetheless by physical attraction, including the first thrills of love (Kajsa, Anne Lisbet).

In the last part of this book, Karl Ove Knausgård became a stronger and a more independent boy who, according to his colleagues and neighbours, always knew everything and boasted all the time. He stopped crying so often, and the figure of his severe father seemed not to affect him as in the early years of his childhood. The narrator admitted that his mother made him cry only twice, because of some trifling things.

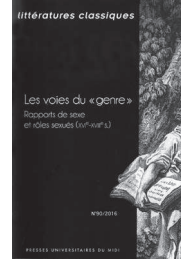
Taking all these things into consideration, *Min kamp 3* (*Boyhood Island: My Struggle 3*) presents the story of a boy portrayed through his relation with the

members of his family and with the other people and friends from his everyday life. The note of novelty given to the series of six books is the fact that Karl Ove Knausgård wrote his story preserving the names of his characters exactly as they are in reality, being guided by the rule that the entire narration must be true and set in the Scandinavian landscapes. The writer chose to write openly about his private life with his good and bad sides, with its banalities and its pleasures, thus drawing the attention and the interest of his audience.

Min kamp/ Tredje bok (Boyhood Island: My Struggle 3) was translated into Romanian by Roxana-Ema Dreve, lecturer at the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures of Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca. The translation brings forward the great abilities of the translator to create a real Scandinavian setting. Even if the target languages belong to different cultural areas, Roxana-Ema Dreve manages to preserve the essence and the message of the whole book, by finding the suitable terms and expressions in order to translate cultural nuances, emotions, feelings, and other such small but full of importance details. From this perspective, the translator presents to the Romanian readers the thoughts and the childhood experiences of a boy, together with short descriptions of the largest island in Southern Norway and its surroundings.

Raluca-Daniela Răduț

Littératures classiques,
N° 90 : « Les voies du
'genre'. Rapports de
sexe et rôles sexués
(XVI^e-XVIII^e s.) », Presses
Universitaires du Midi,
2016



Comment est-ce que les débats sur les *gender studies* et la *queer theory*, toujours plus nombreux pendant ces dernières années, ont-ils influencé la façon de percevoir la littérature classique française ? Voilà un sujet qui, mériterait, à lui seul, une recherche complexe, un sujet à la fois inédit et actuel pour les passionnés des lettres françaises. À cette question – et à bon nombre d'autres questions qui en dérivent – proposent des réponses plusieurs professeurs spécialisés en littérature française dans le 90^e numéro de la revue *Littératures classiques*, intitulé *Les voies du « genre ». Rapports de sexe et rôles sexués (XVI^e – XVIII^e s.)*.

La revue *Littératures classiques* représente la continuation des *Cahiers de littérature du XVII^e siècle* et a été fondée en 1989. À une fréquence de trois numéros par an, son but est de « contribuer au rayonnement de la littérature de l'époque moderne (XVI^e – XVIII^e s.) et au développement de la recherche dans ce domaine », s'attachant « à des problématiques critiques actuelles, à des thèmes ou à des genres particuliers, comme à des auteurs (du XVI^e au XVIII^e siècle) sur lesquels il importe de faire le point ».

Paru en juillet 2016, le 90^e numéro de la revue débute par une introduction signée par Florence Lotterie, suivie par trois volets thématiques réunissant des articles sur la problématique annoncée dans le



titre : *Objets et méthodes, Sexuations de l'autorité littéraire et Identités, rôles et représentations*. Le volume se clôt par un entretien avec Florence Lotterie et Marie-Frédérique Pellegrin (« Le cartésianisme est-il un féminisme ? Autour de Poullain de La Barre »).

Dans son « Introduction », Florence Lotterie (sous la direction de qui ce numéro a été réalisé) évoque brièvement quelques théoriciens des *gender studies* et de la *queer theory*, résumant de manière critique certaines positions qu'ils adoptent. Parmi ces théoriciens, on peut énumérer Monique Wittig, Judith Butler, Michel Foucault ou Geneviève Fraisse. On prend en considération tour à tour « l'approche *genrée* » (p. 6), l'analyse des discours médicaux sur le genre (p. 10) ou l'interdisciplinarité des *gender studies* (p. 11).

Le premier volet du numéro, *Objets et méthodes*, réunit trois articles : « Asymétrie critique. La littérature du XVI^e siècle face au genre » de Michèle Clément, « Au-delà de la différence des sexes : l'humour de Marie-Catherine Desjardins-Villedieu » d'Érik Leborgne et « Sade : entre queer et chair » de Jean-Christophe Abramovici. Dans son article, Michèle Clément traite d'une asymétrie critique, qui a été la raison pour laquelle l'histoire de la virilité a subjugué l'histoire des femmes dans la réception collective. Elle souligne l'importance des *gender studies*, un domaine dérivé des études féministes, en ce qui concerne l'utilité de l'investigation des écrits des femmes. M. Clément offre aussi plusieurs statistiques révélant que, de 1488 à 1574, il y a 71 écrits féminins publiés, « sans tenir compte d'une production féminine restée manuscrite » (p. 27). Dans la dernière partie de son article, Michèle Clément s'appuie sur un article

écrit par Ann Rosalind Jones (« Assimilation with a Difference : Renaissance Women Poets and Literary Influence ») pour montrer comment les sonnets de Louise Labé, en utilisant l'ironie, dévoilent les intentions rhétoriques-érotiques du discours pétrarquiste qui circulait à l'époque. Michèle Clément conclut en soulignant que les *gender studies* incitent à une révision du canon traditionnel des auteurs du XVI^e siècle, par une réévaluation de la part active des femmes dans la société. De son côté, Érik Leborgne part des *Mémoires de la vie d'Henriette-Sylvie de Molière* de Marie-Catherine Desjardins-Villedieu, pour montrer comment Mme de Villedieu utilise l'humour (souvent noir) pour masquer une disponibilité pour le moi bisexué et une attitude narcissiste qui peut illustrer un personnage complexe rendant possible le mélange des deux sexes pour former une unité finie. Jean-Christophe Abramovici se penche sur un essai de William F. Edmiston, *Sade, queer theorist*. D'une part, Abramovici admire les connaissances irréprochables du corpus sadien d'Edmiston et la réflexion critique qui est ouverte par cet essai. D'autre part, l'auteur souligne une possible inquiétude du lecteur français : le risque très élevé des anachronismes causé par la proposition « a priori du texte sadien d'une forme de lecture actualisante » (p. 49).

Le deuxième volet de la revue, *Sexuations de l'autorité littéraire*, contient, lui aussi, trois articles : « Madame Guyon, une légitimation paradoxale » de Louise Piguet, « L'analyse politique du genre : pour une relecture des lettres de Madame de Sévigné » de Markus Wewel et « L'image de la féminité en (Ancien) Régime médiatique » de Mélinda Caron.



Dans son article, Louise Piguet se penche sur Jeanne Guyon, laïque, mystique et prolixe auteure de « ce que l'on pourrait appeler une para-théologie à la fin du XVII^e siècle » (p. 61). Jeanne Guyon est vue comme un cas de résistance à l'assignation de la femme au silence. Selon Piguet, elle « permet de cartographier, non seulement les *genres* d'écriture qui départagent le féminin et le masculin (...), mais aussi, de façon plus large, l'acceptabilité d'une parole pastorale féminine » (p. 63). Mais le féminisme avant la lettre de Jeanne Guyon n'est pas projeté pour la cause collective des femmes, il existe seulement pour sa propre autorisation, en considérant le fait qu'elle était bien consciente de son exclusion, en tant que femme et laïque. C'est pourquoi « Mme Guyon éprouve les cadres d'une asymétrie entre le masculin et le féminin » (p. 75). L'étude suivante, signée par Markus Wewel, prend en considération la dimension politique des lettres que Madame de Sévigné a écrites à sa fille, Françoise-Marguerite de Grignan. Même si La Bruyère croit que les lettres écrites par les femmes doivent être des lettres galantes, comme celles de Guez de Balzac ou de Voiture, Markus Wewel vient avec des arguments et des exemples que les textes de Madame de Sévigné ont une « prise de position plutôt claire et nette, opposée au pouvoir » (p. 85). Dans son article, Mélinda Caron inventorie trois catégories des femmes qui ont contribué à la constitution d'un public littéraire : la femme honnête ou « la femme du monde dont on faisait l'éloge et qui conférait prestige et légitimité au périodique qui lui était adressé » (p. 89), la femme auteure ou « la rédactrice qui invoquait les lieux communs les plus éculés de

la modestie pour justifier sa production » (p. 89) et la frondeuse ou la femme qui « n'ayant souvent ni nom, ni titre, affichait sans vergogne son audace tout en assumant son potentiel de scandale » (p. 89).

