

Prospero

Rivista di Letterature e Culture Straniere

XXVII • MMXXII

Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici
Università degli Studi di Trieste

Prospero

RIVISTA DI LETTERATURE E CULTURE STRANIERE

DIRETTORE RESPONSABILE – FOUNDING EDITOR – GESCHÄFTSFÜHRENDER HERAUSGEBER

Renzo S. Crivelli

DIRETTORE SCIENTIFICO – EDITOR IN CHIEF – VERANTWORTLICHE HERAUSGEBERIN

Roberta Gefter Wondrich

COMITATO DI DIREZIONE – EDITORIAL BOARD – HERAUSGEBERBEIRAT

Irene Fantappiè – Università di Cassino
Maria Carolina Foi – Università di Trieste
Roberta Gefter Wondrich – Università di Trieste
Federica La Manna – Università della Calabria
Marilena Parlati – Università di Padova
Katia Pizzi – University of London

COMITATO SCIENTIFICO – EDITORIAL BOARD – WISSENSCHAFTLICHER BEIRAT

Silvia Albertazzi – Università di Bologna
Rosario Arias – Universidad de Malaga
Carlo M. Bajetta – Università della Valle d'Aosta
Giovanni Cianci – Università di Milano
Maria Carolina Foi – Università di Trieste
Paolo Panizzo – Università di Trieste
Maria Maddalena Parlati – Università di Padova
Caroline Patey – Università di Milano
Katia Pizzi – University of London
Marco Rispoli – Università di Padova
Liam Harte – University of Manchester
Rolf-Peter Janz – Freie Universität Berlin
Andreina Lavagetto – Università Ca' Foscari, Venezia
Daniel-Henri Pageaux – Université de Paris III – Sorbonne Nouvelle
Jörg Robert – Universität Tübingen
Marisa Siguan – Universitat de Barcelona
Bertrand Westphal – Université de Limoges

† *Anna Zoppellari* – Università di Trieste

COMITATO DI REDAZIONE – EDITORIAL STAFF – REDAKTION

Sara Spanghero



© copyright Edizioni Università di Trieste,
Trieste 2022.

Proprietà letteraria riservata.
I diritti di traduzione, memorizzazione
elettronica, di riproduzione
e di adattamento totale e parziale di questa pubblicazione,
con qualsiasi mezzo (compresi i microfilm,
le fotocopie e altro) sono riservati per tutti i paesi

EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste

Via Weiss, 21 – 34128 Trieste
<http://eut.units.it>
<https://www.facebook.com/eutedizioniuniversitatrieste>

Prospero

Rivista di letterature e culture straniere

XXVII/2022

INDICE – INDEX – INHALT

ANGLISTICA

How the Victorians Saw Things Béatrice Laurent	9
Missionaries, Literature, and Censorship in South Africa. Early Twentieth-Century Cultural Dynamics Giuliana Iannaccaro	27
Philip Larkin and jazz: from journalism to poetry Pierpaolo Martino	47
“The Final Continent”’: Geographies of Emotions and Emotional Geographies in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Short Fiction Éva Pataki	65
Horcrux or Hallow? Magical projections of the psyche in <i>Harry Potter</i> Alessandra Petrina	83

GERMANISTICA

Das Feenland <i>Dschinnistan</i>: Ursprung und Fortleben eines literarischen Motivs Renata Gambino	105
La pluralità politica come tentativo di mediazione ne <i>La montagna magica</i> di Thomas Mann Erik Schilling	127

Paul Ernsts <i>Erdachte Gespräche</i> Zum Ausklingen einer beliebten Gattungstradition	
Maurizio Pirro	145
I soggiorni duinesi di Rainer Maria Rilke: per una topografia della memoria tra storia e immaginazione	
Giulia Frare	167
“Erzherzog Friedrich rief Bumsti!”: Karl Kraus e la tragedia della responsabilità	
Maria Giovanna Campobasso	189
„Gute Taten, das bedeutet Ruin!“ – Zur Moralkritik in Bertolt Brechts Theaterstück <i>Der gute Mensch von Sezuan</i>	
Siegrun Wildner	219
Dystopias of Family Planning in the Novels <i>Corpus Delicti</i> (2009) by Juli Zeh and <i>Das weiße Schloss</i> (2018) by Christian Dittloff	
Waltraud Maierhofer	243
Censura e responsabilità in <i>Der Überläufer</i> di Siegfried Lenz	
Francesca Ottavio	263
Notes on Contributors	281
Abstracts	287

And Prospero the prime duke, being so reputed
In dignity, and for the liberal Arts
Without a parallel; those being all my study,
The government I cast upon my brother,
And to my state grew stranger, being transported
And rapt in secret studies.

W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, I.ii. 72-77



Anglistica

How the Victorians Saw Things

Béatrice Laurent

Université Bordeaux-Montaigne

The age of Victoria underwent profound changes, not the least of which concerned the ways of seeing, to use the title of John Berger's seminal book published in 1972. This is evidenced in concrete terms by the fascination with optical instruments (from the stereoscope to the photographic camera) and, indirectly, by the uncertain relationship between vision, representation and interpretation highlighted by Kate Flint:

The Victorians were fascinated with the act of seeing, with the question of the reliability – or otherwise – of the human eye, and with the problems of interpreting what they saw. Those problems extended from the observation of the natural world and the urban environment, to the more specialist interpretation demanded by actual works of art. (1-2).

In the space of three eventful generations, the Victorians witnessed and contributed to profound transformations affecting industry, culture, art and science. Such upheavals required a permanent adaptation of the gaze to understand a changing world, especially as the interaction between these different sectors of activity was frequent and the disciplinary compartmentalisation was less impervious in the nineteenth century than it is today.

To better understand and then account for the ways the Victorians engaged with “reality” in a coherent manner requires the researcher to share nineteenth century observers’ mental framework, to look at his subjects

from their own perspective, adopting the scope, and limitations, of their vision. Renate Brosch convincingly argued that, “as ways of seeing inform modes of depicting and representing, the latter inadvertently disclose subject positions and power relations corresponding to them” (8). Here, we will take the “subject position” in its most literal sense, and wonder what that position was with reference to the observed object in various periods of the nineteenth century. This will raise the question of the point of view adopted, which itself is conditioned by the place where one stands in relation to one’s material: above, beside or inside.

Nancy Anderson and Michael Dietrich have convincingly argued that images shape the way we see things and engage with the outside world because “the visual image is a teaching tool that has worked to convey information or train the eye and the mind in the ways of seeing, researching, organizing, and acting in the world” (6). Following their lead, I am interested in the way images as representations – in the sense Stuart Hall understood this term – are conceived, produced, interpreted, circulated, and recycled. The scholarly field of Victorian visualities has yielded numerous and important contributions in the last forty years. The production, interpretation and circulation of images have especially been studied in great detail by Jonathan Crary, Kate Flint, Renate Brosch and other eminent academics. The point of view used in the conception of images has received less attention, yet it seems to be of paramount importance to study what pictures do to us as spectators, not in terms of affect or understanding, but quite pragmatically, where they position the beholder in relation to the represented object. From what distance and from what angle would the object have to be seen to match the illusionistic representation? In art, this is called perspective, and since the Renaissance, linear perspective has been used in the Western world to provide the illusion of depth on a two-dimensional surface. However, the hegemony of the front-view linear perspective started to crumble in the nineteenth century. Things did not necessarily have to be seen at eye level, from a distance. Objects could now be seen from above, or in close-up, or from inside. These new perspectives affected as much as they were the result of, changing relations between the human subject and the outside world. By borrowing the words of Georges Didi-Huberman, I propose that the point of view be “thought both as an object and as a method, as a syntagma and as a paradigm, as a characteristic of works of art and as an issue of knowledge that claims to say something about it” (10). The point of view conditions the collective illusion of seeing together (sharing the viewpoint), thus to embrace with a common

look an object seen from a certain angle and which becomes significant because it testifies to the rallying of twin spirits.

W.J.T. Mitchell pointed out that etymologically the word “idea” comes from the Greek verb “to see” and is therefore “bound up with the notion of imagery” (5). In fact, one can only represent what is already in one’s mind and what one wishes to make physically present, precisely because of its absence. What is seen through our eyes or in our minds has previously been envisaged, and vision is satisfied in the matching of perception and anticipation. The objects then seem in their right place and can be made sense of, as they appear to belong in a “natural order”. However, we tend to ignore the fact that our “horizon of expectation” is culturally constructed, and that social conditioning acts powerfully in determining what we see and how we see it. In 1986, W.J.T. Mitchell postulated that theories about pictures cannot be separated from larger semiotic theories because images are signs and their history is therefore constituent of the history of knowledge, of science and of power structures. This point was later taken up by Gordon Fyfe and John Law, who argued that invisible and culturally construed and absorbed images condition the ways we perceive the world around us, because “a depiction is never just an illustration. It is the *material representation*, the apparently *stabilised product of a process of work*” (1).

To represent is thus to put forward a singular way of imagining the world, through the material production of an image. This image will necessarily depend on a particular point of view that the researcher must strive to share for the need of analysis, while preserving the necessary scientific distance.

The appearance of the represented object gives us information on the position, distant or close, frontal or lateral, at eye level, from a high or a low angle, or from within, which the author has adopted vis-à-vis his or her material. The work of adopting the point of view of an artist who is distant in space and time allows us to absorb his verbal and visual rhetoric, which necessarily reveals his or her perspective, in the double sense of the word. Any perspective, even the one that claims objectivity, is necessarily subjective, and subjectivities are exciting because they are the ones that best inform us about the spirit of an epoch. To grasp the angle in which the object of a poem, of a painting, or of an essay is envisaged allows the scholar in return to deduce the relation that the observer or the author develops with his or her subject.

This article postulates that a viewpoint is culturally constructed, that it is the fruit of the practices, habits, technical and optical innovations of an epoch that normalize it and eventually impose it as a common vision for a time. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall, drawing on seminal research by Norman Bryson and Richard Rorty, have described the “reflectionist attitude, in which the image is considered to act as a transparent ‘relay’ to a singular originary presence which is imagined to lie behind it” (12), an attitude that implicates a singular position in space. This article will argue that in the nineteenth century three federating points of view, implying three different postures vis-à-vis the observed and represented objects – the surplombing, lateral, and inner standing points - succeeded each other without completely cancelling the previous one(s).

1. Distant view

The “view from afar” can be vertical (bird’s eye view) or horizontal (panoramic). In both cases, the illusion of ocular distance enables the beholder to take a mental distance from the object represented, that is to operate a “distanciation” which helps to view a larger picture than what is possible in the ordinary experience of reality.

The distant overview was a privilege that up until the invention of the balloon was reserved to celestial and divine beings, and to a handful of mountain-climbers. The yearning for exhaustivity, for the control of all existing things and phenomena, had animated the European encyclopedists. In 1784, the Montgolfier brothers made the eighteenth-century dream of an all-encompassing vision come true. In return, this vision, once experienced, allowed the acceptance and development of more elaborate maps, first geographical (as early as 1801), then thematic, as well as “cartographic thought”, manifest through the censuses (the first one also took place in 1801). The same yearning to see all is also explicit in Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, which he devised between 1788 and 1793 with the help of his brother Samuel and the architect Willey Reveley in order to watch and control prisoners¹. It also permeated literature in the form of the omniscient narrator, or the neutral voice of the editor of scientific treatises that seems to come from an ectoplasm flying over the world. In all these examples, the extensive scope of vision meant power. The overview created a situation of domination in which the thing or

the person observed was submitted to the observer's gaze without the possibility to gaze back.

Henry Mayhew, the well-known author of *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851), had an immersive experience of the capital's working class and underclass, which necessitated an internal focalisation while he was assembling his material, but from which he departed when he produced his report. Indeed, the subtitle of the volume, as well as the first sentence in the preface make it clear that the author's ambition was to offer "a cyclopædia of the industry, the want, and the vice of the great Metropolis" (1 : iii). The eighteenth-century ideal of exhaustive grasp on reality is contained in the word "cyclopedia", as is the visual means through which this control is to be effected – evoking as it does the giant one-eyed cyclopes of ancient mythologies. However, the journalist yearned to see things from above not only theoretically, but physically as well, and he had this exhilarating experience when he flew in a balloon for the first time in 1852. He related his feelings in an article for the *Illustrated London News* which stresses how for him the vision of the mind and that of the body were similarly trained to various and intertwined points of view, and why the bird's eye view held the promise of total understanding and absolute power.

I had seen the world of London below the surface, as it were, and I had *a craving to contemplate it far above it* – to behold the immense mass of vice and avarice and cunning, of noble aspirations and humble heroism, blent into *one black spot*; to take, as it were, an angel's view of that huge city [...] to *look down upon* the strange, incongruous clump of palaces and workhouses, of factory chimneys and church steeples, of banks and prisons, of docks and hospitals, of parks and squares, of courts and alleys – to *look down upon these as the birds* of the air look down upon them, and see the whole dwindle into a heap of rubbish on the green sward, a human ant-hill. [...] *To see, to think, and to feel* thus was [...] that led me to peril my bones in the car of a balloon. ('In the clouds' 224)

By describing the accumulation of human misery as one black spot, Mayhew anticipated the cartographer's conventional practice of representing density by dark patches of various sizes. It was first used by John Snow during the cholera epidemic of 1854. Increasingly sophisticated maps were produced in the nineteenth-century, and they brought about as well as they testified to, a generalisation of the overview stance. They permitted a new visual literacy that encouraged an imaginary, decentered vision and created

links between two visual points of view – the terrestrial and mundane level of the pedestrian, and the mental and schematic overview. As Sara Thornton explained « the panoptic aerial view of the mapmaker [...] renders the city legible and comprehensible » (305). It gives to the viewer scopic control of his or her surroundings, and reifies the contemplated object. Such mastery through the power of vision was also applied to panoramic front views.

The distant “front-view” informs the popular panorama shows of the Victorian stage as well as the collection of objects placed side by side in a museum or an art gallery, in order to perceive their common features. These assemblages deliver a message of power and order, as the six million visitors of the Great Exhibition of 1851 could see. The gathering of specimens of all sorts constituted a sort of repository of information which the visitors consumed visually, and memorised as data. This internalised organisation of things could then be instrumental for a fuller comprehension of the real world, especially through the process of analogy. The spectacular expansion of the British Museum and the Royal Academy of Arts throughout the century and their increasing attendance gave the frontal view a new meaning: hindsight allowed one to embrace with one’s eyes an immense amount of works and objects presented in series, at the same time as the context in which they appeared. The two modes of distant vision, be it overhanging or frontal, allow the eye to embrace a vast “visual field”, and the mind to organize the world, to re-present it. The democratisation of this all-embracing gaze yielded a unified response in the ordering of things through what the historian Tony Bennett calls the exhibitionary complex:

The exhibitionary complex was [...] a response to the *problem of order* [...]. As such, its constituent institutions *reversed the orientations* of the disciplinary apparatuses in *seeking to render the forces and principles of order visible* to the populace – transformed, here, into a people, a citizenry – rather than vice versa. They sought *not to map the social body* in order to know the populace by rendering it visible to power. Instead, through the provision of object lessons in power – the *power to command and arrange things* and bodies for public display – they sought to allow the people en masse rather than individually, to know rather than be known, to become the subjects rather than the objects of knowledge. Yet, ideally, they sought also to allow the people to know and thence to regulate themselves; to become, *in seeing themselves from the side* of power, both the subjects and the objects of knowledge. (“The Exhibitionary Complex” 76)

The panoramic vision therefore exercised a similar regulation function to that of the distant overview. Close vision allowed to observe in detail how the elements come together, and it also served the purpose of organisation and regulation. Jonathan Crary identified the first shift as manifest in the years 1820-1830².

2. *Close encounters*

Close vision gives a different access to the previously invisible. It was made possible by optical instruments such as the magnifying glass or the microscope which enabled an examination from above of the minute details of any specimen. Close lateral vision was also encouraged by the laboratory practice of cross-section and the use of transparent test tubes which allow scientists to see the constituent parts of any element and to deduce its internal structure.

This close lateral vision was commonly used in the natural sciences, especially geology (thanks to the geological models of Thomas Sopwith), mineralogy, and biology. The lateral vision of a core sample allowed early Victorian geologists to deduce general laws from a fragment and to draw geological plans (sometimes erroneous). It is this static representation that brought to light the invisible layering of strata in the earth, and which then acquired a power to rationalise analogically many different situations of stratification. It legitimized stratification as a meta-scheme for structuring the visible and invisible world. Figures abounded in the nineteenth century that presented, in the form of a stratified structure, the most diverse things, including animals and humans, and they contributed to naturalizing the concept. They tended to rely on cross-sections to visually represent invisible hierarchical organisations. The geological paradigm offered an alternative to the previous aeronautic overview, without superseding it totally. It made the concept of evolutionism visible and previsible by schematising genealogical and archeological layers of things, animals or people vertically, with the oldest, most primitive, most humble form at the bottom, and the most accomplished contemporary specimen on top. As Tony Bennett summarized, around the mid-nineteenth century, “the organisation of the gaze [...] is archeological: seeing is a matter of seeing how, in the succession of ideas which typological arrangements make visible, the inheritance of the past continues to exist *as a layer* within the

make-up of each step in evolutionary development” (*Pasts* 271). These visualities became so widely understood that they soon permeated non-scientific illustrations and served to naturalise a discourse about Western – and more specifically British – bourgeois male supremacy. Stratification as an ordering method became naturalized because it provided a convenient rationale usable in many different fields, including sociology, anthropology, and psychology, which legitimated one another’s methodology. For instance, in a letter of 1896 to one his friends, Sigmund Freud wrote: “I am working on the assumption that our psychological mechanism has come into being by a *process of stratification*: the material present in the form of memory traces being subjected from time to time to a *rearrangement*” (207). To Freud as to the vast majority of his contemporaries, the geological principle of stratification appeared so natural that it was taken for granted. The aims and origins of such an organisation when it was recycled and used in other domains than geology or archeology were rarely questioned. This geological vision, prone to imagine underlying strata of previous states of things, or previous lives, also imagined deeper meanings in art and literature. In that view, the surface became deceptive as the scholar needed to dig for the invisible, metaphorical significations of the work, or its “typological symbolism” to borrow Geoge Landow’s expression.