Le troisième et dernier volet, *Identités, rôles et représentations*, réunit quatre textes : « Trouble dans la galanterie ? Préciosité et questions de genre » de Myriam Dufour-Maitre, « Du genre d'un genre nouveau : les portraits littéraires d'Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans » de Lieselotte Steinbrügge, « Confisquer l'exceptionnel féminin : Jeanne de Chantal et la femme forte » de Marion de Lencquesaing et « La virilité dans *Iphigénie* selon Racine » de Hendrik Schlieper. Myriam Dufour-Maitre affirme ainsi que, dans le paradigme du féminin, les catégories littéraires et culturelles qui dominent sont la préciosité et la galanterie. Pour l'auteure, la galanterie est la « manière désirable d'inscrire le respect dans la relation des hommes aux femmes, et de maintenir la distance, dans la relation des femmes aux hommes » (p. 109). En ce qui concerne les précieuses, Dufour-Maitre affirme : « les précieuses alors peuvent constituer le moyen de penser la progressive invisibilité de la norme hétérosexuelle et sa performativité » (p. 111). Lieselotte Steinbrügge consacre son article aux portraits littéraires d'Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans publiés en 1659 dans le volume *Divers Portraits* par l'éditeur Jean Segrais. Même si au XVII^e siècle le portrait littéraire est un genre mineur, il est l'objet d'un grand succès de librairie. C'est pourquoi il peut transmettre des messages qui n'ont pas de place dans les grands genres. Par exemple, Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, duchesse de Montpensier était la première princesse

royale et une des femmes les plus riches du monde à son époque. Elle a été bannie en 1652 pour avoir participé à la Fronde, mais elle a « créé une contre cour et, si l'on ose dire, une contre-culture » (p. 124). Marion de Lencquesaing se penche sur la vie de Jeanne de Chantal (ou Mère de Chantal), canonisée en 1767 et reconnue comme un exemple irréprochable et un modèle imitable et admirable. Selon l'auteur, l'expression *femme forte* « est le plus aisément utilisée sous la plume des hagiographes des femmes » (p. 138). Hendrik Schlieper, l'auteur du dernier article du volet, parle du « rôle de la virilité dans la tragédie *Iphigénie* de Racine, partant de l'idée que le théâtre classique peut être interprété comme un lieu privilégié de la discussion et de la *négociation* des questions de genre » (pp. 149-150). Ainsi, il n'y a pas une seule tragédie dans cette pièce de théâtre, celle d'Iphigénie, mais aussi une tragédie « entre hommes », qui pose la virilité en crise (celle du père Agamemnon) à laquelle s'oppose la virilité modèle (celle du personnage Achille).

Vu la diversité des corpus et des genres abordés, à laquelle s'ajoute la richesse des références bibliographiques, les articles réunis dans ce numéro des *Littératures classiques* se présentent comme une source informative et bibliographique très pertinente pour tout spécialiste intéressé par les littératures classiques, de même que par les *gender studies* et la *queer theory*.

Alexandra Bondoc

Oana Soare (éd.),
Stéphane Lupasco –
Infinitul și experiența.
Correspondență primită,
articole, interviuri,
 București, Fundația
 Națională pentru Știință
 și Artă, 2015



Dans une lettre adressée à Stéphane Lupasco le 10 mars 1987, Constantin Noica a remarqué le succès (parfaitement explicable) que l'œuvre lupascienne a acquis pendant la vie de l'auteur, mais, plus que cela, il a osé prophétiser que ce succès restera plutôt mince comparé à celui qu'elle remportera au 21^e siècle (p. 64). Publié en 2015, le livre édité par Oana Soare, *Stéphane Lupasco – L'infini et l'expérience. Correspondance reçue, articles, interviews* représente une contribution significative à l'accomplissement de cette prophétie et à la familiarisation du public roumain avec la philosophie et la personnalité de Stéphane Lupasco.

Le volume a un caractère composite, ainsi les lecteurs roumains (et français, parce que la correspondance est reproduite à la fois en roumain et en français) trouveront dans les 502 pages des lettres, des articles, des études, des interviews et des enquêtes, des photographies, la chronologie de la vie et le travail de Stéphane Lupasco et la chronologie des relations d'amitié de Lupasco avec ses correspondants. Tous ces éléments hétérogènes construisent l'image de l'une des figures les plus importantes de la philosophie et de la culture du 20^e siècle. Philosophe inclassable, comme dit Vintilă Horia, Lupasco était une sorte d'aimant qui attirait des esprits d'horizons divers :



des poètes, des écrivains, des scientifiques, des philosophes qui ne se sentaient pas du tout à l'aise avec la tendance à établir des paradigmes, à penser banale, disjonctive, réductible, avec le refus de toute contradiction. Par conséquent, tous ces malheureux deviennent subitement heureux quand ils découvrent un si fort écho dans la pensée de Stéphane Lupasco (p. 437).

Presque tous ces noms illustrés se trouvent dans le chapitre « Correspondance », qui est la plus grande partie du volume : Gaston Bachelard, André Breton, Louis de Broglie, Georges A, Mathieu, Gilbert Durand, Henri Michaux, Jean Rostand, Georges Louis de Bouligand, Munir Havez, Robert Gallimard, Jean Cassou, Edgar Morin, Alfred Fessard, Salvador Dali, Mircea Eliade, Constantin Noica, Benjamin Fondane, Emil Cioran, Eugène Ionesco, Al. Rosetti, Pius Severin, Vintilă Horia, Virgil Ierunca etc. Donc, nous pouvons voir beaucoup de lettres : de nombreuses lettres dans lesquelles les correspondants répondent, poliment et protocolairement, qu'ils n'ont pas encore lu le livre reçu, mais ils lui promettent de le lire sans aucune doute ; d'autres, plus intimes et sincères, dans lesquelles les correspondants avouent qu'ils rencontrent des difficultés graves pendant la lecture des livres de Lupasco et qu'il est difficile de gérer la pléiade de références aux résultats scientifiques de laboratoire et aux calculs théoriques de la dernière génération (ceux de Wener Heisenberg, Albert Einstein, Erwin Schrödinger, Paul Dirac, Wolfgang Pauli, Niels Bohr etc.) ; il y a, enfin, des lettres qui contiennent de véritables réflexions philosophiques sur les idées de Lupasco.

Ce dernier type de lettres, ainsi que les textes connexes reproduits dans la deuxième

partie du volume condensent toute la philosophie et la logique de Lupasco, qui a eu le courage de s'opposer aux trois principes sacro-saints de la logique classique : de non-contradiction, d'identité et du tiers exclu. Dans ses études, Stéphane Lupasco a commencé à partir de l'observation d'un divorce, d'une incohérence radicale entre la pensée humaine – dominée et guidée par la logique de l'identité et du non-contradictoire, c'est-à-dire une logique homogénéisante – et la réalité macro et microphysique qui, à la suite des découvertes de la physique quantique, s'est avérée être gouvernée par l'antagonisme contradictoire. D'où la nécessité d'inventer une nouvelle logique qui rende compte de toute la complexité du réel – une logique antagoniste (basée sur le principe du tiers inclus), avec laquelle Lupasco propose une nouvelle vision du monde. « À travers mes recherches épistémologiques, logiques et psychologiques, j'ai découvert – dit-il – un univers logique plus large que celui de la logique classique, un univers fondé par la contradiction logique » (p. 339). À partir de la découverte d'Einstein de 1912, selon laquelle toute matière dans l'univers est énergie, Lupasco affirme que chaque phénomène énergétique est basé sur deux dynamismes antagonistes et contradictoires – l'homogénéisation et l'hétérogénéisation – et qu'il y a trois possibilités de systématiser l'énergie : la première, quand l'homogénéisation prévaut (dans le cas de la matière macrophysique inanimée – dominée et orientée par le second principe de la thermodynamique) ; la deuxième, quand l'hétérogénéisation prédomine (dans le cas de la matière macrophysique vivante) ; et la troisième possibilité, lorsque les deux dynamismes sont d'une tension énergétique égale

(dans le cas de la matière microphysique, au niveau atomique, et, selon Lupasco, au niveau de la psyché humaine).

Ces idées révolutionnaires, fascinantes et irritantes en même temps, ont fait de la philosophie de Lupasco une véritable mode dans le monde parisien pour environ 20, 30 ans, comme le confesse Monica Lovinescu (p. 457), et cet ouvrage vient pour témoigner précisément de ceci : l'influence de la philosophie de Stéphane Lupasco sur de grandes personnalités du monde culturel et scientifique de la France et de la Roumanie. En plus, le livre nous fournit un modèle de transdisciplinarité : un intellectuel qui a su combiner les sciences, la philosophie et les arts dans un système de pensée original et qui surprend positivement ses lecteurs (et disciples) au 21^e siècle.

Constantin Tonu

Andi Mihalache, *Time, the Object, the Story: Interior Decorations in Autobiographical Literature*, Iași, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, 2017



Starting from the preoccupation with recent memory, especially the communist one, as well as with the complex relation between the real and the fictive, verisimilitude and veracity, Andi Mihalache offers an ample foray into the realm of cultural history. He has the support of an impressive bibliography in the field of cultural studies, of an amazing capacity for synthesis and of a substantial corpus of autoscopic literature.