According to Foucault, the nineteenth century constituted a new order of knowledge (together with a new way of seeing), passing from one type of knowledge deployed on the surface of representative space, to another, which, on the contrary, is hollowed inwards, according to a dimension no longer horizontal but vertical:

The space of Western knowledge is now about to topple: the taxinomia, whose great, universal expanse extended in correlation with the possibility of a mathesis, and which constituted the down-beat of knowledge – at once its primary possibility and the end of its perfection – is now about to order itself in accordance with *an obscure verticality*: a verticality that is to define the law of resemblances, prescribe all adjacencies and discontinuities, provide the foundation labour, life, language for perceptible arrangements, and displace all the great horizontal deployments of the taxinomia towards the somewhat accessory region of consequences. (*The Order of Things* 273-274).

What Foucault is describing is a shift from the horizontal, cartographic perspective to the vertical, geologic one. Technological advances, of course, played a vital role, displacing the point of view to where was no

longer just a matter of everyday, ordinary, real-life experience based on the external appearance of things. By the mid-nineteenth century, at least by imagination, the bird's-eye view allowed by the invention of the dirigible balloon, the infinitely close perception to which the microscope gave access, not to mention the "through" vision permitted by the democratization of glass, became accessible to the vast majority of Victorians. In addition, the profusion of the iconographic material, made possible by the multiplication of publishing houses and the improvement of the processes of reproduction of images, allowed an education of the gaze. Looking at the city plans on the new maps that the Ordnance Survey had been constantly promoting, one could imagine gliding in the air, like an aeronaut flying over the landscape. The transparency of the test tubes and the side-cut illustrations made it possible to imagine stratifications invisible to the naked eye but nevertheless real, and to project oneself in the role of a geologist physicist, and to discover invisible strata beneath the surface of things. As Foucault explains,

Thus, European culture is inventing for itself a depth in which what matters is no longer identities, distinctive characters, permanent tables with all their possible paths and routes, but *great hidden forces* developed on the basis of their primitive and inaccessible nucleus, origin, causality, and history. From now on things will be represented only from the depths of this density withdrawn into itself, perhaps blurred and darkened by its obscurity, but bound tightly to themselves, assembled or divided, inescapably grouped by the vigour that is hidden down below, in those depths. (*The Order of Things* 273-274)

In this excerpt, Foucault suggests the second shift affecting the point of view, the one from beside to inside "the depths" of the matter, and concerned with assemblage, division, and "vigour", that is energy. This new concern was the principle which guided late-Victorian mental blueprints and served to organise one's knowledge and locate oneself in an increasingly complex world, and it took into account movement and change. As Jonathan Crary has convincingly demonstrated, the observing subject is "both the historical product and the site of certain practices, techniques, institutions, and procedures of subjectification" (*Techniques* 5). The inward move of the standpoint of the observer corresponds to the development of new subjectivities, attentive to the inner mechanics of structures. The late Victorian period was increasingly democratic (and led to the passing of the Reform Act of 1884) and its population was

better educated. This educational boom was perceptible in elementary education with the Forster Act of 1870, but it had affected adult education since the 1850s with the rapid growth of Mechanics' Institutes throughout the country. This newly gained and better-informed power to take part in the apparatus of the state, even at a minor level, developed simultaneously with the inward shift in point of view, and with a greater acceptance of technical rather than artistic models to visualise natural or man-made objects.

3. *The inner mechanics*

The industrial and technical schematics offering views in bevelled or broken sections gave access to the operation of the machines, the movements of their cogs, the circulation of their fluids and propelled, so to speak, the observer into the shoes of an engineer³. This is suggested by Foucault when he mentions a new attention to the connectedness of things:

Visible forms, their connections, the blank spaces that isolate them and surround their outlines – all these will now be presented to our gaze only in an already composed state, already articulated in that nether darkness that is fomenting them with time. (*The Order of Things* 273-274)

The “broken down” view in a “through” perspective, representing the object in its three dimensionalities, shows the relationships between the various constituent parts of the object, it allows to grasp the complexity of a system. This functional approach to representation is the common practice of industrial designers. There was in the second half of the nineteenth century a veritable campaign of drawing literacy that supported industrial design, because it “materially assists the understanding of machinery, not only by illustrations, but by *teaching the mind to separate the parts of a whole and to note their relation*” (*Spectator* 29, 1856, 1080). This more schematic representation is also more dynamic and reflects the modernity of its approach with an emphasis on circulation, movement and exchanges. Moving away from the external appearance of things, or even from their internal composition, it provides an understanding of how things work, highlighting points of contact, intersections, and

flows. Visually it inspired the plans of the great works undertaken in the capitals, in Paris by Baron Georges Haussman and in London by Joseph Bazalgette, two visionaries who, according to Sara Thornton, not only changed the appearance of their respective cities but also gave them a new meaning, and thus served as models for novelists such as Charles Dickens. The schematic vision immediately makes comprehensible the coexistence and interdependence between the visible surface, with its river, rail, street and pavement networks, and the invisible below, with its sewer system and subway tunnels. This pattern, which attaches itself to active networks, serves as a paradigm, it models thought, and contributes to a new, more organic/mechanic interpretation of the living world, of history, and to the evolutionary thinking that is taken in the “vision of the flow”. It also served a Liberal discourse at a time when social mobility became increasingly possible and desirable. The interconnectedness of fields of knowledge was made possible by their apparently similar inner structure as Edward Tylor, who is credited for the invention of cultural anthropology, wrote in 1871: “culture, or civilization, taken in its broad, ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor I:1). This complex whole is a conceptual construct that uses the visual paradigm of the assembly diagram, which itself is an abstract representation. It no longer bears any resemblance to the object it schematises but instead makes intelligible the networks and assemblage within a physical or immaterial object. What we need to bear in mind is that the arrangement of knowledge is culturally constructed, and that it mirrors the a priori of a certain socio-cultural group. By seeking to observe the movement of ideas from one discipline to another, we carry our stance from one object to another, using the same perspective, the same understanding process. This point of view becomes for a time predominant and enables interpersonal exchanges, which contribute to the hegemony of this specific stance. “By the mid-nineteenth century, the chief source of variability had shifted inward, to the multiple subjective viewpoints that shattered a single object into a kaleidoscope of images” write Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison in *Objectivity*, their stimulating book on the history of a scientific ideal (113). The inward shift noted by these authors affected the Victorians globally, changing their gazes with their stance vis-à-vis the object of their observations.

Conclusion

The three different points of view which I have summarized as those of the aeronaut, the geologist and the engineer manifested themselves in various fields of human experience: Gillian Beer identified them in the scientific thought of Charles Darwin, Michel de Certeau noticed them in the historical narrative⁴ and in popular culture⁵, Sara Thornton traced them in literary works. Paradoxically, by striving to attain a mythical scientific objectivity that would bring them closer to the Truth, rid of the trappings that appeared henceforth to be subjective prejudices, new points of view, themselves in solidarity with new subjectivities, were trapped. During the “long” nineteenth century, the point of view underwent changes that testify to different ways in which people thought of the world, and engaged with it. In *Les Mots et les choses*, Michel Foucault defined these necessary preconceptions with the concept of epistemes, which designates the consensual bulk of a priori necessary for the constitution of a certain knowledge, which, in setting their guidelines, anticipate the explanation of what they form.

Modifying the “historical a priori” leads to a replacement or adjustment of assumptions and methods of previous research, and produces a new “structural invariant” of knowledge. In *Les Mots et les choses*, Foucault identified this shift in the nineteenth century as the transition from horizontality to verticality. It seems to me that he was describing a vision of the mind that I relate to the visual experience of the gaze, affected as both are by the change in point of view. In 1977, Foucault included a second paradigm shift, which was accompanied by a new change in perspective, no longer outside (looking at objects horizontally or vertically) but inside, concerned with the mechanics of producing thought. The scientific theories developed during the nineteenth century, and in particular evolutionism, played an important role in displacing the point of view because, by renouncing to place man at the centre of the universe, science led the human being to adapt his point of view, and the artist to try to conceive things from new angles. As Gillian Beer summed up,

Darwin drew upon the *imaginative orderings* and the narrative formulations of his contemporaries. One particular current intellectual ideal of nineteenth-century European culture intensified the impact of scientific theory as well as affecting its terms; the ideal of *synthesis*, a *panoptic scope* which sought similarities between

remote disciplines [...] and which analysed such similarities *morphologically*, as in general systems study today. Another such ideal was that of *relations*, implicit in *organicism*, which in prose allowed the rapid *transformation* of one kind of reference into another – economics into art history into race-theory, say – the kind of organization which made for energy and obscurity in Carlyle and Ruskin [...] Carlyle, indeed, wrote that Ruskin ‘twisted [...] geology into morality, theology, Egyptian mythology [and] political economy’. (41)

When Gillian Beer describes two Victorian ideals, one of panoptic synthesis, the other of organic relationships, she describes two ways of looking at the order of the world that I have described above in parts 1 and 2. These visions of the mind are, it seems to me, conditioned by the point of view adopted, “flying over” in the first case, immersed in the heart of matter in the second. Between these two points of view, the “plane” vision and the “bevelled” or “shattered” vision, a transition was made by the “vertical” vision, which could be the one Beer had in mind when she referred to geology, and which Foucault identified as the one interested in internal morphology. This intermediary point of view ignores the surface of things, and rather digs deep for underlying strata. It seems to me that these three points of view shaped the discoveries of the nineteenth century.

These three perspectives, were basically successive in order of mainstreamness, but each new one also had to coexist with the previous one or two, so that by the end of the century we find illustrations of these three ways of looking at the world, which also depend on three patterns in the sense that Michael Arbib and Mary Hesse understand this term – ie. projections of the mind⁶. We are all the heirs of the past, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century ways of seeing still inform our understanding of the world, and this is why the analysis of any “text” can be static, and focus on displaying its location in History (of art, literature, ideas), or unmask its underlying meanings (using a structuralist approach). Finally, it can be dynamic and study its (de)formation within a network in perpetual motion. With their shifts in points of view, the Victorians adapted their understanding and experience of the world from the metaphysical to the empirical and the conceptual. As natural sciences and technology evolved tremendously throughout the nineteenth century, so did ways of knowing, and of describing and transcribing this knowledge. Overall, the inward shift followed at the same time as it generated the ways in which human subjects looked at themselves, as images of God (since God created Man

in his own image) overhanging infinite panoramas, as children of Nature at ground level intent on discovering the geological secrets of their universal mother, or as cogs located in a gigantic mechanism of many networks. This position conditions three vantage points, above, beside, or inside the object of study that are still the ones that we use today.



- 1 This has been studied by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975).
- 2 «The camera obscura model of vision... collapsed in the early nineteenth century – in the 1820s and 1830s – when it was displaced by radically different notions of what an observer was and of what constituted vision»; Jonathan Crary, «Modernizing Vision», Hal Foster (ed.), *Vision and Visuality*, Dia Art Foundation, n° 2, Seattle: Bay Press, 1988, 29-44, 30. In *Techniques of the Observer*, Crary develops this idea and shows how this new subjective vision contributed to the advent of Modernism.
- 3 The shattered illustration was invented during the Renaissance and Leonardo da Vinci used it frequently. It proliferated in Victorian periodicals, illustrating the power of non-verbal thought as Eugene Ferguson has brilliantly demonstrated. Eugene Ferguson, *Engineering and the mind's eye*, Cambridge, Mass. & London: MIT Press, 1992.
- 4 Michel de Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire*, Paris : Gallimard, 2002.
- 5 Michel de Certeau, *L'Invention du quotidien*, tome 1: « Arts de faire » [1984], Paris : Gallimard, 1990.
- 6 Arbib & Hesse, « A mental model can be seen as consisting of a network of entities called schemas», 2.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Anderson, Nancy and Michael Dietrich (eds). *The Educated Eye: Visual Culture and Pedagogy in the Life Sciences*. Lebanon, NH: Dartmouth College Press, 2012.
- Arbib, Michael A. and Mary B. Hesse. *The Construction of Reality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- Bennett, Tony. "The Exhibitionary Complex." *New Formations* 4 (Spring, 1988): 73-102.
- Bennett, Tony. *Pasts Beyond Memory: Evolution, Museums, Colonialism*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Beer, Gillian. *Darwin's Plots* (1993). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Brosch, Renate, and Rebecca Pohl, eds. *Victorian Visual Culture*. Heidelberg, Germany: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008.
- Bryson, Norman. "The natural attitude". In *Visual Culture : a reader*. Eds Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall. London : Sage, 1999
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980). Translated by Steven F. Rendall. 3rd ed. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2022.
- Certeau, Michel de. *The Writing of History* (1975). Translated by Tom Conley. New York : Columbia University Press, 1992.
- Crary, Jonathan. "Modernizing Vision". In *Vision and Visuality*. Ed. Hal Foster. Dia Art Foundation n° 2, Seattle: Bay Press, 1988, 29-44.
- Crary, Jonathan. *Techniques of the Observer. On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992.
- Datson, Lorraine and Peter Galison. *Objectivity* (2007). New York: Zone Books, 2010.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. « Préface. » In *Aby Warburg et l'image en mouvement*. Ed. Philippe-Alain Michaud. Paris: Macula, 1998.
- Evans, Jessica and Stuart Hall. *Visual Culture: a reader*. London: Sage, 1999.
- Ferguson, Eugene. *Engineering and the mind's eye*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1992.
- Flint, Kate. *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Fontaine, David. *La Poétique. Introduction à la théorie générale des formes littéraires*. Paris : Nathan, 1993.

- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things* (1966). Trans. Tavistock/Routledge. London & New York: Routledge Classics, 2002.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, (1975). Trans. Alan Sheridan, London: Allen Lane, 1977.
- Freud, Sigmund. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887-1904*. Ed. Jeffrey Masson. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Fyfe, Gordon and John Law. "Editors' Introduction: On the Invisibility of the Visual". In *Picturing Power: Visual Depiction and Social Relations*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Kuhn, Thomas. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.
- Landow, George. *William Holman Hunt and Typological Symbolism*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Levi-Strauss, Claude. *Structural Anthropology* (1958). Trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf. New York: Basic Books, 1963.
- Mayhew, Henry. *London Labour and the London Poor; a cyclopaedia of the condition and earnings of those that will work, those that cannot work, and those that will not work*. London: Office 16, Upper Wellington Street, Strand, 1851.
- Mayhew, Henry. "'In the Clouds' or, Some Account of a Balloon Trip with Mr. Green." *The Illustrated London News*, 18 September 1852.
- Méchoulan, Eric. *Pour une histoire esthétique de la littérature*. Paris: PUF, 2004.
- Mitchell, W.J.T. *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Pickstone, John. *Ways of Knowing: A New History of Science, Technology, and Medicine*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press and Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- Rorty, Richard. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979.
- Scott, David. "Visual Culture: Minding the Gap." *On Verbal/Visual Representation, Word and Image Interactions* 4. Eds Michèle Hannoosh et al. Amsterdam & New York: Rodopi, 2005, 251-256.
- Thornton, Sara. "Paris and London superimposed: urban seeing and new political space in Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities*." *Études anglaises* 65 (2012/3). 302-314.
- Tylor, Edward. *Primitive Culture*. 2 vols. New York: J.P. Putman's Sons, 1871.

Missionaries, Literature, and Censorship in South Africa. Early Twentieth-Century Cultural Dynamics

Giuliana Iannaccaro

Università degli Studi di Milano

Since the late 1990s, after the demise of apartheid, literary criticism concerning South African textual production has mainly focused on contemporary issues, with the question of apartheid censorship at the forefront. Black and white writers under the National Party underwent pre- and post-publication censorship from 1954 (with the first Commission of Inquiry against “Undesirable Publications”) to the Publications and Entertainments Acts of 1963 and 1974. As Christopher Merret pointed out as early as 1994, it is crucial to consider “the multiplicity of means by which individuals were censored by the state: naming, listing, banning, banishment, restriction, detention, torture, murder, house arrest, deportation, political trials and general harassment. Similarly, organizations were declared unlawful, restricted and affected; put on effective trial; or subjected to violence, through arson, bombing and burglary” (*A Culture of Censorship* 203).¹ In the case of printed texts, all subjects involved in their production, publication, and diffusion were potentially exposed to bans and restrictions, from authors to editors, printers, publishers, librarians, and booksellers. Less overt means of repression, like surveillance and intimidation, often preceded coercive measures when the writer was white, as in the well-known case of André Brink.²

It would be beyond the scope of this article to do justice to the considerable body of scholarship that has tackled the issue of textual control and punitive regulations in apartheid South Africa. Peter McDonald’s

authoritative *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences* (2009) has been preceded and followed by in-depth research on the same topic. To give a couple of examples – besides the above-quoted *A Culture of Censorship. Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa* by Christopher Merret (1994) – we can mention Margreet De Lang's *The Muzzled Muse. Literature and Censorship in South Africa* (1997) and the much more recent *Real and Imagined Readers: Censorship, Publishing and Reading Under Apartheid* by Rachel Matteau Matsha, issued in 2018.