The book *Time, the Object, the Story* is the result of several researches carried out

for a decade, some published in Romania, with a preparatory, contextualizing role – *Contribuții la istoria ideii de patrimoniu. Surse, evoluții, interpretări* (2014) [*Contributions to the History of the Idea of Patrimony. Sources, Evolutions, Interpretations* (2014)] and the volume coordinated with Silvia-Marin Barutchieff *De la fictiv la real – Imaginea, imaginarul, imagologia* [*From the Fictive to the Real – Image, Imaginary, Imagology*] – others abroad, in the volume coordinated by Maria Todorova, *Remembering Communism* (2014).

This Romanian contribution is part of the recent wave of European academic researches preoccupied with cultural memory, writing and identity, among which we mention works by Jan Assmann, George Kubler, Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, Larry H. Peer, Mark Freeman, Vartan P. Messier, Nandita Batra, Susan Stewart, etc.

The two balanced sides of the book – *History Retreats into Objects* and *Memories Seek an Age For Themselves* – each benefit from conclusive reflections regarding the future of the past (“Does the Past Have a Future?”). While the first part of the book is an articulation of the mechanisms for historicizing and/or rendering of memories into literature, as well as rendering the present of history in objects, the second part reveals the various facets of attitudes and temporal/object perceptions from the point of view of different ages.

The reader steps inside a labyrinth of self-narrative literature, with a focus on the realm known as *self-narrative*. The reader witnesses a *mise-en-scène* of fine analyses, rife with concepts and conceptualizations, with personal histories and historicizing, doubled by surprising critical bases and by a fluid-literary style of an irresistible



attraction. The reflexive literature corpus comprises predictable sources, such as *Swedish Journal* and other examples of feminine autobiography, recent (collective) volumes of memories, correspondence, histories of certain streets and residencies from Bucharest and not only, as well as volumes of interviews (Z. Rostás, S. Stoica, E. Istodor, and others).

What is set under our eyes is, therefore, the parade of autoscopic textual clothes, with a focus on the history of objects, but not for the sake of a simple categorization. It is rather with a profound stake – seizing the nakedness of the ego dispossessed of small patrimonies accumulated during the interwar period, and then endowed with a variety of kitsch during communism. As the author points out, it is a situation handled with difficulty by our post-communist selves, deprived of the old keys of self-interpretation.

The method used is not exactly simple: seizing the connotative side of the various types of tellings regarding small patrimonies which were lost, stolen, abandoned, destroyed or sold at the market during the communist period. The pretext of this giant foray into self-narrative is given by the status of the objects as mediators between the individual and the world, as social products, as well as triggers of self-recuperation. The author offers a nuanced hypothesis: the decorative objects inside the living spaces transpose cultural codes which reflect the social mutations of the times becoming occasions for narratives, literature, and historicizing with self-reflexive purposes.

The confessional fragments focusing on the lack/loss of small patrimonies is interesting from the historical perspective, not the psychological/psychologizing one,

from the desire to reveal the social codings of memory (p. 157). Although Mihalache warns it is not the salon anecdote that is of interest, the reader comes across a mnemonic picturesque landscape balanced under the wand of a virtuoso, of a knowledgeable possessor of the combinatory art. The numerous textual fragments incite the curiosity of the researcher to the extent that they constitute traces; all comprised inside an affective cartography of objects predisposed to self-referentiality. And that all the more so since the stake of the communist period consisted more in the survival of the identity than in physical survival, especially for those in the bourgeois-aristocratic strata.

The communist-bourgeois opposition is exploited throughout the book under its different guises: the augmentation of the aesthetics and the inactivity of the bourgeoisie evident in the elements of the decorum in communist rhetoric, on the one hand, the usefulness and simplicity of the decorative objects during communism, on the other (p. 173). We should also mention other subtle oppositions: the individuality of the bourgeois knick-knack vs. the social coordinate of the communist knick-knack (p. 187); the *mass knick-knack* as the harbinger of the “tacit cohabitation between gift and bribe” (p. 206), while the *elitist knick-knack* is significant because of its origin. Other oppositions reveal as many tender spots huddled together during the interwar period, the communist period and the postcommunist one: the *new man* steals and sells decorative bourgeois objects at the end of the '40s, but he is quick to acquire imitations in the '60s and hesitates to get rid of them. And this is despite the fact that the accumulation of knick-knacks

does not have a symbolic role anymore, one of claiming a new social status, but rather borders on the museification of certain memories-events associated most of the times with youth and with the phenomenon specific to the times – “egalitarian, mass collections.”

The second part of the book includes exciting chapters, which stem either from readings and interpretations of the mirror motif, of the complex relations between writing and mirroring, of the connotative rapport between mirroring and portrayal; or from the childhood space, supported by the correlation between *remembering* and *visualizing*, through which a fascinating symbolic universe is constituted, thanks to ceaseless object mediations. From undertakings with a patrimonial underside, Andi Mihalache also extracts typologies of objects with affective investments: objects-wounds, objects-witnesses, objects-sediments, and object-souvenirs.

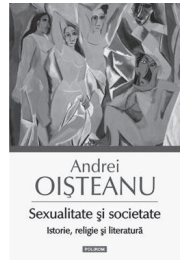
The pages dedicated to the *wardrobe* as a closed space with the potential to afford another identity or as a “first locus of infantile fascinations” (p. 489), those dedicated to the *drawer* as a carrier of mnemonic, funeral, nihilistic signification, and to the *corner* as a “museum of former needs” (p. 494) also seize on projections of the relations between ages. The relations between dream and memory, reflected in self-narratives or in autobiographical fiction are rendered explicitly through the lens of the tensions between the permanent self, the fabular self, and the subconscious self.

The final pages of the book call for the participation of the reader and for the reenchantment of the world through excursions to infinite narrative museums, full of cultural *topoi* that are now threatened by

imminent lexical-semantic disappearance. Driven by the “memory of a happiness,” Andi Mihalache proposes an admirable “research of time locked in things,” a textual tissue with multiple temporal perspectives and with various reflections on time.

Olga Grădinaru

Andrei Oișteanu,
Sexualitate și societate.
Istorie, religie și literatură,
Iași, Polirom, 2016



Andrei Oișteanu is mostly known for his work on the history of religions and the emergence of cultural models. His latest book, *Sexualitate și societate*, tackles the issue of sexuality in relation to the historical, political and religious discourse, exposing a series of underlying myths prevalent in our society. *Sexualitate și societate* should be regarded rather as a collection of essays than as a homogenous whole, since each chapter functions independently in relation to the main theme of the book, revealing various practices specific to a certain historical frame, but whose consequences stretch far beyond their time. The 35 chapters depict the relationship between power and sex. In doing so, the author utilizes a recurrent model, namely that of one’s sexual entitlement in regard to one’s peers or inferiors. This sense of entitlement is historically and institutionally grounded and is guaranteed by the place one occupies in a specific social hierarchy.

For example, the first chapter dwells on the tradition of the lord’s right to the



first night, also known as *droit du seigneur* or *primae noctis*, a practice from which we can still find cultural remains even in our times. The practice in question is understood not only in its historical dimension, but also as a result of a combination between reality and fiction, between a declaration of power and a symbolic exchange thereof. The implications of *primae noctis* are analyzed in different geographical settings and also across different periods of time, starting from Antiquity until late modernity, thus implying that this principle is imbedded in our traditional views on sexuality. The novelty of every new chapter of the book resides in the different forms *primae noctis* take in the organization of social life. Most interesting is the author's ability to illustrate the principle of power at work in the most intimate enclave of human life and the manner in which those in power are aware of and make use of their so called *natural rights*.

The materialization of power into acts of sexual nature also implies that men and women occupy different positions in this game and, more often than not, as the book illustrates, men are the ones in control, while women are perceived either as secondary characters or as a danger due to the symbolic dimension of their sexual potentiality. However, as the author points out on several occasions, the goal of those in power is to humiliate and subordinate not the women who are directly and physically involved, but those to which they belong, either fathers, brothers or husbands.

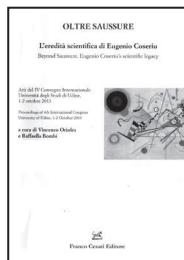
Following the development of *primae noctis* and all the *rights to...* that occur from it, the book also takes into consideration some figurative aspects of female sexuality, as mentioned before, the main motifs being that of female virginity, but also the

sexualization of shared space, as well as different body parts and their sexual dimension. All this information ensures not only the understanding of the connection between the evolution of society and sexual practices, but also exposes the ways in which, starting from these intricate relationships, humans have created entire national profiles, which in some occasions also involve racist considerations. In order to back up this statement, Oişteanu undertakes a comparative analysis of works of literature and art from various parts of the world, pinpointing, among other things, the symbolic connection between the Romanian imaginary and the cultural heritage of the world. The diversity of cultural fields he takes into consideration when making assumptions and developing arguments is impressive, even though precisely the elaborate character of his work means that the analysis can be taken further, since the book presents numerous instances in which possible interpretations and outcomes are possible, but which do not come under the author's scrutiny.

Nonetheless, there are also some more provocative chapters, concerning rape and homosexuality, but the main focus still remains on the relation between the private domain and the power that organizes the social scene.

Concluding, the book offers a wide view on the question of sexuality, in different historical and geographical settings, being more than useful to those who want to see beyond the opaque powerplays prevalent in society and to understand the intricate mechanisms that lie beneath this seemingly plain interface.

Vicenzo Orioles, Raffaella Bombi (eds), *Oltre Saussure. L'eredità scientifica di Eugenio Coseriu/ Beyond Saussure. Eugenio Coseriu's Scientific Legacy. Proceedings of the 4th International Congress University of Udine, 1-2 October 2013*, Franco Cesati Editore, 2015



Integralism, the scientific legacy of Eugenio Coseriu is, first and foremost, the way of thinking language in its three dimensions: universally, historically and individually. The fourth giant paradigm of the last century, it both *integrates* and supersedes structuralism (that highlighted the historical specificity of languages and how it shapes our thinking) and the general idea of generative grammar (the idea that there is a universal linguistic competence that goes beyond particular language formations).

Starting from this observation, there are mainly two dimensions of integralism explored throughout the book. The first dwells on integralism as a paradigm that articulates the knowledge production as the interplay between the universal, historical and individual levels. The articles pertain to epistemology (“Modes of Thinking in Language Study,” Jesús Martínez del Castillo), philosophy (“La riflessione linguistica di Coseriu sul tempo,” Alberto Manco), the history of ideas (“Origini dell’integralismo coseriano: indagando su una possibile matrice fenomenologica,” Floarea Virban), or pedagogy (“La norma coseriana e la norma dei grammatici.

Ovvero l’educazione linguistic secundo Coseriu,” Salvatore Claudio Sgroi), the latter questioning the exclusive focus on the idiomatic (historical) level of discourse when teaching grammar.

The other important dimension is *text linguistics*, linguistics of the individual level or linguistics of sense. This branch is specific to the theoretical and methodological framework of integral linguistics, since it engages with issues largely ignored before or deemed as too elusive, such as unique, unrepeatable and dynamic contents. We can incorporate here articles such as “Le statut typologique special du texte poétique. Une approche de la perspective théoretique d’Eugeniu Coseriu,” Oana Boc; “On the Textual Functions of Linguistics Innovations: Some Considerations Starting from Eugenio Coseriu’s *La lingua di Ion Barbu*,” by Emma Tămăianu-Morita; and “The Keening as a Unit of Repeated Speech,” by Flavia Teoc. The latter evokes the broad perspective of an anthropological poetics, coined by Mircea Borcilă (2013) “who develops the Coserian principle according to which language can be equated with poetry, in their ‘originary moments’ since both correspond exactly to man’s intuitive primary understanding” (p. 367).

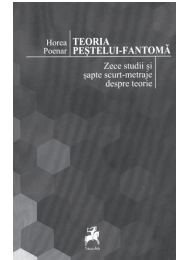
The approaches vary from comparative (Spanish-Italian) to local (Romanian, Italian etc.) and from very specialized to a more broad cultural approach. Of particular interest to me was “Linguistic Integralism in the Context of Romanian Culture,” by Ileana Oancea and Nadia Obrocea, who wrote, firstly, an overview of Eugenio Coseriu’s reception and contribution to the development of world linguistics, and, secondly, an overview of Eugeniu Coseriu’s

own development as a linguist. They emphasize his aesthetic side, as an apprenticeship at George Călinescu's *Jurnalul literar*, and the importance of *La Lingua di Ion Barbu* for the subsequent development of the triad *system-norm-speech*. The latter is best tackled from a theoretical point of view (thus dwelling less on the cultural context) in "On the Textual Functions of Linguistics Innovations: Some Considerations Starting from Eugenio Coseriu's *La lingua di Ion Barbu*," by Emma Tămăianu-Morita. The idea of the distinction between system and norm and the historical level of particular languages is born in this text on Ion Barbu's poetics from 1948 and its development can be traced throughout Eugenio Coseriu's life-long work, later texts actualizing and testing early intuitions.

Oltre Saussure is an eclectic collection of studies, some of them – references for highly specialized linguists working on specific issues within the integralist framework, others – studies of interest for the broader cultural "anthropological" poetics. Sometimes their meanings (integralist linguistics and anthropological poetics) overlap, since the object of integralism is the linguistic competence as it appears in its cultural dimension, but the degree to which the linguist can employ a bird-eye view as opposed to a more "traditional" specialized approach can vary much. The scientific legacy of Eugenio Coseriu is a legacy of approaches, methods and subjects that is bound to produce varied responses.

Ana-Maria Deliu

Horea Poenar, *Teoria peștelui-fantomă. Zece studii și șapte scurte-metraje despre teorie*, București, Tracus Arte, 2016



The Theory of the Ghost-Fish. Ten Studies and Seven Short Films About Theory, written by the academic lecturer and theoretician Horea Poenar, published by Tracus Arte in 2016, appears as a challenging study that aims to present literary theory in the light of a new perspective. The author's major purpose is to redefine the concept of theory and the concept of literature in literary studies, by reaffirming their importance.

As the title already announced, the book is divided into four main chapters, each of them containing studies that reflect on particular aspects in literary theory from a philosophical, political or historical point of view. The volume begins with a more theoretical approach and continues by an applied text analysis. Horea Poenar aims to prove that theory is not outdated in our epistemological era, as many tend to believe. He strongly opposes the idea of "the death of theory," claiming for its resistance, necessity and capacity of interrogating the structure of our world.

His theoretical construction proves the contrary, using arguments served by personal examples. It is quite essential to note that his study as a whole is perceived as a montage of ideas and concrete proposals. He is making use of a very complex conceptual area rooted back in the philosophical tradition of thinkers from various fields such as Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida,



Jonathan Culler, Walter Benjamin, Roland Barthes, Slavoj Žižek, Jean-Luc Godard, Sergei Eisenstein, and other major figures, differentiating between their subtle nuances. In fact, as we read the text we discover that one of the specific features of Horea Poenar's writing is haunted by their concepts and beliefs. The author assumes that the readers are already familiar with these thinkers, and if not, he gives all the time the bibliographical references in the footnotes. Sometimes the pages are subtly overwhelmed by the references. Therefore, such kind of theoretical approach tends to be captured by a metaphorical frame and there exists the risk that the argumentation wouldn't be properly understood.

In the first chapter of the book, the author claims for the autonomy of theory as he argues that literature and theory have a thinking of their own, as we already know from Russian formalism. Horea Poenar's attempt to redefine the perception of literature and theory stands for the idea that both of them represent the concrete space of the universality, which does not imply a generalized character or uniformity. This concrete space permits the integration of particularity; thus, it is opened to everyone, considering, especially, the marginalized groups. Extremely intuitive, Horea Poenar builds his argumentation using examples from novels, films or photographs, searching for blind spots, breaks, ruptures, the invisible and the imperceptible, because in his opinion, art is capable of telling the truth. Definitely, the process of seeking the truth engages a constantly and progressive labor, as Barthes put it, particularly because labor is the true political language. It is essential to remark that one of the author's crucial concerns is the political dimension. For this reason,

Horea Poenar brings into discussion, in his discourse, the importance and the effects of political implications. For example, he examines the relation between art, reality and politics, analyzing the forms of cinema, which, from his perspective, corresponds to the movements of the forms of thinking. Hence, the forms of art are thinking themselves and their essence lies in the capacity of producing changes in the real world.

Horea Poenar displays two possibilities of defining theory, by asserting what it is and what it is not. First of all, the theoretician proposes an ambitious demonstration, claiming that theory opposes all sorts of conventions, categories, labels. He wants to break up with the vicious circle of conservative criticism. Consequently, theory does not have a system and is not subordinated to any of it; otherwise, it would have been captured by a reductionist scheme. Following the considerations of the thinkers that we have mentioned before, and synthesizing all the ideas discussed in the chapter, theory is considered to be a performative act. It is "a practice of concepts," emphasizing that concepts are not preexistent. Therefore, theory is a creation of concepts. In other words, theory leaves any stable and secure territory. Horea Poenar suggests that theory means investigation and exploration of ready-made symbols and signs in order to achieve the essence. The theory act is intrinsically connected to ethics and to responsibility. Thus, theory is always a committed act. To conclude, theory and literature cannot be reduced to a model of representation. Their duty is to put in question order and identity and to deconstruct prejudices. As a result, both of them become dangerous, containing the idea of emancipation, which scares ideology away.

The chapter also discusses the position of the theoretician in our contemporary society. One of the statuses could be that of a nomad. He resembles much more of an intelligent trickster who refuses the mechanism of the system and who puts in danger the stability of hierarchies. It is the one who is aware that this system wants to brainwash people by masking images and by cynical manipulation. In this manner, according to Horea Poenar, theory becomes monstrous, but it gains this term precisely because it escapes clichés and the easy path choices.

The second chapter is entitled “Short films” and reminds of Barthes’s style, using the fragmentation technique. The passages discuss two types of theory: a systemic and rigorous one, on the one hand, and a suspicious one on the other hand. There is also brought into discussion the relation between image and the ethics, focusing on the notion of dignity and the idea of otherness.

The third chapter analyses in great detail some poems of Romanian poet Cosmin Perta, and some paragraphs from *The Kreutzer Sonata* and from *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy. The deep analysis follows the close reading logic, questioning the existence of traces and of the spectra of the past. Horea Poenar is preoccupied with style as well, because for him, as Godard defined it, style represents the spot where meaning begins.