Relatively less attention has been paid to the pre-apartheid period, although the first decades of the twentieth century are crucial to grasp the meaning and relevance of what happened in the near future. All the same, histories of South Africa's textuality (of printing, of book and reading cultures) have recently proliferated: those studies go back to the beginning of the twentieth century and even to the end of the nineteenth; accordingly, they form part of the background of the present research.³

With no pretence of exhaustiveness, this article proposes to discuss some aspects of the South African early twentieth-century literary and political context by investigating the cultural dynamics at play in well-known missionary institutions present on the territory. In South Africa, like elsewhere, the white man's culture spread all over the country by means of the myriad mission schools set up by European and North American religious denominations throughout the nineteenth century. Since the task of instructing the blacks rested firmly in the hands of the missionaries for about a century and a half (from the first decades of the nineteenth century to the National Party's 1953 Bantu Education Act),⁴ their monopoly of the written word must be taken into account when discussing their educational commitment: a decision-making power over what could be read and written that often resulted in more and less overt forms of censorship. At the same time, I also contend that the relationship between missionaries, state power, and black South African writers was much more ambivalent than one may think; for this reason, polarising the dynamics at play in the country's social and political contexts would be of little help in the attempt to investigate a still recent and significant past. Far from assuming unequivocal roles in the colonised territories – either as harbingers of true religion and progress or as unscrupulous supporters of political power – missionaries mostly acted as mediators between black communities and local or national political agents. Accordingly, the outcomes of their actions are not easily classifiable as 'positive' or 'negative' for the people

entrusted to their care. Once admitted that tutelage and control, guidance and imposition, enrichment and deprivation inevitably go together when the relationship between two bodies is based on social and economic inequality, it is less difficult to envisage the complex, contradictory, and often painful relationship that established itself between missionaries and converts. The former felt entitled to change the ‘soul’ of other people through education; the latter, for their part, submitted to the project of being culturally destroyed to be made ‘new’.

This article confines itself to two case studies. The first concerns the Scottish Lovedale Institution because, by the early twentieth century, it had become the most important printing site in South Africa; holding the means of literary production, missionaries often acted as pre-publication censors, but their ‘censorious’ attitude should not be asserted without evidence, as we shall see. The second case study is Mariannhill, a Roman Catholic mission station that offers another example of the ambivalent dynamics at play in missionary educational contexts. No doubt, ethnocentric world views were everywhere the rule. Yet, as the twentieth century progressed, missionaries could be sharply criticised by their former ‘pupils’, namely African journalists and politicians; at the same time, they could be harassed by the white government for alleged subversive activities and for taking too openly the side of the ‘natives’.

Except for a few pioneer individuals, the first missionary societies reached present-day South Africa between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth; from the Cape region, where European ships landed, they spread northwards and eastwards, covering, in due time, the whole territory. Some of the most prominent Christian denominations include the Moravians, who opened a station as early as 1737 at the Cape, where they clashed with the dominant Dutch Reformed Church; the London Missionary Society, which arrived at the Cape in 1799 after the first British occupation of the region in 1795; the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society and the Presbyterian Glasgow Missionary Society, which founded their first stations between the 1820s and the 1830s – the former in the arid regions of Namaqualand and the newly-formed colonial District of Albany, the latter not far from present-day King William’s Town (Lovedale Mission Station).⁵ As anticipated above, we will also consider the Roman Catholic Mariannhill mission, founded by Trappist monks near present-day Durban, even though it was established much later, in 1882. Indeed, Lovedale’s and Mariannhill’s cultural policies are the focus of the present discussion.

Despite belonging to rival denominations, they shared the ethnocentric ideology at the basis of missionary proselytism, had faith in the moralising effect of ‘good’ (i.e., European) literature on the native mind and soul, were prestigious printing sites, and believed in the advantages of providing bookish as well as agricultural/industrial training to their pupils.

As is well known, converting people to Christianity went hand in hand with educating and instructing them. In his detailed history of the Lovedale mission station from 1824 to 1955, Principal Robert Shepherd⁶ reports that Lovedale committed itself from the very beginning to promote both sides of the blacks’ instruction: primary and higher literary education – the latter to ensure that “promising Africans could be trained as teachers and catechists” – and, in accordance with British Governors, industrial training, through which “African men should, under properly qualified masters, be trained to the exercise of some of the more useful mechanical arts” (*Lovedale South Africa* 10, 23). Bringing the African populations to strive after the values of the Western world made sense not only to the missionaries, who saw the future of the blacks as slow and painstaking progress towards assimilation into the white community, but also to nineteenth-century British governors, who understood that education and the manual/technical training of young folks were the best policies to bring the hostile African tribes under control. Sir George Gray, appointed in 1854 as Governor of the Cape, insisted that the education of Africans should not be too bookish and that forms of public employment were essential to instruct the ‘natives’ and keep them safe from the evils of their traditional way of life: savagery, superstition, ignorance, and idleness (see Shepherd, *Lovedale South Africa* 22). Yet, the widespread appreciation and encouragement of missionary work on the part of the British political power would change significantly at the turn of the century.

After the discovery of diamonds and gold in the interior (Orange Free State and Transvaal) and the constitution of the Union of South Africa (1910) in the wake of the South African war, the whites’ territorial colonisation could be considered complete. What was then strongly needed was a cheap labour force to work in the mining industry and agriculture; if the moralising action of the missionaries was still considered indispensable, the question of African literacy and training became more and more an obstacle rather than an asset. Moreover, generations of mission-educated African intellectuals were entering the cultural and political field: if Shepherd of Lovedale could still support the idea of a progressive upliftment of black South Africans

through instruction in the 1940s (“No individual and no nation will reach their highest development without a thoughtful and reverent love for good literature,” *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu* 26), white politicians, entrepreneurs and farmers found it much more profitable to take advantage from a low-cost and apparently inexhaustible workforce than to spend money on native education, which could encourage the growth of a ‘hot-headed’ generation of political opponents to boot. Consequently, the missionaries faced financial difficulties throughout the first half of the twentieth century due to progressively decreasing governmental funding.

Lovedale mission station was the most relevant establishment for the development of black literature in the Eastern Cape, not only because of an educational activity begun as soon as 1838 but also in consideration of its being a printing site. The Glasgow Missionary society had sent its first agents to South Africa in 1821; as early as 1823, Reverend John Ross arrived at the Cape bringing with him

[...] a small Ruthven printing press, with a quantity of type, paper and ink. These the missionaries put on a wagon and travelled with it overland from Cape Town to Chumie, a journey of a thousand miles [...] Arriving at Chumie on 16th December, the press was got in order on the 17th; on the 18th the alphabet was set up; on the 19th fifty copies were thrown off; and on the 20th Bennie recorded that a new era had commenced in the history of the Bantu people. He spoke even more truly than he knew. (Shepherd, *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu* 3)⁷

In the following decades, Lovedale expanded and diversified its activities, but the diffusion of vernacular texts became its prerogative.⁸ Lovedale press issued both ‘literature for the Bantu’ in their languages and works written by ‘natives’, either in the vernacular or in English; thus, the institution granted a vehicle for South African black authors to publish their work. Between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, Lovedale’s press developed along with the mission school, which provided for the education of Africans of both sexes and included white, coloured, and Indian students and teachers.⁹ The cultural dynamics that originated from such a picture were complex and, in a way, inherently contradictory: on the one hand, the missionaries cared for the blacks’ education and, paradoxically, in the long run gave them the cultural weapons to react against European oppression and segregation. On the other hand, they exerted political and cultural patronage and control on writers, often exercising overt and hidden practices of textual authorization.

As early as 1979, Jeffrey Peires investigated the relationship between Xhosa historians and the Lovedale press under the principalship of Robert Shepherd in light of the latter's tendency to reinforce missionary control on publications and set up a sort of "press monopoly" ("The Lovedale Press" 156). Indeed, in *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu* Shepherd proudly stated that there was "a rising tide of education among African peoples" and, consequently, "a growing demand for the right kind of literature" (46). He argued for fewer mission presses in the region, one for "each language area; [...] indeed, more than one area could profitably combine in supporting jointly one press, thus ensuring better results. For example, Morija for the Sotho cluster and Lovedale for the Nguni cluster might be developed sufficiently to undertake all vernacular work [...]" (48). The number of "literary missionaries", though, was too small to meet the task of promoting "literature suited to Bantu needs and to arrange for its adequate distribution" (46), and had to be increased. That missionary institutions should fulfil their educational vocation by choosing, in the first place, the "right kind of literature" for their pupils and young converts is no surprise. Apart from religious instruction, anglophone missionary institutions mainly followed the nineteenth-century British literary syllabus to instill in their students the reverence for a venerable tradition, proposed as the normative model par excellence. As Tim Couzens puts it, "Since the scholars were being 'civilised' and the language of civilisation was English, a knowledge of the 'peaks' of the literature of that language was a distinct status symbol" (*The New African* 51).

Literary instruction and assistance in textual production were considered powerful pedagogical tools (as well as dangerous weapons if mismanaged); consequently, missionaries of all denominations tended to exert strict control on what we would now call the literary market. Shepherd of Lovedale was among the most committed advocates for cultural surveillance: according to Peires, besides recommending the reduction of the number of mission presses to exert better control on native publications, he also "exercised the monopoly of his individual judgment" ("The Lovedale Press" 156):

When he first arrived at Lovedale the press was directed by the Principal, who convened meetings of the Press Committee on an *ad hoc* basis. In 1930 Shepherd became convenor, and in 1936 he staged a mini-coup whereby the Press Committee was relegated to a ceremonial annual meeting and all decisions, including the

approval of manuscripts, passed into the hands of the Press Sub-Committee, which consisted of Shepherd and the two European employees who supervised the bookshop and the mechanical side of the press. (157)

Once a text was rejected by Lovedale, it was unlikely for a black writer to find another press willing to publish it. Manuscripts could be refused for several reasons, which predictably included real or alleged seditious, irreverent, and ideologically unorthodox tenets; therefore, the first and most common form of textual control was pre-publication censorship justified by religious or political reasons. A case in point is the refusal, on the part of the Paris Evangelical mission press at Morija (Lesotho), of Thomas Mofolo's novel *Chaka*, an epic tragedy written in SeSotho on the rise and fall of the eponymous nineteenth-century chief of the Zulus. Apparently, the novel was ready by 1909, but it was rejected by missionaries because in their view it dealt with pre-Christian, pagan times apologetically.¹⁰ As Neil Lazarus points out, though, the enigmatic quality of *Chaka* has puzzled readers since its first appearance:

In 1910, for example, when the *Chaka* manuscript was first submitted to the missionaries who ran the Morija press, for which Mofolo worked, it provoked sharp dissent. Some of these initial readers saw the manuscript as inflammatory and subversive of Christian values, and urged that it not be published. Others disagreed, arguing not only that the manuscript possessed a positive educative content, but also that it said nothing that was not in accord with the mission's teaching. ("The Logic of Equivocation" 41)

Once revised in 1922, *Chaka* was finally published in 1925; in 1931 it was translated into English and in 1940 into French, before appearing in many other languages (see Sandwith, "History by Paratext" 472).

Another better-known but more puzzling example is Solomon Tshekiso Plaatje's *Mhudi*, a mythical-historical novel written in English around 1920; the manuscript was submitted to British and North American publishers in the following years and was finally issued by Lovedale Press in 1930. Plaatje, like Mofolo, was mission-educated: he belonged to a Christianised Tswana family who, about the time he was born, had moved to Pniel, a mission station not far from Kimberly held by the Lutheran Berlin Missionary Society. There, the young boy received his elementary teaching and improved his education; at the turn of the century, he left the mission and began his remarkable literary and political activity. Among his many cultural

achievements, *Mhudi* stands out as the first South African novel written in English by a black writer. As anticipated, the novel's editorial history is rather intricate and has been the object of a distinguished body of scholarship in less and more recent years, starting from the late 1970s. Stimulated by the import of a book that challenged Eurocentric narrations of the African past in a very early stage of black literary achievements, scholars tended to see in the belated publication of *Mhudi* and in the alterations made to its typescript a clear example of missionary censorship. Couzens and Gray's "Printers' and Other Devils" (1978) opened the way to a number of contributions that left the charges against Lovedale press – and against Robert Shepherd in particular, who at the time was convenor of the publications committee – ultimately unchallenged. Brian Willan's article "What 'Other Devils'?" (2015), instead, invites caution when evoking the spectre of censorship: through a philological investigation of Plaatje's typescript and its careful comparison with the text published by the missionaries, he rejects the mainstream argument for ideological control and subversion of authorial intention. In Willan's words: "I revisit the evidence and the assumptions underlying these arguments and conclude that there is nothing to suggest that changes made to the text were not entirely at the author's volition, and that Plaatje's role and agency as author, and that of the Lovedale Press as publisher, have been seriously misrepresented" (1331).¹¹

I have drawn on the controversial example of *Mhudi* to make a point I consider of primary importance: it is undeniable that missionary institutions, which owned and controlled the means of publication in early twentieth-century South Africa, exerted forms of pre-publication censorship on the blacks' literary production. We shall briefly discuss another case regarding Lovedale presently. Yet, it would be wrong to apply the labels of 'coercion' and 'censorship' to all cultural exchanges between black writers and their mentors. The ultimately undecidable nature of the process through which the novel *Mhudi* saw the light should prompt us to acknowledge the existence of multi-layered situations that sometimes can be clarified thanks to painstaking philological research and lucky discoveries, but sometimes simply cannot – in that case, better not to pass judgment and accept the conjectural nature of any critical interpretation.

The second example concerning Shepherd's evaluation of black writers' literary output regards Herbert Dhlomo (1903-1956), a Zulu journalist, essayist, poet, playwright, and short-story writer who tried to have his historical plays published by Lovedale Press in 1938.¹² He

accordingly submitted them to Shepherd's judgment, who, after due consideration, rejected them. In this case, an exchange of letters between the playwright and the Director of publications allows us to interpret the missionary's refusal with a fair approximation of what his reasons might have been. Dhlomo had written his first play, *The Girl Who Killed to Save*, in 1935: that work had been accepted by Lovedale, and two thousand copies were published the following year (see Couzens, *The New African* 177). Yet, by 1938 only three hundred and thirty-six copies had been sold – not a great number, and certainly lower than expected. In Shepherd's refusal of other plays by Dhlomo the fear of financial loss was possibly decisive, as Couzens suggests; still, in his reply the missionary gave a different reason, which I think is worth considering.

Dhlomo had written to Shepherd on the 16th of April 1938, trying to convince him that there would have been a market for his works because the Bantu Dramatic Society in Johannesburg was in great need of newly published plays.¹³ The Director of publications replied one month later (19 May), stating that “the plays ‘on the whole’ were ‘not up to publication standard’, though they showed ‘considerable talent’” (in Couzens, *The New African* 176-77).¹⁴ Here what comes into play is something different from the usual reasons for rejecting manuscripts, namely actual or alleged seditious tendencies: Shepherd grounded his refusal on formal features, rather than moral principles. There is no doubt that Dhlomo's historical plays were also politically provocative, since they depicted the Zulu tribal past in the light of the miseries of a colonial present that was becoming increasingly racist and segregative. Indeed, it is also possible that, by refusing Dhlomo's manuscripts, Shepherd was censoring the way in which his historical drama patently denounced the white government. One year later, Dhlomo would write a journal article entitled “Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?”, in which he explicitly referred to preventive censorship:

A wisely controlled African dramatic movement would do much to harmonise and humanise race relations in this country. Yet herein lies the difficulty about plays on modern subjects. The conditions obtaining in South Africa may prevent the free play of talent in matters of race relations. There are subjects, upon which it is not possible to write truthfully without being suppressed. (41)

That said, we should not overlook the missionary vetoes derived from a biased evaluation of the ‘form’ of native literature when it was too atypical for Western standards. Dhlomo's scripts are indeed unorthodox literary

texts: they exceed Western literary conventions by transgressing the rules of dramatic composition, character consistency, and the boundaries between different genres and styles, while proposing the blending of diverse literary and oral traditions.¹⁵ In *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu*, Shepherd himself specified: “No MS. is accepted, even though the author is prepared to meet the cost of publication, unless it is found after close scrutiny to have reached a certain standard of excellence” (19). Leon De Kock refers *in primis* to Lovedale when discussing the censorial practices of religious institutions as far as literary form is concerned:

Lovedale in the Eastern Cape, along with other institutions and individual missionaries, not only established a widespread literate order that incorporated institutional surveillance, but in doing this it sought to ‘translate’ indigenous forms of subjectivity into excessively narrow limits determined by Western literary forms of expression. This process relied to a very great extent on the existence and continued refinement of a growing culture of print and on the reification of the Book as a pre-eminent source of both knowledge and human understanding in a normative sense. (“Metonymies of Lead” 55-56)

Indeed, the ways in which missionary institutions could curb and re-orient black literary production were not restricted to keeping a tight rein on immoral or revolutionary pens; even before their censorious ‘duty’ came their educational vocation, which justified their efforts to instruct their converts on how to produce ‘good literature’. It was not a question of erasing native cultures, though: quite a few missionaries were polyglots, accomplished linguists, and translators from several South African languages.¹⁶ It was, rather, their unshakable faith in the intrinsic superiority of their own form of spirituality *and* civilisation that justified the cultural colonisation of other lands and peoples, which meant exerting control over literary consumption and production. At the same time, religious institutions in the first half of the century were the only places in which the cultural life of the African people was taken into consideration and encouraged: to be able to provide ‘proper’ educational and recreational activities, the missionaries ran schools and promoted the creation and development of libraries and white-sponsored public forums, such as social and sporting clubs, debating societies, and theatres.