The last chapter is dedicated to the ethics of the image. Besides a meticulous analysis of Sorin Titel’s novel, perceived as a labor of mourning for otherness, the theoretician explores a fascinating area as mass-media related with the idea of *image pensive*. The passages refer to ideological

manipulation in mass-media and call attention to the necessity of an image that has to make individuals responsible.

To conclude, it must be said that Horea Poenar is a passionate thinker who proposes intriguing views and insightful thoughts about theory, art, politics, history, and contemporary society. His intellectually-enriching book opens the space for debates and challenges us to rethink the concepts that shape our reality.

Maria Fărîmă

Papa Samba Diop,
Alain Vuillemin (éds.),
*Les littératures en
langue française.
Histoire, mythe et
creation*, Rennes,
Presses Universitaires
de Rennes, 2015



Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president of Senegal and one of the most important African intellectuals of the twentieth century, considered the French language to be “the language of Gods.” From the beginning of the twelfth century, both history and literature appear to validate the truthfulness of this affirmation, as the Romance language was one of the main instruments of communication for commerce in the Mediterranean, present during the Age of Discovery and a universal language of the political, aristocratic and cultural elite between 1714 and 1815. As a consequence of this versatility, in the late Middle Ages, a literature written in French by foreigners developed and continued to flourish, to the point where it gained a francophone status.



The present volume focuses on these particular literatures and their assimilation in what professor Papa Samba Diop labeled “francophonie littéraire.” United by a common denominator, the French language, but also diverse as a result of a native heritage, which bestows on them a personal, national touch, literary works of the “étrangers” are analysed in the conferences held at the international colloquy, between 22nd and 23rd of November at the Paris-Est Créteil University, organized by the “Lettres, Idées, Savoirs” Laboratory. The discourses, conducted by guests from over twenty countries, with a notable number of participations from Romanian universities, are systematized in four main parts by themes and literary genres.

The first part of the book, allocated to poetry and history, consists of five lectures, centered on the importance of poetry and its tumultuous relationship with history. The opening discourse of the part, held by Horia Bădescu, is particularly interesting, as it suggests that the most significant trait of this form of literature is its capacity to illustrate what he calls “the interior time of the poet” and the true, hidden face of history. The creative role of poetry, he further explains, is that of humanizing the soul, and it is because of this process we can affirm its subversive function, a function which is easier to identify in relation to historical events. Another lecture worth mentioning is Alain Vuillemin’s analysis on Lubomir Guentchev, a Bulgarian poet who was censored all through his life. His most prominent volume, *Panthéon*, consists of rewritings of history by means of eliminating all the historical milestones and replacing them with figures of artists, philosophers and inventors.

Literature and History, the second part of the volume, devotes its lectures to the relationship between other cultures, represented by different authors who chose to write their works in French, and French itself, a combination which is illustrated by Élise Adjoumani in her discourse as a hybridization. Although vernacular languages, such as Haitian, African or other Creole languages appear to be incongruous in their mixture with the French language, they are, in reality, a unique place in which various local cultures find an advantageous place to expose their uncommon imaginary.

Dominique Ranaivoson’s contribution is also notable in her pursuit of examining three contemporary texts, in order to expose different manners of transforming the historical reality into personal myths. She further argues that, since Roland Barthes’ contribution in “Littérature et Réalité” challenges the readers to question the real in a literary text, a great number of writers from Maghreb and sub-Saharan Africa responded to his text by creating a literature which has its roots in local, national or communitarian history and uses real episodes to forge a new reality, lost in fiction, transformed into a new myth. This is the case of the three novels she grounds her discourse on, *La Dernière Nuit de l’émir* by Abdelkader Djemai, *Le Terroriste noir* by Tierno Monémebo and Jean-François Samlong’s *Une guillotine dans un train de nuit*. Apart from these studies, there are also a number of articles that discuss the role of colonialism in “peripheral literatures” and its effect in a francophone literature marked by powerful and often violent turns of history.

The third part of this ensemble, entitled *Literature and Dictatorship*, focuses



entirely on analyzing the impact of totalitarian regimes in several works which expose a raw collective history from countries such as Cambodia, Poland or Romania, where the memory of macabre events still marks the existence of an entire generation of novelists, poets and playwrights. Renata Jakubczuk's lecture on Anna Languf, a Polish author of French expression, is an example of an in-depth exploration of Languf's life and creation, which concludes with a powerful study of *The Lepers* (*Les Lépreux*), her first play. Although Anna Languf has been awarded the famous Prix Goncourt for one of her novels, *Bags of Sand* (*Les bagages de sable*), she remains a rather unknown writer in her native country, mainly due the fact that, as she later confesses, she could no longer live in Poland or write in her mother tongue after escaping the Holocaust. Being the only concentration camp survivor in her family after the eradication of ghettos, Languf's works are full of sorrow and honesty, rough testimonies in which autobiographical elements intertwine with fiction, in an attempt to fulfill a responsibility towards her contemporaries, but also towards her future readers.

Another remarkable study of such an experience is an account on Lena Constante and her synthesis on Romanian Gulag. Already a well-known researcher and essayist in the field of communist persecution and political imprisonment, Ruxandra Cesereanu's discourse is a meticulous, thoroughly researched study on the mechanisms of fictionalization, present in *Evadarea tăcută* (*The Silent Escape: Three Thousand Days in Romanian Prisons*) and *Evadarea imposibilă*. Rather than glorifying the figure of the prisoner, Lena Constante records her experience with a more

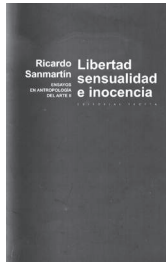
internalized, aesthetical approach while illustrating a collection of women portrayed in what Ruxandra Cesereanu calls a "larval" state. Her documentation is set apart by a pursuit of dividing her own punitive phases while creating a genuine philosophy of detention through the creation of an imaginary alternative world.

The last part of this volume, *Novel and History*, is divided in five other sections, using geographical criteria. Each chapter centers around writers and works from various region grouped in insular, oriental, Asian, African or Québécois literatures, demarcated in a manner which allows each contribution to delve into a brief but comprehensive study how heterogeneous cultures and myths are brought together under the inclusive roof of the French language. Among many topics approached in this section, some compelling and innovative discourses are Marie Fremin's study on memoir and history of slavery in the francophone Caribbean literature, Corin Braga's survey of the Romanian psychological novel between the two World Wars and the sublimation of women figures and a discourse on the myth of Didon by Ali Baccar-Bournaz.

Even though an attempt to assemble some of the most prominent contemporary works written in French into a single publication may appear as a futile endeavor, the present volume is successful evidence of how comparative literature can be a fruitful instrument in analyzing and exploring varied, diverse cultures through a common denominator, while still capturing the uniqueness of each and every national literature.

Alexandra Cengher

Ricardo Sanmartin,
*Libertad, sensualidad e
 inocencia. Ensayos en
 antropología del arte II*,
 Madrid, Trotta
 Publishing House, 2011



Ricardo Sanmartin began studying arts from an anthropological point of view in his previous book, *Meninas, espejos e hispanistas* (Trotta, 2005), where he focused his attention on painting, prose and poetry. *Libertad, sensualidad e inocencia* comes as a part of the same project and it is more interested in music and cinematography, pursuing the different forms through which the cultural background may be encountered in work of arts, viewing the matter also from a social and economic perspective. The process of research for this book consisted of field work followed by interpretation, with the aim of defining modern culture, of exposing the heterogeneity of the modern society, which is formed through the method of bricolage.

The author mounts his thesis on the presumption that technology made art available everywhere in space and time and due to its ubiquity it possesses the power to shape the collective imaginary in a dialogical process. Furthermore, art is essential to the understanding of history and the manner in which history is being created. Solicitous about the identity of the modern subject, Ricardo Sanmartin quotes Nietzsche and Stevenson to illustrate the internal plurality of the human being and uses the cinematic example of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as well as the story of Peter Pan. To the author, cinema is essential

to understanding the modern paradigm as through the portrayals of loneliness, decay, or sexual communication, it exposes the untranslatable identity of the subject. Pain, freedom, transgression and hope are perceived as the main feelings that dominate the modern era and, according to Sanmartin, they are all ultimately metamorphosed in the metaphor of the innocence.

The first figure analyzed in this book is that of the artist himself, as a symbol for collective identity, by watching the world with a moral eye. Through this figure it is possible to notice how art can act in the real, how art can move the world, and here Sanmartin uses the example of The Beatles and their influence on the counterculture. To the artist, creativity is produced by a wound, but it also consists of sensitivity, love and innocence and this is the reason why, in Sanmartin's vision, music expresses a duality, it is formed by both pain and glory, as the modern paradigm itself.

In modernity, art is more and more associated with the eye and the gaze and cinema becomes important especially because it does not work as a reflection, but it rather educates the look and proposes new ways of seeing. Using the example of Buñuel's work, the author demonstrates how cinematography directs the eye from the outside to the inside, questioning the limits between fiction and reality, suggesting and being under no circumstances explicit and offering no solutions, but only different perspectives. In Ricardo Sanmartin's view, this interplay of multiple perspectives is familiar to both modernity and cinematography, and this is the reason why Picasso's *Guernica* is such a cinematic work of art.