The last case study I wish to discuss here draws on the more general points made above and regards a different institution, the Mariannahill Catholic missionary station. The uncomfortable and sometimes dangerous

position in which the Principal of St Francis College, Father Bernard Huss, found himself due to his educational activities suggests caution in drawing too sharp a line between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ agents in colonial contexts. Bhekizizwe Peterson introduces Mariannhill’s ideological climate in the following words:

The intellectual ideas operative at Mariannhill were very much in the tradition of the ethnocentric ideologies so prevalent in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the heyday of the British empire. Christianity and imperialism – conflated as constituting ‘civilisation’ – were projected as normative models and the ideal negations of African ‘primitiveness’, ‘paganism’, ‘savagery’ and ‘degenerate morals’, states of being that were signified in the ‘nakedness’ of Africans, their ‘aversion’ to labour and the absence of industrial progress on the continent. (23)

No doubt, missionary societies belonging to different denominations shared, for the most part, the same assumptions regarding their political allegiances and their role among the populations they set about to convert to Christianity. Yet, as is always the case, social, political, and cultural dynamics were neither universal nor immutable. Interestingly, Peterson himself illustrates in his *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals* how roles could be reversed, and even missionaries could feel persecuted by the representatives of that same political power whose authority they recognised and often justified in front of the blacks. The figure we are now interested in is the above-mentioned German missionary Bernard Huss, who served as Principal of St Francis College, Mariannhill, between 1915 and 1927.

Huss was a strong promoter of both theatrical performances as a means to educate the Christian converts¹⁷ and agricultural and industrial training. He was also, as Paul Rich puts it, an “adept publicist” (“Bernard Huss and the Experiment” 298): he wrote journal articles, essays, and several monographs, these last published by Mariannhill Press. His readership was European as well as African: in the fields of economics, agriculture, and rural organisation, Huss tried to involve the mission-educated African intelligentsia in the study and practice of innovative theories and methods. Economic cooperation was his favourite topic of research and instruction; he started promoting cooperative societies in the 1920s through lectures and writings, and “By the mid-1930s [he] had effectively become the most prominent voice speaking out in missionary and reformist circles in favor of cooperatives in South Africa” (Rich, “Bernard Huss and the

Experiment” 306). Huss was a reformist, but not a revolutionary: he opposed African trade unionism and tried, instead, to establish missionary-controlled organisms like the Catholic African Union; he stigmatised black political protest and believed that liberal whites and educated blacks should cooperate to promote peaceful progress and oppose radicalism. Peterson quotes from Huss’ *Psychology for Everyday Life for African Students* (1927) to underline the monk’s “social gospel”: “Better homes, better fields and better hearts” (25). At the same time, Huss was profoundly critical of the South African government’s social policy: racism, segregation, social degradation, and uncontrolled urbanisation destroyed African communities and engendered social evils, like drink and crime. He identified at least part of the problem in the prejudices (and greed) of the European settlers:

The European mind is wrong when it believes, as some really do, that the native has no soul, that he is the son of Ham and as such for ever destined to be the white man’s servant, that the natives are an inferior race which should form a continuous available supply of cheap labour, that the Europeans can for ever enjoy a high standard of living or even a life of ease at the expense of the black man and say: *‘Quod licet Jovi non licet bovi’*. (“The Evolution of the South African Native Mind” 448)

Huss was also critical of the kind of capitalism that dehumanised people, considering them as ‘hands’; he believed that societies should strive for an even-handed distribution of wealth – while avoiding, by all means, falling into the grip of communism. In brief, he struggled for what might be called a form of ‘ethical capitalism’ that could be reached thanks to the ongoing educational work of the missions. Notwithstanding his favourable attitude towards black converts, Huss soon found himself in an uncomfortable in-between position, criticized by the blacks and even harassed by the whites, as we shall see. His efforts to improve the agricultural production of African rural communities sadly coincided with the period in which the post-Union governments were laying the foundations for the modern industrial and racially segregationist South African state. As Rich points out, “government segregation policy discouraged the return of educated black leaders to the reserves. This, in turn, reinforced more traditional forces within African society who were resistant to efforts at modernizing African agricultural methods” (“Bernard Huss and the Experiment” 309). Huss meditates bitterly, as soon as 1931, on the growing mistrust on the part of Africans towards Europeans:

The scepticism of the Africans has gone so far that even measures intended to help them, however good and tested by history, are repudiated scornfully as coming from the white race. 'We natives are different', they say. [...] For offering some sound and well-meant advice to educated natives in a certain case, I was attacked in the native press and called a fool. ("The Evolution of the South African Native Mind" 450)¹⁸

Contestations and attacks also came from the other front and were not limited to the printed word. In 1944 Huss wrote his annual report to the philanthropic Phelps-Stokes Fund: there, he seized the opportunity to denounce the mistreatment he had suffered at the hands of white subjects for many years, be they private individuals or governmental agents. The mere fact that he was German worsened his situation during the war years, when he was spied on, had his lodgings searched, and his papers confiscated for alleged subversive activities:

It may be now advisable to mention [...] the persecution which I have had to suffer for 20 years for trying to help the Natives. My book on Elementary Economics published in 1924 was called Forbidden Food for the Natives. One white trader even publicly threatened to thrash me if I should fall into his hands. The persecution took a more acute form with the outbreak of the war although I am a British subject by Naturalisation for many years. [...] Repeatedly rumours were spread that I was interned and white people of the town of Matatiele asked my scholars about my subversive activities. Seven times Policemen came here after me and I had to prove repeatedly that I am a British subject. Spies were appointed to watch me. [...] In September 1941 2 police officers came to me and took away from the following 3 sets of papers. 1. A file of notes on communistic activities collected by me during the last 12 years for 2 reports to the Vatican in Rome [...] 2. A collection of 56 articles published monthly in serial form in the "Southern Cross" [...] 3. A collection of 76 articles published monthly by the "Umteteli" [...] on purely Agricultural subjects. All these papers were taken away to be sent, as I was told, to Kokstad, Umtata and Pretoria to be searched for SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES. After 3 months all papers were returned to me with the verdict: Not Guilty! (In Peterson 39-40; emphasis in the original).

This extended excerpt provides a clear, if extreme, example of the ambiguous situation in which some missionaries found themselves during the first half of the twentieth century, when the contradictions inherent in the idea of a Christianising and civilising colonial force were becoming more and more evident. "Paramount for missionaries", Peterson remarks, "was the

need for conversion, followed by the attempt to contain the ambiguities of progress in the face of racist discrimination against converts” (*Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals* 29). As educators and owners of the printing presses, they no doubt could and did behave as censors towards black writers; nevertheless, closer scrutiny of specific cases brings to the fore many other aspects of the relationship between converts and mentors. In addition, we should remember that missionaries moved in a context of pressures exerted by other white forces: central, provincial, and municipal governmental powers; the needs and complaints of mining companies and white farmers, who most of all needed unskilled (and therefore underpaid) labour force; not least, the requirements of their own religious institutions, which, back in the motherland, provided funding and determined what course of action could be taken and what, instead, was not advisable. If we add to this the non-univocal character of the missionaries’ beliefs as far as black education was concerned, we find ourselves in front of many-sided political and social contexts that cannot be studied as stereotypical realities.

The often-polarised perception of missionaries as the ‘saints’ or ‘devils’ of the colonial enterprise simply does not hold. The space in which these people moved can rather be visualized as a tangle of contradictions that impacted negatively not only on black populations, but also on their own life and work. At the basis of any proselytising and civilising project there is a strongly ethnocentric worldview; namely, the blind faith in the intrinsic superiority of one’s religion and culture over another. Needless to say, those same assumptions also justified colonial land grabbing and segregative political rule in the South African territories. The underlying contradiction between project and practice that marked European territorial expansion – that is, carrying on ‘civilising’ projects through land appropriation, social discrimination and cultural erasure – proved more and more difficult to justify on the part of religious denominations, which based their very existence on moral grounds. Preaching the equality of all believers in front of God and the right of converts to full admittance into white society became increasingly ‘embarrassing’ for missionaries in the Thirties and Forties; more and more patently, the government’s discriminatory and exploitative practices proved totally incompatible with the evangelical principles that Christian institutions had been tirelessly disseminating for more than a century.



- 1 Merret's more recent "A Tale of Two Paradoxes" (2001) deals with the South African information system both before and after the demise of apartheid. Daniel Kunene's "Ideas Under Arrest: Censorship in South Africa" (1981) highlighted yet another aspect of censorship in connection with propaganda: "Censorship can thus be further defined as a monopoly of propaganda enjoyed by a regime and upheld by force" (204).
- 2 Brink describes the elusive and devious nature of the Security Police's persecution in several publications, like his collection of essays entitled *Mapmakers. Writing in a State of Siege* (1983) and his memoir, *A Fork in the Road* (2009).
- 3 See, for instance, De Kock's "Textual Capture in the Civilising Mission"; Copley's "Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness"; Rochester's "The Carnegie Corporation and South Africa"; Dick's *The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures*; McDonald's "The Book in South Africa"; van der Vlies's *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*; Sandwith's "The Idea of Reading in Early 20th-Century South Africa" and "The Appearance of the Book".
- 4 Before the advent of the apartheid government, the great majority of South African educational institutions were state-funded mission schools. The 1953 Bantu Education Act took over the control of black education, which was entrusted to the centralised Education Department; deprived of financial aid, most mission schools were compelled to close down.
- 5 Many other missionary institutions reached South Africa between the 1820s and the 30s, like the Rhenish Mission, the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, the Berlin Missionary Society, and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions.
- 6 Robert Henry Wishart Shepherd was appointed Chaplain at Lovedale from 1927 to 1941, Director of Publications in 1932, and Principal from 1942 to 1955.
- 7 Together with Rev. W. R. Thomson, Mr. John Bennie was one of the founding fathers of Lovedale. He was an enthusiastic linguist and the first to transcribe the language spoken by the populations he came in contact with, isiXhosa, using the Latin alphabet. This allowed him to print the first booklet

- in isiXhosa in 1824, the same year in which he started working on a grammar and a vocabulary. ‘Chumie’ was the location where the Glasgow Missionary Society established its first station, on the banks of the Tyhume (Chumie) river, near present-day Alice.
- 8 As Leon De Kock reminds us, Lovedale was not the only early nineteenth-century mission to dispose of a printing press from the very beginning: “Johannes van der Kemp, the first missionary in the region from the London Missionary Society, carried a small printing press with him when he arrived at the Cape in 1799” (“Metonymies of Lead” 52). The Paris Evangelical Missionary Society started running a printing press in Morija (Lesotho) since its settlement in 1833. Also the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society imported a press in 1825, and it is thanks to the co-operative effort of the Wesleyan, Glasgow, and Berlin Societies that the first versions of the Scriptures in isiXhosa were produced and printed between the 1840s and the 1860s.
 - 9 In 1916, Fort Hare University (originally called The South African Native College) was founded on the territories adjoining Lovedale mission station and put under the chairmanship of the Principal of Lovedale. It grew in the following years, until in 1923 it was given the standing of a University College.
 - 10 For a cultural and editorial history of Mofolo’s *Chaka*, see Sandwith “History by Paratext”; as Sandwith argues, “In its immediate pre- and post-publication history, the novel occupied the anomalous position of a mission-sponsored text, which, by virtue of the weight of attention given to sorcery, witchcraft and Zulu mythology, had the potential to undo the painstaking work of the mission itself” (4). A much earlier but insightful article is Neil Lazarus’ “The Logic of Equivocation in Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*” (1986).
 - 11 Willan traces a brief history of the book’s difficult path towards publication, according to which the belated appearance of the novel is to be ascribed to British and North American publishers, not to Lovedale Press: “He [Plaatje] sent his manuscript to Macmillan, Harper Brothers, Scribners, Harcourt – all leading American publishing houses – but they declined it. On his return to London in 1922, an approach to the London firm of Allen and Unwin elicited a more positive response. [...] The only problem was that [they] required a £75 subsidy, which Plaatje did not have and could not raise. Plaatje then tried some other London publishers, but to no avail” (1334-35). Lovedale, instead, received the manuscript in 1929 and accepted it in a very short time. Willan also mentions other critical “dissenting voices” who, like himself, have underlined the conjectural nature of Couzens and Gray’s account of coercive agency on the part of Shepherd to modify Plaatje’s manuscript (see 1333-34).

- 12 On H. I. E. Dhlomo's historical plays, see, among others, Couzens, *The New African*; Peterson, *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals*; Wenzel, "Voices of Spectral and Textual Ancestors"; Voss, "Refracted Modernisms"; Iannaccaro, "The Teacher and the Bard".
- 13 Herbert Dhlomo was founding member and promoter of the Johannesburg Bantu Dramatic Society, which had been established in 1932 to encourage the production of African plays; its lifespan was relatively short, from 1932 to 1940.
- 14 Lovedale Records are kept at the Cory Library, Rhodes University.
- 15 On a reading of Dhlomo's historical plays that combines the analysis of thematic issues with the scrutiny of formal attributes, see Iannaccaro, "The Teacher and the Bard".
- 16 In the same book, Shepherd also stated: "[the natives'] own language is an integral part of the individuality of a people, so that their intellectual development would be prejudiced by any measure which imposed on them for educational, and ultimately for literary purposes, a language to which they could not readily accommodate themselves" (57-58).
- 17 On theatre and mission education at Mariannhill under the principalship of Bernard Huss, see Peterson chapters 1-3.
- 18 Although personally wounded by the attitude of people he considered his protégés, Huss lucidly observes: "So the natives began to look more closely at the white people and to survey critically the whole position, asking such questions as these: 'Why are these white people here, what do they want from us, how much are we doing for them and what are they doing for us in return, what rights have we, the baby race, being taxed heavily, but inarticulate because unrepresented in the council of the white men, why have they taken from us the land where our ancestors are buried, and why must we carry passes and be restricted in our movements in the land of our birth?' They began to analyse the actions of the government and of public bodies and to scrutinize the private life of white individuals" ("The Evolution of the South African Native Mind" 450).



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Barber, Karin (ed.). *Africa's Hidden Histories: Everyday Literacy and the Making of the Self*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Brink, André. *Mapmakers. Writing in a State of Siege*. London: Faber and Faber, 1983.
- . *A Fork in the Road: A Memoir*. London: Vintage, [2009] 2010.
- Cobley, Alan G. "Literacy, Libraries, and Consciousness: The Provision of Library Services for Blacks in South Africa in the Pre-Apartheid Era". In *Libraries & Culture* 32.1 (1997): 57-80.
- Couzens, Tim. *The New African. A Study of the Life and Work of H. I. E. Dhlomo*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1985.
- Couzens, Tim and Gray, Stephen. "Printers' and Other Devils: The Texts of Sol T. Plaatje's *Mhudi*". In *Research in African Literatures* 9.2 (1978): 198–215.
- De Kock, Leon. "Textual Capture in the Civilising Mission: Moffat, Livingstone, and the Case of Tiyo Soga". In *English in Africa* 21.1/2 (1994): 33-58.
- . *Civilising Barbarians: Missionary Narrative and African Textual Response in Nineteenth-century South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1996.
- . "Metonymies of Lead: Bullets, Type and Print Culture in South African Missionary Colonialism". In Andrew van der Vlies (ed.), *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press (2012): 50-73.
- De Lange, Margreet. *The Muzzled Muse. Literature and Censorship in South Africa*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1997.
- Dhlomo, Herbert Isaac Ernest. *The Girl Who Killed to Save. Nongqause the Liberator*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1935.
- . "Why Study Tribal Dramatic Forms?". In *Transvaal Native Education Quarterly* (March 1939): 20-24. Reprinted in *English in Africa*, ed. Nick W. Visser, "H.I.E. Dhlomo: Literary Theory and Criticism" 4.2 (1977): 37-43.
- Dick, Archie L. *The Hidden History of South Africa's Book and Reading Cultures*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012.
- Duncan, Graham A. "Coercive Agency in Mission Education at Lovedale Missionary Institution". In *HTS Theological Studies* 60.3 (2004): 947-992.
- Huss, Bernard. *A Textbook on Elementary Economics for Native Students*. By the Rev. Bernard Huss, Principal, St. Francis Native Training College, Mariannhill, Natal. Reprinted from "Izindaba Zabantu", Mariannhill, 1924.

- . “The Evolution of the South African Native Mind”. In *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 4.4 (1931): 445-455.
- Iannaccaro, Giuliana. “The Teacher and the Bard: Herbert Dhlomo’s Historical Drama”. In *Thinking Out of the Box in Literary and Cultural Studies*, eds R. Coronato, M. Parlati and A. Petrina. Padova: Padova University Press, 2021.
- Kunene, Daniel P. “Ideas Under Arrest: Censorship in South Africa”. In *Ufhamu: A Journal of African Studies* 11.3 ([1981] 1982): 204-221.
- Lazarus, Neil. “The Logic of Equivocation in Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*”. In *English in Africa* 13.1 (1986): 41-60.
- Matteau Matsha, Rachel. *Real and Imagined Readers: Censorship, Publishing and Reading Under Apartheid*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2018.
- McDonald, Peter D. *The Literature Police: Apartheid Censorship and its Cultural Consequences*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- . “The Book in South Africa”. In *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, eds David Attwell and Derek Attridge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2012): 800-817.
- Merrett, Christopher. *A Culture of Censorship. Secrecy and Intellectual Repression in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, and Pietermaritzburg: University of Natal Press, 1994.
- . “A Tale of Two Paradoxes: Media Censorship in South Africa, Pre-Liberation and Post-Apartheid”. In *Critical Arts* 15.1-2 (2001): 50-68.
- Mofolo, Thomas Mokopu. *Chaka*. Morija: Morija Sesuto Book Depot, 1925.
- Peires, Jeffrey B. “The Lovedale Press. Literature for the Bantu Revisited”. In *History in Africa* 6 (1979): 155-175.
- Peterson, Bhekizizwe. *Monarchs, Missionaries and African Intellectuals. African Theatre and the Unmaking of Colonial Marginality*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 2000.
- Plaatje, Solomon Tshekisho. *Mhudi. An Epic of South African Native Life a Hundred Years Ago*. Lovedale: Lovedale Press, 1930.
- Rich Paul B. “Bernard Huss and the Experiment in African Cooperatives in South Africa, 1926-1948”. In *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 26.2 (1993): 297-317.
- Rochester, Maxine K. “The Carnegie Corporation and South Africa: Non-European Library Services”. In *Libraries & Culture* 34.1 (1999): 27-51.
- Sandwith, Corinne. “The Idea of Reading in Early 20th-Century South Africa”. In *Journal of Southern African Studies* 42.6 (2016): 1095-1108.
- . “The Appearance of the Book: Towards a History of the Reading Lives and Worlds of Black South African Readers”. In *English in Africa* 45.1 (2018): 11-38.