In order to display the new human condition in the modern paradigm, the

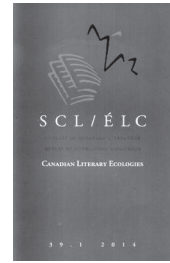
author follows the manner in which modern science and identity are closely related, using the examples of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, of Hulk or of Peter Pan, as they are illustrated in cinema, and concludes that the disruption in the interior of the human being must be understood as primarily an anthropologic metamorphosis. Moreover, arguing for the cultural perception of space, Sanmartino proves that the subjects impose their own cultural background to places they encounter and, from this point of view, he analyzes how cinematography works with space itself, the use of clothes, gestures, focusing the interpretation on the limits between private and public space. Furthermore, the author interprets cinema's choice of how to show or hide the body and observes that most often the hands and the face of the characters are exposed as they are perceived as central elements in the act of communication. And, in the case of an image, the attention is always drawn to the uncovered body parts. Starting from the analysis of body in cinema and modern culture in general, the author states that the sexual act is used in cinema in order to answer anthropologic questions, revealing the transparency of the subject who, in modernity, withdraws from the rules of the society. Cinema proves in this aspect more efficiently than theater or other traditional art, as it is more preoccupied with the interior of the subject, exposing one in one's intimacy and one's sensuality.

In *Libertad, sensualidad e inocencia*, Ricardo Sanmartin uses the methods of anthropology in order to investigate the relation between art and culture, but he also succeeds in re-evaluating the main characteristics of the modern paradigm and putting them in connection with the new

form of art that modernity brings forth, that of cinematography.

Alexandra Turcu

Studies in Canadian Literature / Études en Littérature Canadienne, Vol. 39.1, Pamela Banting, Cynthia Sugars & Herb Wyile (eds.), *Canadian Literary Ecologies*, The University of New Brunswick. 2014



Edited by Pamela Banting, Cynthia Sugars, and Herb Wyile, this collection of essays makes a deliberate effort to resist “the inexorable pull of literary history.” Unlike most anthologies of Canadian literature and criticism that arrange their articles in a pattern of historical progression, this collection resists “the pressures of linearity” to achieve “a structure more circular in outline and more dialogic within.” It opens with Travis V. Mason’s essay on Oliver Goldsmith’s canonical long poem “The Rising Village” and concludes with Jenny Kerber’s article on Douglas Coupland’s near-futurist novel about a post-bee world, *Generation A*, forming nonetheless what the editors recognize as an “altogether unintentional yet powerful narrative arc” spanning “a series of analyses of the colonial settler occupation of Canada.”

The strong colonial and neocolonial themes that reverberate across the entire collection make the first essay “speak meaningfully back to” the last essay, since they both zoom in on “issues pertaining to the imposition of colonial and neocolonial agricultural practices.” The span of critical

literary investigations in the collection is motivated by the editors' concern that "too few Canadian literature specialists heeded Lee Maracle's charge back in 1992 that the 'post-' in postcolonial was merely yet another settler fantasy and that, in her words, Canadian writers (and, I would add, literary critics) 'still hover about the gates of old forts, peek through the cracks of their protective ideological walls and try to write their own yearnings for freedom from the safety of their intellectual incarceration'" (p. 14).

Banting scrutinizes the operating assumptions of the literary profession and holds them to the light of recent troubling developments in order to reach the conclusions that the former come up short of the actual reality on the ground: "In light of the First Nations' 'Idle No More' Movement that emerged in Saskatchewan in November/December 2012 and quickly spread around the globe, on the one hand, and dramatically regressive political changes in Canada over the past several years, on the other hand, one cannot help but think that, in the study of Canadian literature, the 'post-' in postcolonialism was in fact premature" (p. 7).

Travis Mason's "Having Cleared and Embellished the Earth's': Agricultural Science and Poetic Tradition in Oliver Goldsmith's "The Rising Village"" is an eco-critical post-colonial study which takes the Lockean premise of settler entitlement to task, while Wanda Campbell's "Island Ecology and Early Canadian Women Writers" reexamines the works of Susan Frances Harrison, Marjorie Pickthall, and Katherine Hale, Canadian women writers from the beginning of last century, in order to signal the way in which these

writers employ the island motif to confront the treatment of women and nature under colonialism. "A Poetics of Simpson Pass: Natural History and Place-Making in Rocky Mountains Park," by Sarah Wylie Krotz weds ecocriticism to mountain literature and parks history. In examining an early promotional tourist pamphlet advertising the dominion parks of Canada, entitled "A Spring of Mountain Heather," Krotz makes the case that the colonial and curatorial report with wilderness pertains to a regime of "potency of the natural object as a locus of memory" and brings our attention to "the audacious role white European settlers assumed when they decided to 'curate' the wilderness."

Nelson Grey's essay "Herman Voaden's *Romantic Ecologies*: Settler Identity and the Canadian Sublime" engages with the work of the early twentieth century dramatist Herman Voaden with the aim of highlighting the manner in which human and nonhuman alike are shown due respect in literature that blends romantic nationalism with pantheistic and ecocritical consciousness. Voaden's plays are post-human *avant la lettre*, demonstrating a core affinity for non-human nature seen "as an animated materiality in its own right."

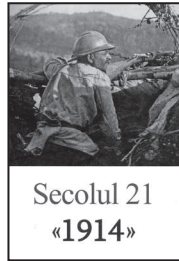
Urban spaces and places (or, as the case might be, suburban and exurban ones) receive consideration in the essays written by Rob Ross, Cheryl Lousley, Tanis MacDonald, Elise Lepage, Sherrie Malisch, Lee Frew, Allison Athens, Adam Beardsworth, Paul Chafe, Nandra Hebouche, Jessica L.W. Carey, Jenny Kerber.

The collection has the great merit of assembling both English language and French language scholarship under the same covers, and offering a seamless read

from cover to cover. Alert, civically engaged scholarship hits a high note of clarity and persuasion with this anthology of Canadian Literary Ecologies.

Nicoleta Marinescu

Secolul 21, Vol. 1-6,
 “1914,” The Writers’
 Union of Romania and
 the Cultural Foundation
 “Secolul 21,” Bucharest,
 2014



In order to celebrate the passing of a hundred years from the beginning of World War I, *Secolul 21*, the magazine which continued the well-known biannual publication *Secolul 20*, issued an anniversary number suggestively entitled “1914.” Awarded with the prize for the “Best magazine of literature and art in the world” in 1987 and becoming famous along time through its exceptionally varied editorials on themes connected to human sciences, the magazine stands out again through an original synthesis of the events that marked the fatidic year of 1914. With the invaluable help of historians such as Lucian Boia, Adrian Cioroianu or Margaret MacMillan, the selected essays treat the beginning of the “war that could have not happened” from some unusual perspectives: it is not necessarily the military facts that are analyzed, but the immediate consequences of the war, so the theaters of war are put aside in favor of describing the orphans’ and the prisoners’ fate, the volunteers’ mobilization, the fate of the Romanian patrimony and the role of research within the course and consequences of war.

Emil Hurezeanu opens the volume with an essay in which he underlines the importance of the minor conflicts between the soon-to-be-named “belligerent parts,” events that connect and influence each other, despite their apparent lack of importance from the moment of happening. We can even talk about a certain revenge of “the particular,” because the history of World War I is also the sum of the local wars’ small histories: the Romanians’, the Hungarians’, the Czechs’, or the Slovaks’. In this way, without necessarily rebuilding the big historical galaxy (with emperors, kings, armies and battle orders), Hurezeanu also sheds light on some attempts of recreating the world starting from micro galaxies, such as the world described in the soldiers’ diaries. Smalls gestures such as random conversations between state leaders or their choices of applying some uncommon ideas end up mattering more than the great actions, which, despite pushing history forward, aren’t always of the same importance.

Adrian Cioroianu, on the other hand, focuses on describing the chain of the events that lead to the beginning of World War I, closely analyzing the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, the Archduke of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as well as the historical context in which this catastrophe happened. Confirming Donald MacKenzie’s affirmation that “[t]he more secure a system is thought to be, the more catastrophic the accidents to which it should have been invulnerable will be,” Europe denies its promising future from the beginning of the twentieth century with the countless accidents from the years of 1911 and 1912, which seem to show that man is not meant to feel comfortable either in the



air, or on water and under it. Obsessed by the idea of progress, the political powers of the continent had too many ambitions for only one “*belle époque*” and they did not see the imminence of the conflict in whose trap they all fell together, eventually. The British Empire, Russia and Germany had personal interests and huge ambitions, but the map proved to be too small for so many and so big spheres of influence desired by each and every one of them. In the end, Cioroianu points out the hazard of human actions and the easiness with which someone’s smallest gesture could have international consequences: “It was barely past noon. A man and a woman – two potentially crowned heads – will be dead in the next few hours. And then, almost another nine millions.”