- . “History by Paratext: Thomas Mofolo’s *Chaka*”. In *Journal of Southern African Studies* 44.3 (2018): 471-490.
- Seton, Bernard E. “The Founding of Methodist Missions in South Africa”. Digital publication (1967): A condensation of a doctoral dissertation, “Wesleyan Missions and the Sixth Frontier War,” presented to the University of Cape Town in 1962.
- Shepherd, Robert Henry Wishart. *Lovedale and Literature for the Bantu*. Lovedale: The Lovedale Press, 1945.
- . *Lovedale South Africa, 1824-1955*. Lovedale: The Lovedale Press, 1971.
- Van der Vlies, Andrew (ed.). *Print, Text and Book Cultures in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2012.
- Voss, Tony. “Refracted Modernisms. Roy Campbell, Herbert Dhlomo, N. P. van Wyk Louw”. In *The Cambridge History of South African Literature*, eds David Attwell and Derek Attridge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2012): 339-359.
- Wenzel, Jennifer. “Voices of Spectral and Textual Ancestors: Reading Tiyo Soga alongside H.I.E. Dhlomo’s *The Girl Who Killed to Save*”. In *Research in African Literatures* 36.1 (2005): 51-73.
- Willan, Brian. *Sol Plaatje: A Biography*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984.
- . “What ‘Other Devils’? The Texts of Sol T. Plaatje’s *Mhudi* Revisited. In *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41:6 (2015): 1331-1347.

Philip Larkin and jazz: from journalism to poetry

Pierpaolo Martino

Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro

1. Jazz and Writing

British bass player and eminent critic Alyn Shipton, in his introduction to *A New History of Jazz*, focuses on jazz centrality within Twentieth century and on its capacity of generating a powerful response from people of different ethnicities, genders and social backgrounds:

Of all the musical forms to emerge during the twentieth century, jazz was by far the most significant. In the early years of the century, it spread first throughout the United States of America, and then quickly to the rest of the world, where its combination of syncopation, unusual pitching, vocal tones, and raw energy touched the hearts and minds of people across the entire spectrum of social and racial backgrounds. Its message was universal, and it stood for something new, something revolutionary, something risqué that overturned the old orders of art music and folk music alike. (1)

Jazz music is mostly about “improvisation” (Bailey *ix*), interplay and interaction in this sense, it is mainly, even though unintentionally, concerned with the redefinition of the self in dialogical terms (Derrida, Coleman); it is an art-form which, being strongly rooted in concepts such as enunciation and performance, confers centrality to listening. In jazz very often there is no score to read or respond to, what the musician is asked to do is to listen to his body and to the body of others in order to

read and translate sounds in other sounds, in a horizontal, democratic dimension, which conceives no verticality, no authority. Jazz becomes in this sense a model for a free and freed social interaction, and for the construction of a polyphonic self within this very social dialogue; jazz is a language capable of speaking *across* cultures, it is about stepping “across” lines (Rushdie *Step Across this Line*, 407) and borders, it is a language which refuses to “sit still” (Gioia 474) and which very often coincides with the idea of “migration” itself (Zenni 15). As Watson observes “jazz has always been a generous and a malleable music [...] it has always reached out beyond race, culture and nation, and beyond doctrine and dogma. Jazz has always been a hybrid music as complex as its history” (290).

According to Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite – author of *The Arrivants* trilogy (1973) – jazz represents the perfect expression for the rootless, cultureless truly expatriate Negro¹. It has been from the beginning a cry from the heart of the hurt man, the lonely one, something which can also be heard in the saxophone and trumpet of many performers, from John Coltrane to Don Cherry. But its meaning comes not just from this, jazz is a collective music, the affirmation of the life and rhythm of a group. The affirmation of such a genre does not come from the individual voice, but from the ensemble, the merging of the various instruments; something which is particularly relevant in free jazz ensembles such as The Liberation Music Orchestra by bass player and activist Charlie Haden. This explains Brathwaite’s commitment to jazz as a central concern in his work: “I was seeking for a musical form which allowed me to hear the speaking voice, which allowed me to see the individual within the community, and which allowed me free improvisation within a tradition and jazz does it” (Martino 121).

But jazz can also go beyond itself; most importantly jazz was and still is also able to address and be addressed by other art forms such as “literature” (Locatelli 9-10), painting² and cinema³. Besides, all these art forms are forms of *writing*, modelling systems through which we approach and confer meaning to reality. As Art Lange affirms in the opening note of *Moment’s notice*, a jazz inspired collection of poetry and prose, edited by Lange himself and Nathaniel Mackey:

The reception jazz has garnered and the influence it has exercised have extended not only far beyond the geographic boundaries of its country of origin but far beyond

the boundaries of music itself. Jazz is at the same time a musicians' music [...] and a music which, much more than most is more than music. Jazz has become iconic, its own often iconoclastic impulse notwithstanding. [...] It is particularly unsurprising that a music which so frequently and characteristically aspires to the condition of speech, reflecting critically it seems upon the limits of the sayable, should have provoked and proved of enormous interest to practitioners of the art of the word. (i)

Lange's words allow us to investigate jazz in a different space from the one of its origins; jazz indeed had a major impact in post-war Britain, as it emerges from the journalism, poetry and novels of some of the most relevant literary voices of the period.

In a recent interview Canadian author Michael Ondaatje focuses on his involvement with jazz as a teenager in London – when he used to dance in Jazz Clubs thrice a week – and affirms:

The rhythms of music in some ways has been the biggest influence on my writing. It's not Wordsworth it's Ray Charles. When I'm writing the pace of a paragraph, a long long sentence is closer to music than any other thing. [...]. Listening before you write, influences how you "think" (Louisiana Channel)

Jazz, most importantly, perfectly translates the sense and meaning of the social energies which were transforming and redefining, in a multicultural and youth-oriented sense, British society in the Fifties.

MacInnes's iconic novel *Absolute Beginners* is interestingly set in Soho, which, besides being associated with ethnic diversity, also stands as the stage where teenagers perform their exciting dramas. Here we find the jazz clubs loved by the protagonist and his girlfriend Suzette, who is particularly fond of dancing. The protagonist is, like his black friend Mr Cool, a jazz addict:

The great thing about the jazz world, and all the *kids* that enter into it, is that no one, not a soul cares what your class is, or what your *race* is, or what your income, or if you're boy, or girl, or bent or versatile, or what you are - so long as you dig the scene and can behave yourself, and have left all that *crap* behind you, too, when you come in the jazz club door. The result of all this is that, in the jazz world, you meet all kinds of *cats* on absolutely equal terms, who can clue you up in all kinds of directions—in social directions, in culture directions, in sexual directions, and in *racial* directions [...] in fact, almost anywhere, really, you want to go to learn. (MacInnes *Absolute*, 61)

In jazz, as we have seen, musicians with different backgrounds speak to each other about a given theme, trying to rewrite it from different and yet simultaneous perspectives. In this sense in the novel jazz stands as a space of freedom, as a language capable of confounding differences, providing teenagers with a concrete possibility of multicultural dialogue. Interestingly, in the passage above the protagonist is able to speak about jazz in a kind of jazzy style rich in syncopations and blue-notes.

Even in his essays and in his journalism MacInnes makes reference to jazz, writing about iconic singers and performers such as Ella Fitzgerald:

She's so good you only have to listen, it is the voice that acts. Nor, unless you see her, does her voice sound particularly 'coloured' – just as she seems any age between sixteen and forty (which is close on what she really is), so does her voice sound as if it might belong to either race. [...]. To hear her is to be given, in the most telling and pleasurable form, that particular lift of the spirits that is the great gift of jazz, in its more positive moods, to our frowning cross-patch age. (MacInnes *Ella*, 134)

Ella's voice with its very peculiar "grain" (Barthes 179) becomes in this sense a dialogical space of encounter and mixture in which whites and blacks, young people and adults can re-define themselves.

In post-war Britain, another writer beside MacInnes wrote about jazz, at times in contradictory terms, but with a passion and devotion which probably has no equals, and which conveys the sense of richness and the very excitement and pleasure which come with this music; we are referring, of course, to Philip Larkin. In the next section, we will read Larkin's poetic achievements and in particular two of his jazz-related poems showing how, in their *dialogical* complexity and polyphony, they present features that allow us to rethink and rearticulate the artist's relationship with jazz, exceeding conventional readings which consider the poet exclusively interested in and influenced by traditional jazz to investigate similarities between his literary style and modern jazz.

2. Philip Larkin's jazz: from journalism to poetry

In his Introduction to *All What Jazz* – the collected edition of the reviews originally published in *The Telegraph*, where he was jazz critic from 1961 to 1968 – Philip Larkin writes:

Few things have given me more pleasure in life than listening to jazz. I don't claim to be original in this: for the generations that came to adolescence between the wars jazz was that unique private excitement that youth seemed to demand. (15)

Larkin's private excitement was the result of hours of listening to what was by the time contemporary jazz: Armstrong, early Ellington, Count Basie. He even remembers his love for "a classic 'hot' number" entitled 'Tiger Rag', which dance band used to perform "at the local Hippodrome". The young Larkin was particularly attracted by the rhythm of jazz and his favourite instrument was the drums; his parents bought him "an elementary drum kit" and he spent a lot of time "improvising an accompaniment to records" (16). At Oxford, Larkin met people who were, like him, jazz enthusiasts and knew even more than him about the music and the artists and for whom "jazz became part of the private joke of existence" (17). In particular, he shared his enthusiasm with Kingsley Amis and they were both insistent about their rigidly traditional tastes⁴. At the time indeed jazz had already bifurcated into *trad* and *mod*, hot and cool.

As it is known, Larkin was intolerant of all Modernist forms, and his attacks were targeted at the art of Picasso, the poetry of Pound and, as we will see, Charlie Parker's *Be Bop*⁵. For the poet the term "modern, when applied to art, has a more than a chronological meaning: it denotes a quality of irresponsibility peculiar to this century, known sometimes as Modernism" (23). On the contrary, Larkin's poetry was to be marked by a strong sense of responsibility, by an interest for everyday experiences and for a direct, accessible style which he shared with the other members of The Movement. If in one sense poetry belonged to "the reader", the very physiognomy of his readership was, however, to prove problematic, as this group of academics, who spoke the same language and wrote for each other, often addressed a readership which resembled themselves⁶.

Regan notes how, when Larkin died in 1984, his reputation was unblemished and secure and he was identified with a reassuring idea of Englishness. In this sense:

The formal achievements of his verse – its colloquial tenor, its ironic humour and its clear-sighted realism – were construed as civic virtues. Even those aspects of the poetry that some critics found wanting – its wry circumspection and parochial outlook – seemed to encapsulate the authentic experience of a drab and disillusioned

England. Larkin's wistful, lyrical grasp of life shortcomings was considered in keeping with the quietistic mood of the post-war years. (Regan 1)

Nevertheless, the publication of his *Collected Poems* in 1988 and of the *Selected Letters* in 1992 completely changed the reception of the poet both at home and abroad. The early unpublished poems revealed a young man whose very idea of sexuality proved problematic, to the extent that the writer betrayed a sense of guilt and fear in relation to sex which he saw as something destructive. These early poems, also, lack that sense of ironic detachment we find in his more mature efforts. The *Selected Letters*, on the other side, revealed, in Germaine Greer's words, a man whose attitudes were "racist and sexist and rotten with class-consciousness" (Greer 27).

These remarks, however, even though projecting a different light on the poet, cannot make us ignore Larkin's poetic achievement which presents features that allow us to rethink and rearticulate the artist's relationship with jazz.

Larkin's esteem rests on four concise volumes of poetry: *The North Ship* (1945), *The Less Deceived* (1955), *The Whitsun Weddings* (1964) and *High Windows* (1974). While the first collection was heavily influenced by Yeats and did not present a fully formed artistic voice, *The Less Deceived*, which included poems written in a long span of time, echoed Hardy and presented the style of the detached, sometimes lugubrious, sometimes tender observer of ordinary people doing ordinary things. This style was fully accomplished in the third collection *The Whitsun Weddings* which includes a poem – completed in January 1954 – representing Larkin's most direct tribute to jazz, namely "For Sidney Bechet"⁷:

That note you hold, narrowing and rising, shakes
Like New Orleans reflected on the water,
And in all ears appropriate falsehood wakes,

Building for some a legendary Quarter
Of balconies, flower-baskets and quadrilles,
Everyone making love and going shares--

Oh, play that thing! Mute glorious Storyvilles
Others may license, grouping around their chairs
Sporting-house girls like circus tigers (priced

Far above rubies) to pretend their fads,
While scholars *manqués* nod around unnoticed
Wrapped up in personnels like old plaids. (*Collected Poems*, 87)

In an article entitled “A Real Musicianer” published in *The Guardian* in (8 April 1960) Larkin wrote: “there are not many perfect things in jazz, but Bechet playing the blues could be one of them”. We do not know if Larkin had any specific track in mind but in 1961 he nominated Bechet’s 1944 recording of *Blue Horizon* as one of his four Daily Telegraph Records of the Year and it was performed at his memorial service in Westminster Abbey in 1985.

Martin Williams points to the relevance of Bechet in Twentieth century culture when he affirms:

Bechet was recognized as a major jazz musician outside his own city by the teens of this century. He was the subject of the first serious appreciation ever written about a jazzman, conductor Ernest Ansermet’s tribute of 1919. Ansermet saw in Bechet’s work the beginnings of a new style and he conjectured that tomorrow perhaps the whole world would be following his path. We also learn from Stravinsky’s letters that he wrote three early clarinet pieces under the spell of Bechet. During subsequent developments in jazz, Bechet was admired by musicians of all styles and schools; he was one of Charlie Parker’s favorite players, and one of his last recordings—an excellent one—was done with the respected modernist French pianist, Martial Solal. (3-4)

“For Sidney Bechet” is set in New Orleans, which Larkin never visited, but of whose jazz associations he was well aware. Interestingly, the poem opens with a reference to Bechet’s sound “That note you hold”. There are quite a few long-held notes in Bechet’s recordings which he sustains inimitably⁸. Larkin adds: “narrowing and rising”, which refers to the fact that Bechet used plenty of vibrato⁹. “Reflected on the water” seems to refer to the maritime location of New Orleans, while the phrase “Oh, play that thing!” was sometimes called out by jazz players and can be heard on several historical recorded tracks; moreover, it is also a quotation from the Afro-American poet Langston Hughes who uses this same expression in *Jazz Band in a Parisian Cabaret*. In this sense, this poem assumes a particular intertextual quality, which is quite unusual for Larkin.

The poet goes on to describe the mixed clientele in the French Quarter where there are expensive “Sporting-house girls” alongside scholars

manqués (that is, merely enthusiasts) who are immersed in “personnels”, the discographical details that show who played what where and when. The mythical New Orleans is also referred to as Storyville and Crescent City. Everything about it and its music is seen as positive, through such expressions as “an enormous yes” and “the natural noise of good”:

On me your voice falls as they say love should,
Like an enormous yes. My Crescent City
Is where your speech alone is understood,

And greeted as the natural noise of good,
Scattering long-haired grief and scored pity (*Collected Poems* 87).

In the very closing line, Larkin refers to classical music;¹⁰ the poet, however, seems not to pay attention to the fact that Bechet, like many early jazz musicians, could not read music. In this sense, the “long-hairs” should refer to the serious musicians and “scored” presumably means notated music as opposed to jazz and improvisation, which had been addressed through the expression, “noise for good”. The very association of jazz with noise becomes here of paramount importance, indeed early jazz was condemned when it first appeared in similar terms to the ones Larkin uses to dismiss modern jazz as “jerky”, “unnatural”, “fevered”, “cacophonous”.

One of the poems included in Larkin’s second collection, *The Less Deceived* is entitled “Reasons for Attendance” and – even if it is not as direct in its reference to music as the previous poem – is particularly illuminating in relation to the function of jazz in Larkin’s poetry. The poem records a rich, theatrical soundscape, where the sound of a trumpet seems to interact with the rising tone of the protagonist’s questions:

The trumpet’s voice, loud and authoritative,
Draws me a moment to the lighted glass
To watch the dancers - all under twenty-five –
Shifting intently, face to flushed face,
Solemnly on the beat of happiness.

- Or so I fancy, sensing the smoke and sweat,
The wonderful feel of girls. Why be out there?
But then, why be in there? Sex, yes, but what

Is sex ? Surely to think the lion's share
Of happiness is found by couples - sheer

Inaccuracy, as far as I'm concerned. [...] (*Collected Poems* 48).

The poem stages two different and contrasting approaches to jazz, the first is the one which associates this kind of music with sex (the very term jazz has such semantic implications) and is exemplified by the couple dancing at the "beat of happiness". The other, voiced by the protagonist himself, sees jazz as a religious form and as an artistic commitment¹¹:

What calls me is that lifted, rough-tongued bell
(Art, if you like) whose individual sound
Insists I too am individual.
It speaks; I hear; others may hear as well,

But not for me, nor I for them; and so
With happiness. Therefore I stay outside,
Believing this, and they maul to and fro,
Believing that; and both are satisfied,
If no one has misjudged himself. Or lied. (*Ibid.*)

The beat becomes something deep, and the easy, danceable rhythm of the music is broken by the drummer, that is by Larkin's irregular pulsation in the very last verse and in particular by the syncopated rhythms of his final remarks.