Another very interesting approach to the year of 1914 comes from the researcher Margaret MacMillan, who justly asks herself “why did this war end peace”? Many crises similar to the one that followed the prince’s assassination had happened before, but the leaders always solved them and chose to maintain peace; the war threat had also been used before, even if everything calmed down eventually. However, in 1914 the war ended up materializing itself and all the nations allied to reciprocally compensate each other’s weaknesses. MacMillan suggests a possible reason for this fact, namely that none of the important actors of the 1914 moment were strong leaders with initiative, who would be brave enough to fight the pressures which pushed the world towards war. Possibly wishing to clear off the internal divisions by uniting the people in a big patriotic wave, but being unaware of the dimensions of the conflagration in which they were throwing their countries,

the nations let themselves be drawn in a big mix of ambitions for power and territorial expansion, forces and prejudices, a mix that led to the collapse of four out of the five empires that were ruling the world at that moment (Russia, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire).

The historian Lucian Boia comes with yet another different perspective, namely the one about how we can judge World War I from the vantage point of the present and generally all the events that have happened in the past. Most people would tend to believe that everything happened in a certain way because this is how it had to, but we should also consider the fact that there is a relatively aleatory combination of directions that things could follow, a combination which should be regarded objectively. A small but significant event can often change the path things take, and Lucian Boia shows that, for example, if Germany hadn’t been defeated in World War I and treated so badly at Versailles, Hitler would not have existed, as he would not have had an economic disaster and abashment to rise on. The war accelerated and diversified the historical process, thus letting the American continent overpower Europe; can the latter still mean something in a time where the former wants to “Americanize” everything? Yes, but only if it learns to be united, to develop a common defense system and to maintain a solid foreign policy.

The volume continues with a close-up of the perspective and by focusing on some war aspects strictly connected to the Romanian space. Pia Alimăneșteanu, the daughter of the great political man Ion C. Brătianu, is present with some pages from



the diary she kept during the Germanic occupation of Romania. There she describes the tensioned atmosphere of Bucharest and condemns the behavior of the Germanophile Romanians, who were extremely revolted by the decision of abandoning the alliance with Germany and, therefore, forgot about supporting their country.

What happened to the national treasure in that period, though? Carmen Tănăsioiu, curator at the Museum of National Art of Romania, treats the subject in detail and includes in her study even some lists with the valuable objects that were transported from Peleş Castle. Most of them were packed and sent to Iași during the two weeks when the Germans surrounded the city of Braşov, in October 1916, but unfortunately not all of them returned to Sinaia in 1919, when the royal family did. The death of King Carol I meant the end of an era of brilliance and elegance for Peleş Castle, the residence which best fulfilled the role of representing the monarchy. During the German occupation it had not been taken care of, and the events that followed during the twentieth century slowly transformed it into a museum that impresses with the artistic treasures it possesses, but it does not serve anymore as a place where all the crowned heads of Europe used to come and be treated with the greatest honor.

One last dimension of the year 1914 refers to the common people and to how they were affected by this war. A series of touching images from the patrimony of “King Ferdinand I” National Military Museum, as well as some letters from the battlefield or from prison give us direct access to the people’s sufferings and to the way their most basic needs were far from

being covered, while the leaders of Europe were fighting for territorial and military supremacy. It is true that after the war was over, many commemorative monuments for the fallen soldiers were built, for glorifying their courage and national spirit, but this did not stop the World War II from taking place, neither did it make the Nazis or the Communists take into consideration the human aspect and the collateral victims that always appear in the case of such international conflicts.

All things considered, this issue of the *Secolul 21* magazine is both a painful reminder of the series of events that started World War I and a warning concerning the fact that the nations’ “reciprocal intimidations,” however controlled they appear to be, can easily lead to a catastrophe. Nationally and internationally known historians show us that, contrary to the belief from the beginning of the twentieth century, war could only have appeared where the white man had not conquered land yet, it was actually just a sparkle away from the decision of any man of power. The book does not necessarily offer a detailed history regarding the beginning of the war, but offers the public other perspectives on it, while the style in which it is written manages to delete the time barrier between our present and the turbulent period that is described.

Maria Barbu

Secolul 21, Vol. 7-12,
 “Corpul și vindecătorul
 său,” The Writers’ Union
 of Romania and The
 Cultural Foundation
 “Secolul 21,” Bucharest,
 2015



The 7-12/2015 issue of *Secolul 21* journal, called suggestively “Corpul și vindecătorul său” (“The Body and Its Healer”), covers a series of articles and essays on topics such as illness, corporality, photography and film, connected, to some extent, by larger themes: the ephemeral character of matter and methods to counteract it. The fields generally targeted by the publication are social sciences, world literature and the dialogue between cultures. I find it important to mention that in the upcoming paragraphs, I will bring into the open some of the articles, omitting others and sketching the concepts elaborated by the authors.

The first section exposes the concept of body disease and how it affects people. As understood by Monica Pillat, illness might be an initiatory journey, creating a good context for introspection. To strengthen her opinion, the authoress cites Kierkegaard, from whose point of view, suffering has an essential role in one’s road to spiritualization, keeping one connected to God. Recalling her own experience as a seriously ill person facing death, sickness became a metaphysical state only after her revealing conversation with a priest. Moving from the philosophical angle to social anthropology, Sanda Galopenția writes about the teams of students formed by Dimitrie Gusti, who undertook research on the health conditions in Romania’s

rural area, from 1934 to 1939. As anyone can expect, the results were alarming, later published in order to raise awareness about the difficult tasks doctors had to manage and the problems that needed to be solved. The food was a good criterion to distinguish the social status of the peasantry – the rich, the intermediaries and the poor – but given the fact that last category was the most widespread, the population was generally malnourished. When it came to the hygiene of their houses, this aspect also became an agent that led to illness: during the winter season the windows were nailed so that heat would be preserved and there were even cases when the peasants shared their rooms with the animals. Given the facts, it is no surprise that epidemics, tuberculosis, dysentery and many other illnesses occurred. The actions initiated by the insufficient local medical staff were useless, as the population remained blind to the dangers. This study on sickness ends with a brief and interesting history of Romanian diets and cookbooks from 1846 to 1954, written by Mariana Neț. Starting from the French, English and Italian translations, Romanian gastronomy evolved significantly in the mid-twentieth century, when doctors promoted the direct link between food and one’s health condition.

The transition from body to art and their dialectical relationship is subtly made through Carmen Tănăsioiu’s article on how vessels which served as utensils in pharmacies can be art too, giving some exquisite examples of *albarello* and *barattolo* pots and amphorae with delicate baroque motifs or religious scenes painted on them.

The second part of the publication aims to discuss photography (providing the journal with a few remarkable shots)



and cinema. The decay of the body and photography are not some arbitrarily chosen subjects. In Barthes's *Camera Lucida*, the photograph announces our death, it testifies to our mortality. Susan Sontag perfectly synthesized this phenomenon in *On Photography*, saying that the photo is the "inventory of mortality," stating "the innocence, the vulnerability of lives heading toward their own destruction."

George Banu introduces through his article one of the greatest actresses of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Sarah Bernhardt, who had the genius intuition to let herself be photographed by none other than Félix Nadar and later, his son, Paul Nadar. The unusual beauty and uniqueness of this woman (adored even by Proust) were captured and left as testimony for the public, foreseeing the phenomenon of advertising through photography, long before it became so popular. Through the portraits that will outlive her, Sarah Bernhardt builds her mythology, creating a woman who lives outside the conventional time. The theatricality in photography can be noticed even in the postcards of Bucharest from the twentieth century, as Mariana Net observes. The city is a scene and the street becomes a "state of mind." Despite the apparent spontaneity of the photos, everything is controlled: the characters are purposefully put in a certain place, the light is manipulated, the street is not only presented, but also recreated. This kind of "scenario" also emerges in the photos taken at the Royal Court, depicting Queen Marie of Romania. Carmen Tănăsioiu reveals the queen's fondness for photography, her being the one responsible for the photos' layout, annotations and the covers' aesthetics.

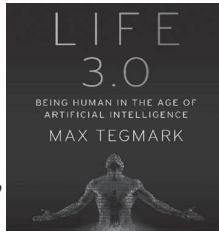
The albums can be seen at Peleş National Museum.

Photography, as seen by Eugen De-diu-Sandu, is "the intermediary between painting and film." The need for realism in painting and photography, needless to say, not in a mimetic way, is expressed in cinema though Italian Neorealism (Luchino Visconti, Roberto Rosellini), but the silent films of the early twentieth century, which mark a spectacular evolution of the cinema, distance themselves significantly from reality and explore a world of fantasy and spectrality. Victor Sjöström's *Körkarlen* (*The Phantom Carriage*), Murnau's *Nosferatu* and Frintz Lang's *Metropolis*, for instance, suggested a revolutionary way of making film. The link between painting and cinema is best demonstrated by Sergei Paradjanov, who did not use a conventional written script for his movies, but images drawn by himself, exploiting metaphors and color usage.

To conclude this review, I strongly recommend the periodical and this particular issue to all those who take interest in the eternal interplay between death and art, body and transcendence. Each subject is looked upon differently, giving the reader diverse insights concerning a certain topic, but also different styles of writing: from poetical reminiscing to rigorously documented researches. A mixture of contrasting pieces of writing creating a unitary system.