A problem might arise in relation to which trumpet's sound the poet and the reader might have in mind; if the context of the two young dancers makes us think of swing, hot or danceable jazz, the very year of the poem's publication – 1955 – locates the reader's perception of that sound in more problematic terms. Those were, indeed, the years of Dizzy Gillespie – Charlie Parker's Be Bop alter ego – and Miles Davis, who moved from Be Bop to Hard Bop and Cool. Their sound could be loud and authoritative, but also smooth and contemplative, perfectly translating, in this sense, the mood voiced by the protagonist in stanzas II to IV, conveyed by the image of the "rough-tongued bell" (that is, Art) he hears and that he hopes "others" may "hear as well".

In a sense, here jazz becomes an independent, resistant discourse – moving freely between past and present, *trad* and *mod* forms – that the poet

probably does not want to take control of. In short, Larkin's poetry tells us a different, but complementary, story in relation to the poet's relationship with that music. Jazz often works unconsciously, and Larkin's mature poetry paradoxically reflects some of the moods, elegance and clarity of late 1950s Miles Davis¹². The poet in a review published in 1966 praises Davis's maturity and richness;¹³ commenting on a reissue of his 1957 album *Birth of the Cool* he writes: "the music has a relaxed, mature quality, a richness of voicing, that speaks of experience rather than youth" (*All that Jazz* 163)¹⁴. In truth as Magee observes: "accounts of Miles Davis's career tend to emphasize change and contrast, because his musical path illuminates almost every major movement in modern jazz: from bebop, to cool jazz, to hard bop, to modal jazz, to a controlled version of free jazz, to jazz-rock fusion, and, finally, to hip-hop hybrids at the end of his life" (Magee 6), and yet one is tempted to read Larkin's most intense poems to Davis's iconic ballad 'Blue'n'Green' from his 1959 masterpiece *Kind Of Blue*, by many critics considered the most important album in the history of jazz.

In his monographic study dedicated to Davis' iconic work, jazz critic Ashley Kahn approaches *Kind of Blue* in terms of "the premier album of its era, jazz or otherwise," and he insists on how "Its vapory piano-and-bass introduction is universally recognized. Classical buffs and rage rockers alike praise its subtlety, simplicity and emotional depth" (16); the album is, in other words, defined by a sense of directness, beauty and condensation which perfectly captures, in our view, the essence of much of Larkin's writing. Focusing on 'Blue'n'Green,' – which as the third of the seven tracks included in the album, is also the *central* piece in Davis's narrative – Kahn notes how the tune stands as a "quiet miniature on an album of more extended meditations, five and-a-half minutes of quiet, rippling solos over a ring of chords;" its circularity is indeed its most defining aspect¹⁵, the tune's "ten-bar structure – breaking the standard thirty-two or twelve-bar mold for jazz composition – and steadily flowing tempo amplify its perpetual cycle effect" (117-118). 'Blue'n'Green' is, in this sense, "about placid mood and suspended feel" and not "apparent melody" (118). Kahn tries to verbally *respond* to Davis' iconic piece through a series of keywords which again, we think, might perfectly de-fine Larkin's poetry and in particular "Reasons for Attendance."

We can conclude pointing, in this sense, to how in Larkin's narrative not only we have a quiet, meditative protagonist; the poem itself stands

indeed as a circular space, in which the reader, sharing the protagonist's stance, can experience a suspended feel, listening to the other(ness) inhabiting his identity and having, at the same time, the powerful sensation of being *there* – in the place in which the dancers shift “intently on the beat of happiness” – only to move *somewhere else*, in that mobile dimension *art-jazz* and *jazz-poetry* can create in their precious combination. In short, in ‘Blue’n’Green’, one has music as colour, sadness and hope, that is, *blue and green*, as well as that irony and clever detachment from easy emotions which have made Larkin’s poetry one of the most interesting and important achievements of twentieth-century English literature.



- 1 Brathwaite focuses on jazz in his essay “Jazz and the West Indian Novel” (1993, first published in 1968) in which – starting from the reading of the novel *Brother Man* (1954) by Roger Mais – he creates an alternative Caribbean aesthetics, based on polyphony and polyrhythms that enabled him to experiment with alternatives to Eurocentric culture. In addition to the supremacy of sound, Brathwaite identified three fundamental features for a novel to be considered a jazz novel: first, it had to be rooted in an African presence; second, it had to express protest; and third, it had to manifest the communality of West Indian societies. Brathwaite focuses on this particular kind of music, because – unlike the ballad, which is a mostly pastoral expression – jazz is an urban folk form, “that has wider and more overt connections and correspondences with the increasingly cosmopolitan world in which we live, than the purely West Indian folk forms [...]. Most importantly, jazz, in several quarters, is already *seen* to be, or to represent, an alternative to the “European” tradition” (Brathwaite *Jazz*, 107). In considering jazz simultaneously urban, folk and cosmopolitan, Brathwaite was evidently erasing the division between high and popular culture. Brathwaite defines it in contrast with the earlier blues of slave culture; jazz, in the poet’s view, is not “slave” music; it is the sound, the voice and the music of the emancipated Negro: hence its brush colouring, the bravado, its parade of syncopation, its emphasis on improvisations, its *swing*. It is, in short, the music of slaves freed from their subjugation; it became a vital language for a man forced to erase his own culture.
- 2 Interestingly, American artist Jackson Pollock listened to jazz as inspiration to become one with his canvas. He submerged himself in the music in order to reach a higher state of mental clarity where he could not be distracted from his unconscious relationship with the paint that dripped from his brush.
- 3 Beside the constant use of jazz in many movies’ soundtracks, there have been a multiplicity of films in the history of Hollywood and European cinema which have focused on jazz as subject: from Clint Eastwood’s *Bird* (1988) which reconstructs the life of Be Bop hero and alto saxophone player Charlie Parker, to Bertrand Tavernier’s *Round Midnight* (1986), which features tenor saxophone player Dexter Gordon, to Pupi Avati’s *Bix* (1990) which offers a biography of ragtime-era trumpet player Bix Beiderbecke.

- 4 In his seminal study entitled *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s*, Blake Morrison – speaking about the friendship between Larkin and Amis, and making reference to Larkin’s introduction to his novel *Jill* (1946) – notes how both “shared an interest in jazz” (12), to the extent of using their money to buy “some hundred records” instead of employing them to buy works from more established arts. Morrison, however, also points to the shift from consolidation to defense, in the posture of many members of the Movement, especially in their later years. In this sense, the critic refers to their “defense of traditional jazz over against modern jazz and rock music” (260).
- 5 A severe criticism of Larkin’s position is voiced by Tolley in his essay “On First Looking into Larkin’s *The Less Deceived*” (2002) when he writes: “As time went by he strained his position to the point of being unquestionably wrong when he ventures into a field where he is not well informed [...] and he refers to the diatonic as natural in contrast to the chromatic in his attempt to see the music of Charlie Parker as arcane. He speaks out against art that requires special knowledge to understand it; and one might say that this was true of Joyce and Pound as Larkin contends; but it is not true of the music of Charlie Parker, whose records are bought in the tens of thousands by uncultured fans. The trouble with Charlie Parker was not that you needed special knowledge: it was just the trouble that Larkin’s readers had when his mature poetry first appeared - one had to know how to take it. Similarly, Larkin could not imagine someone going into a room full of Picassos and gasping - not with mystified shock, but amazed delight”. In short, Tolley notes how Larkin failed to acknowledge that sensibilities change and consequently art forms change with them.
- 6 On this aspect see also Enrichetta Soccio. *Philip Larkin. Immaginazione poetica e percorsi del quotidiano*, Roma, Carocci, 2008.
- 7 Sidney Bechet was born in New Orleans in 1897 and played clarinet and soprano saxophone. He was a key figure in the early Harlem scene but moved to Chicago in 1917. He toured Europe with Will Marion Cook’s band the Southern Syncopators in 1919 and from then on was recognised as one of the most influential figures in jazz. He travelled widely in Europe and the USA, where he worked with Duke Ellington and Louis Armstrong, and finally lived in France from 1951 until his death in 1959. On Bechet see John Chilton. *Sidney Bechet. The Wizard of Jazz*, London, Palgrave-MacMillan, 1997.
- 8 London-based pianist and composer Steve Beresford, in a recent book on him by Andy Hamilton reports about British saxophonist Evan Parker having a great story about “Numar Lubin, the Russian opera singer who ran the Nimbus label, famous for their very high quality classical records. Numar had lived in Paris in the same block as Sidney Bechet, so he would hear him play

everyday. Finally Numar, who got very well with hm asked “Sidney, do you mind me asking about your practicing routine? I’ve noticed you play scales and arpeggios, and you play well-known tunes, and then you play some stuff at the end that I can’t identify”. And Sidney Bechet said, “I’m trying to play birdsong; for me this is the highest form of music” (Hamilton 81).

- 9 In his biography of Bechet, Chilton notes how “the biggest obstacle to his achieving universal acclaim was unquestionably his vibrato. Detractors were well aware that Bechet was a consummate artist, whose harmonic knowledge and technique were exceptionally fine, but the fierce throbbing that marked his sound touched a nerve within them and they could not listen with pleasure to his music”; and yet as the critic insists “Bechet was a giant of traditional jazz, an originator who could be inventive within any musical line-up. His thrilling playing ‘swung’ before that descriptive word had ever been applied to music, and throughout a long career he remained a supremely gifted melodist. His interpretation of the blues is timeless, and all of his work contains a passion that should never be absent from jazz” (Chilton 293).
- 10 Beside jazz, classical music represents a fascinating lens to approach and de-fine some very peculiar features of Larkin’s aesthetics and in particular the sense of economy defining his work; indeed, according to Booth: “the economy of Larkin’s forms and genres, the predominance in his oeuvre of the hapax principle (‘its own sole freshly created universe’) is difficult to parallel elsewhere in literature. In music, however, Maurice Ravel shows a similar scrupulosity, composing one opera for adults and one for children, one brooding single-movement piano concerto for left hand, one extrovert three-movement piano concerto for two hands, one triptych of solo piano pieces, one quartet, one piano trio, one mature violin sonata, one work for the unprecedented combination of harp, flute, clarinet and string quartet, a unique bolero, a single archaic pavane. In each case the artist transforms the ‘given’ genre with his own original touch, then moves on to another. Larkin is this kind of writer. His mature volumes contain, it has been said, ‘a remarkable percentage of the definitive poems of his time. This is, largely, because he consciously aimed to make his version of any genre he touched ‘definitive’”. (Booth 15-16).
- 11 Commenting on the poem, Booth notes how in ‘Reasons for Attendance’ (1953) “his aestheticism is impatient of its own preciousness. [...] Like the church bell of religion this bell of secular aestheticism proclaims his higher calling. He refuses to ‘attend’ the party and ‘attends’ instead to the bell of art”. Ivi, 152.
- 12 Tolley sees Larkin’s poetry in relation to more radical and avant-garde music: “Reading *the Less Deceived* [...] showed me new possibilities for poetry. As T. S. Eliot contended, truly new poetry not only makes us see the poetry of

the past in a different light but also expands our sense of what poetry might be. The experience of this is not easy to communicate. It was not merely that someone was doing something new. It was analogous to the experience I had on first listening to a recording of the post-modern jazz pianist, Cecil Taylor. I was hearing something in an idiom that I had always wanted to hear yet could not have imagined myself." A.T. Tolley, "On first Looking into Larkin's *The Less Deceived*", cit. On Larkin's poetic style see also John Osborne, *Radical Larkin: Seven Types of Technical Mastery*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016.

- 13 Interestingly, in *The Black Atlantic* Paul Gilroy focuses on the irreconcilable views on jazz of the two of the most relevant trumpet players and composers of the Twentieth century, namely Wynton Marsalis – for whom “jazz provides an essential repository for wider black cultural values” – and Miles Davis who prioritises “the restless creative energies that could keep the corrosive process of reification and commodification at bay” (1993, 97); in particular, Gilroy refers to Davis’s work of the late Sixties and early Seventies in terms of a space of “displacements and transformations” which, with its crossing of geographical and musical borders, problematizes any attempt to define the very notion of jazz’s *authenticity* in the postmodern (and postcolonial age).
- 14 In a fascinating study entitled *Such Deliberate Disguises: The Art of Philip Larkin*, R. H. Palmer focuses on Larkin’s jazz writings brilliantly deconstructing some of the stereotypes usually associated with Larkin’s approach to jazz. Palmer notes how Larkin’s “voice is predicated in jazz: its rhythms, its ambiguities and paradoxes, its humor and its sheer common humanity” (3). All these aspects relate, to some extent, to both traditional and modern jazz experiences; in this sense, Larkin’s voice stands as a bridge between past and present, consonance and dissonance, if its criticism looks backwards, his poetry is projected towards the future, in a fascinating and unpredictable dialectics, in which the invention and inventiveness of both Louis Armstrong and Miles Davis speak to each other.
- 15 On this aspect see Keith Waters, Henry Martin, Steve Larson, Steven Strunk, “Circular Thinking—A Roundtable on ‘Blue in Green’ and ‘Nefertiti’”, *Journal of Jazz Studies*, 11, 1, 2016, 105-120.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Bailey, Derek. *Improvisation, its Nature and Practice in Music*. London: The British Library Sound Archive, 1992.
- Barthes, Roland. "The Grain of the Voice" in *Image, Music, Text*, ed. by S. Heath. London: Fontana Paperbacks, 1977. 179-189.
- Booth, James. *Philip Larkin. The Poet's Plight*. London: Palgrave, 2005.
- Brathwaite, Kamau. "Jazz and the West Indian Novel", in *Roots*, (1986). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993: 55-110
- Brathwaite, Kamau. *The Arrivants. A New World Trilogy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973.
- Chilton, John. *Sidney Bechet. The Wizard of Jazz*. London: Palgrave-MacMillan, 1997.
- Derrida, Jacques, Coleman, Ornette, "La langue de l' autre" in *Les inrockuptibles*, n. 115, 20 August 1997. 37- 43.
- Francis D. A. "Travelling Miles: Jazz in the Making of a West Indian Intellectual" in A. Paul (ed.), *Caribbean Culture. Soundings on Kamau Brathwaite*. Kingston: University of the West Indian Press, 2007. 142-151.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic, Modernity and Double Consciousness*. London: Verso, 1993.
- Gioia, Ted. *The History of Jazz*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Greer, Germaine. "A Very British Misery." *The Guardian*, 14 October 1988.
- Hamilton, Andy. *Pianos, Toys, Music and Noise. Conversations with Steve Beresford*. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2021.
- Hartley, John. *Philip Larkin The Marvell Press and Me*. London: Faber &Faber, 1989.
- James, Louis. "Brathwaite and Jazz" in S. Brown (Ed), *The Art of Kamau Brathwaite*. Bridgend Wale: Seren, 1995. 62-74.
- Kahn, Ashley. *Kind of Blue. The Making of the Miles Davis Masterpiece*. New York: Da Capo Press, 2007.
- Lange, Art, Mackey, Nathaniel (eds), *Moment's Notice, Jazz in Poetry and Prose*. Minneapolis: Coffee House Press, 1993.
- Larkin, Philip. "A Real Musicianer," *The Guardian*, 8 April 1960.
- Larkin, Philip. *All What Jazz. A Record Diary*. London: Faber & Faber, 1970.

- Larkin, Philip. *Collected Poems*. London: Faber & Faber, 2003.
- Locatelli, Aude. *Jazz belles-lettres. Approche comparatiste des rapports du jazz e de la literature*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2011.
- Magee, Jeffrey. "Kinds of Blue: Miles Davis, Afro-Modernism, and the Blues". *Jazz Perspectives*, 1:1, 2007, 5-27.
- MacInnes, Colin, "Ella" in *England, Half English*. London: Penguin, 1966.
- MacInnes, Colin, *Absolute Beginners in The London Novels*. London: Allison and Bussy, 2005.
- Martino, Pierpaolo. "'Poetry is a Form of Music'. Intervista a Kamau Brathwaite, con un saggio introduttivo", in P. Martino (ed), *Exodus. Studi sulla letteratura anglo-caribica*. Bari: Edizioni B. A. Graphis, 2009. 111-125.
- Morrison, Blake. *The Movement: English Poetry and Fiction of the 1950s*. London: Methuen, 1980.
- Nelson, Lilieth. "The Music of Kamau Brathwaite", in A. Paul (ed.), *Caribbean Culture. Soundings on Kamau Brathwaite*. Kingston: University of the West Indian Press, 2007. 127-141.
- Ondaatje, Michael. "The Music in the Words" *Louisiana Channel*, 2015, interview: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oLeD97p9gcQ>> (last accessed 23 October 2022)
- Osborne, John. *Radical Larkin: Seven Types of Technical Mastery*. London: Palgrave Macmillan 2016.
- Palmer, Richard H. *Such Deliberate Disguises: The Art of Philip Larkin*. London: Continuum 2008.
- Regan, Sean (ed). *Philip Larkin*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 1997.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands. Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London: Granta Books, 1991.
- Rushdie, Salman. *Step across this Line. Collected Non-Fiction 1992-2002*. London: Vintage, 2002.
- Shipton, Andy. *A New History of Jazz*. London: Continuum, 2008.
- Soccio, Enrichetta. *Philip Larkin. Immaginazione poetica e percorsi del quotidiano*. Roma: Carocci, 2008.
- Tolley, A. Trevor. "On first Looking into Larkin's *The Less Deceived*", paper delivered at the Larkin in Context Conference, *The Philip Larkin Society*, 2002. <<https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/25293810/on-first-looking-into-larkins-the-less-deceived-the-philip-larkin->> (last accessed 23 October 2022)
- Waters, Keith, Martin, Henry, Larson, Steve, Strunk, Steven, "Circular Thinking—A Roundtable on 'Blue in Green' and 'Nefertiti'", *Journal of Jazz Studies*, 11, 1, 2016, 105-120.
- Watson, Philip. *Bill Frisell. Beautiful Dreamer*. London: Faber & Faber, 2022.
- Williams, Martin. *Jazz in its Times*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.
- Zenni, Stefano. *Storia del jazz. Una prospettiva globale*. Roma: Stampa Alternativa, 2012.

“The Final Continent”: Geographies of Emotions and Emotional Geographies in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Short Fiction

Éva Pataki

University of Debrecen

Introduction

In the “Introduction” to their edited volume, *Emotional Geographies* (2007), Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith point out that emotional geography has “a common concern with the spatiality and temporality of emotions, with the way they coalesce around and within certain places” (3). A study of literary representations of this spatiality may be especially suitable for unraveling the complex emotional relations between people and environments and may lead to a better understanding of geographies of emotions and emotional geographies, that is, the “intersubjective representations of territories” articulated through memory (Proglío 10) and how feelings generate and mediate our behaviors in and attitudes to places and spaces through bodily and lived experience and emotional associations. My paper maps the location and formation of emotions in and with regards to places, investigating the interconnections between individuals’ sense of place, remembering through place, affective relationships and attachments, in a selection of Jhumpa Lahiri’s short stories: “The Third and Final Continent” from *The Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), as well as “Unaccustomed Earth” and “Going Ashore” from *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008). Engaging in a close reading of Lahiri’s texts with a primary focus on the aspect of emotional geography, my interdisciplinary analysis charts the development of emotional attachment and a concomitant sense of belonging and self in the characters, as well as of their evolving affective

relationships with people and (remembered) places. My contention is that the two processes intertwine, are mutually constructive, and constantly changing, as emotions are fundamentally “relational flows, fluxes or currents, in-between people and places” (Davidson et al, 3).

Davidson et al. also point out that “much of the symbolic importance of [...] places stems from their emotional associations, the feelings they inspire of awe, dread, worry, loss or love” (3) – as demonstrated by the multitude of emotional geographies in Lahiri’s fiction. Born in the UK to Bengali parents and immigrating to the US at the age of three, Lahiri has had a first hand experience of the diasporic condition, portrayed so eloquently in her short story collections *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999) and *Unaccustomed Earth* (2008), as well as her novel *The Namesake* (2003). Her writings may thus be regarded, on one hand, as postcolonial immigrant narratives, with an emphasis on the immigrant experience, uprooting and re-rooting, a crisis of cultural identity generated by straddling two worlds, and Bhabhaian hybridity as a “third space” of the “in-between” (38), as well as mapping geographies where “emotional displacement, cultural habitations, and liminality are experienced” (Bruno 347). On the other hand, with its transnational, often cosmopolitan characters, her fiction may also be labelled “neo-cosmopolitan,” which Binod Paudyal explains as “blurring the distinction between home and abroad, and [...] imagining a global community, characterized by transcultural exchanges and transnational affiliations” (16). Interpreted as such, Lahiri’s fiction may also be approached from the field of literary geography – “the study of *space in literature*; or else, *of literature in space*” (Moretti 3, original emphasis) –, investigating the specific role of geographical locations in shaping the narrative structure of the stories (Moretti 8) and the identity of the characters. Furthermore, drawing on Bertrand Westphal’s geocritical concepts of multifocalization and polysensoriality (122), emphasizing the importance of consulting multiple texts and interpretations for a more complex and thorough understanding of places, as well as on and Yi-Fu Tuan’s (1990) notion of topophilia, denoting an affective bond between people and place, an analysis of geography in Lahiri’s writings may offer considerable new insights into place/specific places and the processes through which such emotional bonds are created.

Within and at the intersection of these various approaches, the present study focuses primarily on the interconnectedness of geography and emotions with regards to Lahiri’s ‘fictional’ diasporians, mapping

the character's literal-metaphorical journeys and emotional geographies through analyzing their affective bonds with both people and places, and the vital role these emotional relationships play in a redefinition of the notion of home, of belonging, and, by extension, of the self.

Re-rooting

Home is where the heart is. As commonplace as it may sound, the old saying could be a suitable epigraph to Lahiri's fiction, including her short story, "The Third and Final Continent." The unnamed protagonist-narrator immigrates from India to the US (via the UK) for a job, arriving with the preconception and expectations of tourists – a temporary engagement with space and place – only to form an emotional attachment to and sense of belonging in his chosen home through the meaningful human relationships he builds with his first landlady, Mrs. Croft, and later his wife, Mala.

The protagonist's first impression of Cambridge, Massachusetts, involves a sensory and bodily experience of sounds: "flashing sirens," "a powerful hiss, throughout the night," a "distracting, at times suffocating" noise he feels "deep in [his] ribs" (TFC 191), which resonate with the uneasy feeling of having to adjust and find his place in a strange land. For the next six weeks, the narrator tries to create a sense of belonging by looking for familiarities between Britain and the US, such as going to Woolworth's and reading the Boston Globe so that he "would grow familiar with things" (TFC 192) but initially it is rendered difficult by the difference, which manifests itself in the bodily experience of the "stifling room" and the "suffocating" noise outside (TFC 191). What makes the recollection of his early days of arriving in and trying to adjust to the US so intriguing and his attempt so futile is that he uses London "the narrator's second and transitional continent" (Bahri), as a point of reference, not his home town Calcutta, that is, he compares one immigrant experience to the other, which may lead to a sense of familiarity but – due to the transitoriness of both – not to that of belonging. A few weeks later he finds a temporary abode at an old widow's house in a street "shaded with trees," "stray blades of grass pok[ing] between the cracks of the footpath" and "a tangle of forsythia bushes" (TFC 194), where "the alien and foreign [mingles] differently into the familiar" (Bahri), as exemplified by his daily encounter with Mrs. Croft – characterized with the adjectives "tough," "battered," and sharp" but interestingly giving him

“undivided attention” (TFC 194) – and their endless conversation about the landing on the moon, which she demands to be acknowledged by an amazed “Splendid!” (TFC 196) and which is, apparently, a symbolic parallel with the narrator’s move to the US. With time, this routine creates familiarity and slowly turns into a concern, then empathy for the 103-year-old woman. Taking care of her upon her daughter’s request generates a growing sense of belonging as “a yearning to make skin stretch beyond individual needs and wants” (Probyn 6), that is, truly caring for someone, which he only becomes fully aware of when realizing his own disappointment with the old woman acknowledging his leaving for new lodgings with a simple, rather aloof “Good-bye, then” (TFC 208).

The narrator’s warm relationship with Mrs. Croft is juxtaposed to his initial distant and cold attitude to Mala, his wife through an arranged marriage. In the first few days of their marriage (before his move to the US), he does nothing to console her when Mala cries. Instead, he reads his guidebook excitedly, displaying more interest in the US than his wife. Later he remains untouched by her words in the letter she has sent, and, upon her arrival from India, he appears to be somewhat irritated by having to help her get adjusted to her new way of life, explaining his attitude by claiming “I was [...] used to sitting on the bench with Mrs. Croft. The only thing I was not used to was Mala” (TFC 208), despite their shared roots and cultural identity. As Deepika Bahri notes, Lahiri here suggests that “the foreign may be recognised as familiar, the familiar seen alien,” depending on emotional attachment or the lack thereof, which greatly determines the narrator’s sense of place as well: the couple’s first home does not feel like home. This perception may be explained by his lack of emotional participation, a crucial element of experiencing a spatial environment (Hasse 52), and implies an “interconnected location of emotions in people and places” (Davidson et al. 6).

A profound change in the couple’s relationship begins when he takes Mala for a walk in Mrs. Croft’s street, in an unconscious attempt to create some kind of a connection between the familiar of his new circumstances (Mrs. Croft and her house) and the unfamiliar of his old life (Mala). Mrs. Croft and Mala’s encounter finally breaks the ice between the couple as he realizes their shared experience of immigration. His wife’s gestures and attitude, when being inspected by the old lady, remind the narrator of his first day of arriving in London, the sense of being a stranger, of having to prove himself and adjust to a new cultural space. Furthermore,

Mrs. Croft's claim that Mala was "a perfect lady" (TFC 213), creates a point of connection, not only between the two women, through their shared attribute of modesty, but between the narrator and Mala as well, the former recognizing familiarity in the latter, which leads him to develop an emotional attachment and a shared sense of belonging in their new home as well: "we looked at each other and smiled. I like to think of that moment in Mrs. Croft's parlor as the moment when the distance between Mala and me began to lessen. Although we were not yet fully in love, I like to think of the months that followed as a honeymoon of sorts. Together we explored the city and met other Bengalis, some of whom are still friends today" (TFC 214). Their newly found connection leads the narrator to develop a shared sense of belonging as well, an "emotional (even ontological) attachment, [...] a feeling 'at home'" (Yuval-Davis 10): their mapping of the city leads to an increasingly growing familiarity and attachment, turning Cambridge into an emotional geography, as their bond strengthens and they create more relationships from the local shopkeeper to fellow immigrants, suggesting that emotions are "intrinsically relational" (Davidson et al. 7).

When learning about Mrs. Croft's death, the narrator puts down the sense of loss to the fact that "Mrs. Croft's was the first death I mourned in America, for hers was the first life I had admired" (TFC 214-15). As he knew very little of the old lady, this admiration may be better explained by the sense of home she helped create in him through their emotional relationship, well-illustrated by the fact that some twenty years later, when visiting his son in college, the narrator always drives through Mrs. Croft's street, reliving the memories and recalling their shared experience with Mala, amazed "that there was ever a time that we were strangers" (TFC 215). When the narrator claims that "here was my first home in America" (TFC 215), his perception and memory of the old lady's house as 'home' indicates both the development of emotional attachment and the location thereof: Mrs. Croft and her house "became a fixed point in the geography of his story about becoming a citizen, a husband, and a father" (Boykin Hardy 36-37). Mrs. Croft indirectly aided the narrator in developing an emotional bond with his wife, as well as having a sense of belonging to place and space, Cambridge, and, by extension, the USA as well – a legacy his son can be proud of:

Whenever he is discouraged I tell him that if I can survive on three continents than there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent

mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have traveled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there are times when it is beyond my imagination.” (TFC 216)

The protagonist’s words indicate that his experience and achievement, unbelievable yet likewise “splendid,” mirrors that of the astronauts, in terms of the distance they traveled and the unfamiliarity awaiting them at the final destination, “the final continent.” His memories of the journey towards emotional attachment and a sense of belonging, both metaphorical and geographical, echo Owain Jones’s claim about the spatiality of memory, as it is “bound up with processes of place and emotional attachments to place” (Jones 213). By the same token, the protagonist’s memories of home and developed sense of being highlight what Steve Pile calls the spatiality of narratives of the self (111), i.e. coming to life through the interconnectedness of self, memory, place, and emotional attachment and resonate with Jones’s claim that “remembering being-in-place, and perhaps remembering through place, through emotions of (remembered) place are powerful elements of emotional geographies of the self” (213).

The same link and inherent spatiality are further explored in Lahiri’s “Unaccustomed Earth,” which reveals the complex emotional relationship of Ruma and his retired father, through the story of his brief visit to Ruma’s new home in Seattle and the memories of their past. Their narrative describes a host of (emotional) geographies: the places and spaces they visit, inhabit, or call home, take roots in or run away from. While in “The Third and Final Continent” first Mrs. Croft and her house, then Mala served as metaphors for home, in “Unaccustomed Earth” taking roots is metaphorised through the trope of the garden, likewise intertwined with emotional relationships to people and home.

For Ruma’s father, gardening is a solitary activity and a labor of love. The memory of toiling “in unfriendly soil” (UE 16) in the garden of their home in the early years of immigration not only reveals the difficulties of settling in the host country but also “his ability to choose his own fate” (Hsin-Ju 177). Furthermore, Lahiri uses the metaphor of gardening to show how emotional landscapes are created and cultivated through emotional bonds with people. Besides roots, the garden too symbolizes home for the

father and in this interpretation, it is inextricably linked to his late wife: “It was the one thing he missed about the old house, and when he thought about his garden was when he missed his wife most keenly. She had taken that from him” (UE 49). Apparently, having lost his wife, he decided to sell the house and move to a small flat alone, an action that his daughter perceives as “wiping out her mother’s presence” (UE 6). The trauma caused by her sudden death is thus readily connected to the loss of the family home, including the garden, as well as his inability (or, perhaps, unwillingness) to continue working towards a sense of belonging, which marks a considerable change in his emotional geographies as well. If home is lost and emotional attachment to people and places causes pain, then traveling and the detachment of the tourist seems to be the obvious solution, offering the promise of uprooting and motion, which he is wishing for and deliberately choosing.

Uprooting

When, after his wife’s death, the father sells their home and starts going on package tours in Europe “in the company of strangers” (UE 3), he seems to be searching for the unfamiliar, for no emotional attachment, no roots, no belonging through his travels. The neutral tone of the postcards he sends to his daughter makes her think “there was never a sense of her father’s presence in those places” (UE 4). As opposed to the narrator of “The Third and Final Continent,” who searches for familiarity for the sake of emotional attachment, and creates home and a sense of belonging in the US through emotional relationships, Ruma’s father opts for the opposite, abandoning his home and finding a sense of freedom granted by his travels. His constantly being on the move may suggest the uprootedness of the diasporian as he becomes “the unlikely transnational subject” (James 49), and his lack of presence in these places may indicate a conscious choice of not belonging. Staring through the window of a plane, “[t]he sight filled him with peace; this was his life now, the ability to do as he pleased, the responsibility of his family absent just as all else was absent from the unmolested vision of the clouds” (UE 8). It is this absence that characterizes his emotional landscape, projected onto the geography of his travels. In contrast with the annual visits back to India with his family, laden with anxiety, sadness, and shame, in Europe he can adopt the emotional detachment of the tourist instead of

the emotional attachment and concomitant painful memories of the man ‘at home’ – at least until he meets a fellow traveler, Mrs. Bagchi, described as “adamant about not marrying, about never sharing her home with another man, conditions which made the prospect of her companionship all the more appealing” (UE 9). It seems that the father is drawn to her because of her independence, having no strings attached, and unbelonging. On the other hand, as both prefer solitude (UE 29), their relationship is based more on a need for companionship, on similarities rather than differences – it is an emotional bond between two kindred spirits, which does not contribute to attachment to and belonging in place.

At this point, as Ruma notes, “wearing a baseball cap that said POMPEII, [...] her father resembled an American in his old age. With his gray hair and fair skin he could have been practically from anywhere” (UE 11). What is most noteworthy about this quotation is that the father’s appearance as an American tourist, and always knowing the exact distance between A and B, workplace and home, suggests both physical and mental assimilation and a sense of belonging to his chosen home, evoking Jones’s assertion that “[e]ach spatialized, felt moment or sequence of the now-being-laid-down is, (more or less), mapped into our bodies and minds to become a vast store of past geographies which shape who we are and the ongoing process of life” (206). On the other hand, the father’s image and behavior as a tourist point to a desire for rootlessness, for belonging in movement. His wife’s death taught him that belonging and emotional attachment lead to unavoidable and unbearable loss. Therefore, he is watching life and places indirectly, through frames – a typical tourist behavior entailing the lack of participation and attachment – and counting/keeping distance from the familiar (family and home) but embracing the unfamiliar (Mrs. Bagchi and traveling the world).

Between two trips, the father pays a short visit to his daughter in her new home in Seattle, which generates a surprising sense of familiarity and triggers memories of the past: in Europe “he was reminded of his early days in America, understanding only a word or two of what people said, handling different coins” but in Seattle, “as on a summer night in Pennsylvania, moths fluttered against the window screen, and sometimes an insect would bang against it, startling him with its force” (UE 28). While the detachment and unbelonging of the tourist are reminiscent of the immigrant’s sense of rootlessness and placelessness, through the sense of similarity between his old home and Seattle that this memory creates, Seattle becomes a place that

he could emotionally attach to – due to its familiarity and the presence of family, and especially his grandson, the next generation that could strike roots in this land. The emotional association of the two memories thus demonstrates the way emotions “interact constantly with our conscious and unconscious selves, memories and environment” and how these associations as “transactions of body(ies), space(s), mind(s), feeling(s)” help the father “make sense of/practice the world” (Jones 205-6).

Jones’s words become especially noteworthy when examining the following memory of the family home: “The bedroom in which Romi and Ruma had both been conceived was dreary, morning light never penetrating, and yet he considered it, still, the most sacred of spaces. He recalled his children running through the rooms, the pitch of their young voices. It was a part of their lives only he and his wife carried with them” (UE 29). It seems that the memory of becoming a father and the emotional relationship with his family is what turns places (whether the family home or Ruma’s house) into emotional geographies, with an inherent opportunity to become home and provide him with a sense of belonging. The fact that Seattle triggers the memory of the first home in US, a small apartment in Garden City, New Jersey, and all it stands for may therefore be one of the reasons why the father does not want to go sightseeing in Seattle but instead turn his attention to cultivating Ruma’s garden, a task that allows him to bond with his grandson and teach him his native Bengali language. On the other hand, he admits to himself that he might be emotionally detached from Ruma because she “resembled his wife so strongly that he could not bear to look at her directly” (UE 27), and he fears having to face the memory of his wife, of losing her and abandoning their home.