Anda Duman

Max Tegmark, *Life 3.0: Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2017



In his new book, *Life 3.0*, Max Tegmark discusses the possibility of AI and the implications such a discovery will entail for all humanity. He chooses not to show artificial intelligence either in a good, utopian light or in a dystopian one. Instead, Tegmark discusses this problem from a present point of view. The “what if” scenarios that he portrays are written from a down-to-earth perspective, each scenario having its roots in reality.

The book is composed of eight chapters, each discussing the problems that humans will face when or if AI will come into existence. In the prelude, Tegmark imagines a plausible story about “the Omega Team,” a group of scientists who create an AI named Prometheus. In this story, he discusses the social, economic and cultural influence this artificial intelligence has upon the entire population. At the end of the story, his questions are simple and targeted towards the reader: how do we want our relationship with an AI to be and how much would it change society.

In the first chapter, Tegmark defines three stages of life: life 1.0, life 2.0 and life 3.0. The first one denotes rudimentary life forms that can only survive and replicate their DNA in order to ensure the survival and evolution of the species. Life 1.0 is composed of simple biological organisms that cannot design their software or hardware. By software, Tegmark understands

“the algorithms and knowledge that you use to process the information from your sense and decide what to do – everything from the ability to recognize your friends when you see them to your ability to walk, read, write, calculate, sing and tell jokes,” while hardware refers to the physical body, to DNA, to the material components of a certain being. Therefore, life 1.0 cannot change or improve its skills, its language acquisition or the way in which it reacts, nor can it change its corporal body.

Life 2.0, on the other hand, represents the improved version of life 1.0. Life 2.0 represents cultural life, humans in their actual state. As opposed to their predecessors, humans can actually design their software. As cultural beings, humans can always learn new skills, improve themselves and change almost daily. The hardware component stays the same, humans being only able to evolve, but not design their hardware. Human bodies grow after birth, they have a prewritten hardware which cannot be modified yet.

The last stage introduced by Max Tegmark is life 3.0, the technological stage. This stage does not yet exist, but the author believes that this is the next step for humanity. This new, improved version of life can design their software and also their hardware. Life 3.0 is no longer trapped by the limitations of the body and can transform their material existence as they please. Artificial Intelligence is a great example for how life 3.0 will be. As a virtual being, an AI is no longer held back by the material world mostly because it exists in two planes: virtual and material. As an evolved life form, an AI could change its software but, most importantly, can change its hardware in order to improve itself.



Continuing this triad, Tegmark talks about the three main ways of perceiving Artificial Intelligence: digital utopians, techno-skeptics and the beneficial AI-movement. The first group of people believe that the technology and the possibility to create an AI are just around the corner. They believe that AI will come into existence in the next 20 to 30 years and its appearance will only mean a beneficial upgrade for humanity. Tegmark questions their utopian views mostly because humans cannot yet know how an AI will interact with other inferior beings, if it will be submissive or if have other goals than its master. In opposition, techno-skeptics believe that AI is a thing of the future and it will probably appear in the next 150 to 200 years. They do not believe that an AI is good or evil. They simply choose to not think about something that will probably not happen in their life time.

As a supporter of the beneficial AI-movement, Max Tegmark focuses on the real possibility that AI will probably appear in the next 50 years. This movement focuses its attention on the need of humans. The possibility of a dystopian future created by a malevolent AI is something that this movement has into consideration. Therefore, the beneficial AI-movement urges every scientist, engineer and even us as readers to process into the creation of artificial intelligence but to be conscious about our relationship to it.

In the next chapter, Tegmark discusses how an AI could help with breakthroughs in technology, law and even weapons. The problem that he sees with an AI being in control of weapons and being part of a war is the impact that it may have on human lives. The same problem appears when the

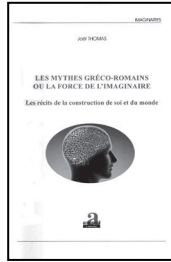
author imagines an AI as a judge. Artificial intelligence would only be able to judge based on statistics, other cases and probabilities, but not on emotions. Maybe the statistics drawn by an AI about prisoners would be racist, therefore its judging techniques would not benefit everyone.

In the next chapters, Max Tegmark imagines a few dystopian and utopian scenarios in which the world is controlled by an AI, or in which humans control an AI. Everyone is afraid of the first scenario in which humanity creates an AI, but this new life form has a different agenda (not necessary an evil one) that could lead to the destruction of society. The second scenario entails a different problem: morality. An AI represents a new life form but because it does not have a corporal body, humans might take advantage of that and enslave this new consciousness.

Max Tegmark finds a simple solution to this problem: common goals. Humans and Artificial Intelligence should have common goals, accepted by both parties, without one ever gaining control of the other. By doing so, the relationship between humans and a new form of life would be based on ethical principles. After presetting the possibility which the near future entails, Tegmark urges the reader to think openly about how they perceive their future and the relationship they want with an AI.

Denisa Adriana Moldovan

Joël Thomas, *Les mythes gréco-romains ou la force de l'imaginaire. Les récits de la construction de soi et du monde*, Préface de Paul-Augustin Deproost, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017



Joël Thomas, professeur émérite de langue et littératures latines à l'Université de Perpignan-*via Domitia*, reprend dans son dernier ouvrage *Les mythes gréco-romains ou la force de l'imaginaire. Les récits de la construction de soi et du monde* (Préface de Paul-Augustin Deproost, L'Harmattan, Académia, 2017) son questionnement sur les origines de la pensée symbolique. L'objectif principal de cette étude est de souligner le rôle essentiel des mythes dans les sociétés de tous les temps ; pour y arriver l'auteur interroge la structure des mythes, leur survivance aussi bien que leurs fonctions. L'originalité du livre réside dans la démarche proposée : la vue panoramique sur les mythes les fait sortir du domaine de l'histoire de la religion pour les ouvrir au champ plus vaste des sciences humaines.

Trois parties structurent la recherche ; la première partie, « L'organisation du cosmos, dans une polarisation entre l'Ordre et le Désordre. La cosmogonie et la théogonie », analyse le mystère qui préoccupe depuis toujours la pensée grecque : le lien entre l'être et le néant. Les deux traditions, la tradition hésiodique et celle orphique, sont présentées avec leur figures mythiques (Kronos, Zeus, les Cyclopes, Typhon, Prométhée, Dionysos, Éros et Aphrodite) ; la catastrophe, la fête, l'ordre et le désordre constituent des points de repère dans l'organisation du monde antique ; ceux-ci

coïncident avec l'organisation de la psyché humaine qui évolue entre barbarie et civilisation. La deuxième partie, « La construction de la psyché humaine, dans une polarisation entre le Haut et le Bas. Les figures du héros », se concentre sur l'interprétation du combat des héros qui est « de s'arracher à la bête et de se relier à l'esprit qui est en lui » (p. 69) ; en fonction du résultat de leur action les héros s'intègrent dans plusieurs catégories : ceux qui connaissent la chute à cause de l'*hybris* et de l'exaltation (Icare, Tantale, Phaéton, Ixion, Bellérophon), ceux qui échouent soit par banalisation soit par renoncement au projet héroïque (Midas, Œdipe, Narcisse), ceux qui éprouvent des réussites partielles (Jason, Thésée, Persée, Ulysse) et, enfin, ceux qui sont saveurs (Héraklès, Énée, Orphée). La réussite apparaît comme située au milieu, comme un terme moyen ; la mythologie classique gravite autour du mouvement du héros entre bestialité et spiritualité ; le « système mythologique » (p. 69) a comme moteurs le centre et la périphérie ; ce système fait partie de « [l]a grammaire universelle des mythes » qui est examinée dans la troisième partie de l'étude. La grammaire des mythes est définie par la violence, la pérennité et la plasticité des mythes, par l'universalité et par la cohésion. La violence, trait de la mythologie gréco-romaine, s'explique par la polarisation chaos-organisation qui participe à la mise en place des sociétés humaines ; la pérennité des mythes est visible dans le rôle joué par ceux-ci dans le monde : pour les Grecs ils sont une représentation de l'inconnu ; les mythes seront, par conséquent, complémentaires à l'approche scientifique. Un autre élément de la grammaire universelle des mythes est leur capacité d'abstraction : le mythe



se propose comme un paradigme, comme un archétype, ils expliquent l'histoire de chaque homme ; de plus, les mythes sont plastiques : ils s'adaptent à la vie d'une société pour mieux répondre aux peurs et aux inquiétudes. De plus, « les mythes sont créateurs : ils nous modifient, nous rendent différents » (p. 161).

L'erreur de notre société est de tenter d'éliminer l'imaginaire ; les mythes ne peuvent pas mourir parce que, comme l'a

montré Joël Thomas, ils sont reliés à notre activité cérébrale, « à l'activité biologique de notre cerveau » (p. 178). Au-delà de leur rôle dans l'organisation d'une individualité, les mythes assurent l'unité si nécessaire au bon fonctionnement d'une société ; allons à la découverte des mythes qui nous offrent de la cohérence pour gagner notre force et notre liberté !

Anamaria Lupan