The father thus turns down Ruma’s offer to move in with her, convincing himself that he “didn’t want to live again in an enormous house that would only fill up with things over the years” (UE 53) – a decision which might be justified by his ambivalent memories of and relationship with his ‘old home.’ Admitting to himself that the place he used to call home for decades was now just “the old house” where “he was still stuck in his former life” (UE 30) reveals how “emotions are embodied through an exploration of the shifting nature of emotional attachment to place” (Davidson et al. 6) and explains why he declines the offer saying “It is a good place, Ruma. But this is your home, not mine” (UE 52). Living with her daughter’s family would equal a return to a settled, rooted life – instead, the father chooses absence and freedom found in non-attachment to places and creates new,

different emotional geographies, based on what Elspeth Probyn refers to as “movement within belonging” (40) and belonging in movement.

A similar attitude to attachment and belonging may be detected in “Going Ashore,” the final short story of “Part Two: Hema and Kaushik,” a love story of two second-generation immigrants from India to the US, set mainly in Rome and the Italian countryside. The male protagonist, Kaushik, works as a photojournalist, drifting “across the globe without making meaningful ties” (GA 306), that is, building only temporary emotional relationships with both people and places. His travels offer him a chance to deliberately avoid the US, where he was born, and when nevertheless going there, to avoid “the miserable day trip to Massachusetts to see his father’s new life” (GA 305) with a new wife, echoing Davidson et al.’s idea of “the dynamic emotional interplay between [...] environments and people who variously use and avoid them” (9). Having an apartment in Rome as a temporary abode to inhabit between two trips, Kaushik cannot help but recall his first visit to Rome with his mother: “He remembered Rome, of course, from the only other time he’d gone there, on the way back from Bombay to Massachusetts with his parents. His mother was dying [...] And he had returned like a pilgrim to those places” (GA 307). Rome may not be home to Kaushik, but his memories reveal a certain degree of emotional attachment to the Italian city due to his affective relationship with his mother, whose memory is engrained in every stone of the city, turning it into both a deathscape, i.e. a place associated with death (Cf. Maddrell and Sidaway, 2010) and an emotional geography.

In contrast, when his father and his new wife visit him in Rome, instead of the memories coming to life at every corner, at each site and sensation, he feels that “they had left no dent on the place, and he never thought of their presence on the streets of Rome as he continued to think, now and again, of his mother’s” (GA 307). The father’s visit to Rome triggers a strange bodily experience:

In the lush grounds of the Protestant Cemetery, Kaushik had thought that a gnat was circling his head, and he kept swatting at it, putting out his fingers trying to flick it away. But the speck continued to accompany him wherever he went, quietly tormenting him, and he realized it was within him, that it was not possible to remove it or make it stop. [...] He was told he would grow used to it, and he had, more or less, not bothered these days [...] And yet it felt like an invasion of the part of his body, the physical sense that was most precious: something that betrayed him and also refused to abandon him” (GA 307-8).

A gnat in his head invading his body and tormenting him may be read as a metaphorical invasion of memories of his deceased mother and of the negative thoughts connected to his father, who seemingly moved on after his wife's death, creating a rift in his relationship with Kaushik, propelling him to avoid the family home and the US altogether, cutting all ties and uprooting, only to realize that although unbelonging may be a conscious choice, memories of the past unconsciously creep up on him and linger. It appears, then, that Kaushik's complex emotional relationship with Rome is just as much the product of his inability to let go of the fond yet painful memories of his mother as of his desperate attempt to not form any emotional bond with his father's new family. His loss and detachment may be read as a symbolic death of his roots or, as Reshmi Dutt-Ballerstadt puts it, "the death of memory and a disruption of the hyphenated existence when the hyphen itself is disrupted" (161). Whenever he returns 'home' from his travels, "the land provokes an emotional response" (Bruno 377) and as Kaushik revives and re-lives these memories and projects them, as well as the emotions they entail, onto the Italian capital thereby contributing to its atmosphere.

According to Gernot Böhme, "Atmospheres are indeterminate above all as regards their ontological status. We are not sure whether we should attribute them to the objects or environments from which they proceed or to the subjects who experience them (114). Kaushik's memories of "the strong shaft of light that poured through the dome of the Pantheon" and "clusters of swallows like giant thumbprints swiping the sky" when visiting the city with his mother entail a sense of warmth and freedom, while the bodily experience of a gnat in his head when visited by the father suggests discomfort and an invasion of his private sphere. It is the combination of these two experiences, and the positive and negative emotions they generate that determine both Kaushik's attitude toward Rome and the atmosphere of the city, highlighting an inextricable link between emotions, bodily and lived experience, and atmosphere, and recalling Schmid, Sahr and Urry's assertion that "emotions are not private states of the inner world of the soul, but they are spatially extended atmospheres" (58), as well as Böhme's idea that the atmosphere of the city is mainly sensually perceived, and intrinsically, bodily felt since it is "scripted in emotional states of being" (Plesske 139).

Another aspect of Rome influencing Kaushik's emotional attitude and thwarting the possibility of forming an emotional attachment to it is the fact that "in Rome, in all of Europe, he was always regarded as an Indian first" (GA 311), alien and unbelonging. Thus, the metropolis turns

out to be a “liminal environment, at once reminiscent and distancing” (James 51). When Kaushik decides to move to Hong Kong for a job, it is pointed out that “[t]he thought of leaving the city, the streets he now navigated with ease, made him melancholy” (GA 308), a sense of sadness and loss he cannot explain since, as opposed to his mother, who no matter “where she was in the world, or whether or not she was dying; [...] had always given everything to make her homes beautiful, always drawn strength from her things, her walls,” he “never fully trusted the places he’d lived, never turned to them for refuge” and he “wanted to believe [...] in ten minutes he could be on his way to anywhere in the world. But he knew that it was impossible, wherever he landed, not to form attachments” (GA 309). The quotation reveals Kaushik’s difficulties in forming emotional attachment to places and people (due to his loss, much like Ruma’s father in “Unaccustomed Earth”) and his unwilling acceptance of the inevitability thereof, which may explain his melancholy and attempt to re-write this emotional geography through his brief affair with Hema (the climax of their almost lifelong acquaintance) and the trips they make together, mapping Italy and creating their own emotional geography of it. However, this shared experience is likewise imbued with a sense of loss, both that of his mother and foreshadowing the end of their relationship, indicating that “emotions experienced as if in the present moment are never free of the past but are instead always re-encountered” (Davidson et al. 12).

“Striking” roots

The impact of the past on present emotions “in ways that simultaneously evoke familiarity and freshness” (Davidson et al. 12) is something that the female protagonist of “Going Ashore” likewise experiences during her stay in Rome. Hema has been to Rome three times: first as a tourist, engaging in common tourist activities and creating an emotional relationship with the Italian capital through what John Urry calls “the pleasures of place,” derived “at least in part from the emotions involved in visual consumption of place” (82). For the second time, she went under “false pretenses” (GA 295), accompanying his married lover, which left her with unpleasant memories as the trip “was a heap of rubble that added up to nothing” (GA 296). For the third time, Hema stays in Rome before heading off to Calcutta for an arranged marriage – enjoying the last days of her ‘freedom,’ doing

research on Etruscan history, and making the following comparison: “Like Calcutta, which she’d visited throughout childhood, Rome was a city she knew on the one hand intimately and on the other hand not at all – a place that fully absorbed her and also kept her at bay” (GA 299). Hema’s words suggest the double status of the insider (a professor of Italian history) and outsider (a tourist), an ambivalent ontological and emotional relationship to the Italian capital, characterized by a deep interest in Rome which, however, resists her and denies her the opportunity to develop a sense of emotional attachment. This soon changes when she runs into and starts an affair with her childhood love interest, Kaushik. As both Hema and Kaushik connect Rome with people they have loved and lost, their unexpected surge of emotions, which nevertheless feels completely natural, as if predestined, as well as their positive experience of the city and its atmosphere underlines Kaushik’s claim of the impossibility of not forming emotional attachment to places and suggests that specific “environments have the capacity to transform people’s (emotional) lives” (Davidson et al. 8).

While Rome and the Italian countryside they discover together strengthen the emotional bond between the two lovers and help create memorable emotional geographies, Hema and Kaushik’s final trip to Volterra suggests a different relationship with place through unpleasant bodily experience and thus foreshadows the end of their love affair. The ancient Etruscan town is an “austere, forbidding, solitary place,” which feels “remote, impervious to tourists and time” (GA 318). As opposed to the familiar, warm atmosphere of Rome, which “had hidden them, enabled them, their affair one of thousands,” in Volterra Hema “felt singled out, exposed” (GA 318), sensing the indifference of the locals. In her experience “[i]t was a nearly silent place, apart from the sharp sound of their footsteps, the insistent coupled notes of the bells, the shriek of the wind. At that great height the wind was constant, striking their faces and agitating their hair” (GA 318). The phenomenological experience and atmosphere of coldness and distance signal the two diasporic subjects’ otherness and echo the couple’s irreconcilable differences in terms of their attitude to belonging and emotional attachment. Hema envies the locals as she feels she has “never belonged to any place that way” (GA 320), which may explain her decision to marry – a status she hopes to help her settle, strike roots, and have a sense of belonging. Therefore, she turns down Kaushik’s invitation to move to Hong Kong with him and chooses the reliable emotional attachment that her arranged marriage entails, while

the man continues traveling, opting for belonging in movement until he tragically dies in a tsunami on Thai shores. The memory of their love affair in Rome lives on in Hema as part of the emotional geographies of her life, illustrating how, through memory, “we all carry traces of past geographies, in ways that are always emotionally coloured” (Davidson et al. 12).

Similarly, the interconnectedness of geographies and emotions triggered by memories of the past is a vital part of how Ruma’s father in “Unaccustomed Earth” relates to the concept of home, roots, and belonging, as his visit brings back the long-forgotten memories of what ‘home’ and ‘taking roots’ meant for him. When he recalls the first years of immigration and how he “toiled in unfriendly soil” (UE 16) while creating the garden of his new home in his new country, he decides to do the same in his daughter’s backyard with the help of his 3-year-old grandson, Akash. Interestingly, this is where the title of the short story and the volume gains special significance: borrowed from Hawthorne’s preface to *The Scarlet Letter*, voicing the wish that his children “shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth” (7), the phrase is used by Lahiri linked to horticulture as a symbol of diasporic subjects’ cultural displacement and endeavors to take roots and is manifested in Ruma’s father’s intentions to help Akash, “flourish in alien soil” (Hsin-Ju 176).

The shared experience helps create an emotional bond between Akash and his grandfather and, for a split second, makes the latter want to reconsider his choice of unbelonging: “The only temptation was the boy, but he knew that the boy would forget him. [...] Oddly, it was his grandson, who was only half-Bengali to begin with, who did not even have a Bengali surname, with whom he felt a direct biological connection, a sense of himself reconstituted in another” (UA 53-54). It is this sense of familiarity and of the continuation of his self that leads him to form a bond with Akash, an unplanned but much appreciated emotional attachment which, however, does not make him want to stay and be ‘at home’ again. Nevertheless, the metaphor of gardening may also reveal how emotional landscapes are created and cultivated through emotional bonds with people, and indicates that memory – in this case, the grandfather and the grandson’s shared memory of gardening – plays “a key, formative role in the construction of our ongoing emotional and imaginative geographies” (Jones 210).

Indirectly, Akash and his grandfather’s shared experience and emotional bond also aid Ruma in dealing with her growing sense of isolation and rootlessness in her new home in Seattle, described as follows:

“Though she was growing familiar with the roads, with the exits and the mountains and the quality of the light, she felt no connection to any of it, or to anyone” (UE 34). Watching her father and son plant in the garden, Ruma recognizes the importance of re-rooting and forming an emotional attachment to her new home and surroundings. Although he himself opts for non-attachment and unbelonging, the father offers a possibility for the further generations to grow in this soil and to re-connect with him (and the mother, represented by her favorite plant) at the level of memory and an emotional relationship with place, and shows his daughter the merits of “striking roots into unaccustomed earth.”

Conclusion

For Lahiri, as Leah Harte notes, “borders, boundaries, maps and geography in a broad sense are indicative of her characters in terms of personal spaces, narrative location, actual countries/nations and in relation to immigrant communities” (67-68). The three short stories analyzed here portray not only the spatiality of the diasporic experience but also reveal that “[l]ife is inherently spatial, and inherently emotional” (Jones 205), and that it always already involves creating emotional geographies, just as “a work of fiction [too] may function as an emotional geography” (Smith et al. 31).

These emotional geographies are developed through complex interconnections between individuals’ sense of place and affective relationships, manifested in attachment and detachment, belonging in place and in movement, concepts of home and roots, and are heavily influenced by memory. The unnamed narrator of “The Third and Final Continent” develops a sense of home and belonging through his gradually evolving emotional relationship with his landlady, who also indirectly aids him in creating an emotional attachment to his wife, and thereby a sense of belonging in the host country. For Ruma in “Unaccustomed Earth,” her new life and surroundings in Seattle become home through the relationship evolving between her son and her father, and her family achieves a sense of belonging by striking roots – both metaphorically and literally. Lahiri portrays emotional relationships and fond or painful memories as a vital part of the diasporic subject’s attachment to or detachment from places and people, of a sense of belonging and unbelonging. After his wife’s death and selling the family home, the primary place of memories, Ruma’s

father deliberately chooses the non-attachment of the tourist, engaging in a fleeting relationship with both places and people through his travels. Although he forms an emotional bond with his grandson during his short visit and helps Akash and Ruma create roots and a sense of belonging, he himself chooses belonging in movement. Likewise, having lost his mother, the most important emotional relationship in his life, as well as a sense of home after his father remarries, Kaushik in “Going Ashore” spends his adult life constantly traveling, inhabiting places temporarily in an attempt to avoid forming any emotional attachment, only to realize the impossibility thereof. His brief affair with Hema in Rome offers the possibility of re-writing his painful memories of the city with happy ones, of enjoying emotional attachment and a sense of belonging to a person – but not to place. He invites Hema to share his traveling lifestyle and belong in movement, an offer she declines for the sake of a traditional form of emotional attachment to place and people through marriage.

Although they differ in terms of their attitudes to relationships, attachment, and belonging, Lahiri’s characters analyzed here all make places an unalienable part of their own story through bodily and lived experience – the emotions and atmospheres bodily felt and the choices made –, thus creating their own emotional geographies of the places they inhabit, whether temporarily or permanently. As argued, their stories shed light on the link between forming affective relationships with people and places and the spatiality of memory on the one hand, and attachment, a sense of belonging, and emotional geographies on the other, in a way that the two processes intertwine, are mutually constructive and constantly changing.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Bahri, Deepika. "Aliens, Aliases, Surrogates and Familiars: The Family in Jhumpa Lahiri's Short Stories." *Security, Socialisation and Affect in Indian Families: Unfamiliar Ground*. Ed. Ira Raja. E-book. Routledge, 2014.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. 1994. Routledge, 2005.
- Bondi, Liz, Joyce Davidson, and Mick Smith, "Introduction: Geography's 'Emotional Turn.'" *Emotional Geographies*, edited by Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith, Ashgate, 2007, pp. 1-16.
- Böhme, Gernot. "Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics." *Thesis Eleven*, vol. 36, no. 1, 1993, pp. 113-26.
- Boykin Hardy, Sarah. "Geographies of Aging in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'The Third and Final Continent' and Jeffrey Eugenides's *Middlesex*." *Aging Masculinities in Contemporary U.S. Fiction*, edited by Joseph M. Armengol, Palgrave Macmillan, 2021.
- Bruno, Giuliana. *Atlas of Emotions*. Verso, 2018.
- Dutt-Ballerstadt, Reshmi. "Gendered belonging: First and second-generation migrants in the works of Jhumpa Lahiri." *Naming Jhumpa Lahiri: Canons and Controversies*, edited by Lavina Dhingra and Floyd Cheung, Lexington, 2012.
- Harte, Leah. "The Borderland of Identity and a B-Side to the Self: Jhumpa Lahiri's 'When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine', 'The Third and Final Continent' and 'Unaccustomed Earth.'" *Passages: Movements and Moments in Text and Theory*, edited by Maria Beville, Marita Ryan, and Maeve Tynan, Cambridge Scholars, 2009, pp. 63-76.
- Hasse, Jürgen. "Emotions in an Urban Environment: Embellishing the Cities from the Perspective of the Humanities." *Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning*, edited by Heiko Schmid, Wolf-Dietrich Sahr, and John Urry, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 49-74.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. 1850. Courier Corporation, 1994.
- Hsin-Ju, Kuo. "'Strike Their Roots into Unaccustomed Earth' in an Era of New Genetics: Diasporic Identity Politics and Genealogy Re-Considered in Jhumpa Lahiri's 'Unaccustomed Earth'." *Transnational Narratives in Englishes of Exile*, edited by Catarina Florina Florescu and Sheng Mei Ma, Lexington, 2018, pp. 173-92.

- James, David. "Worlded Localisms: Cosmopolitics Writ Small." *Postmodern Literature and Race*, edited by Len Platt and Sara Upstone, Cambridge UP, 2015, pp. 47-61.
- Jones, Owain. "An Ecology of Emotion, Memory, Self and Landscape." *Emotional Geographies*, edited by Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith, Ashgate, 2007, pp. 205-18.
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. "Going Ashore." *Unaccustomed Earth*. E-book, Knopf, 2008, pp. 294-333.
- . "Unaccustomed Earth." *Unaccustomed Earth*. E-book, Knopf, 2008. pp. 3-59.
- . *The Namesake*. Mariner Books, 2003.
- . "The Third and Final Continent." *The Interpreter of Maladies*. E-book, Mariner, 1999. pp. 189-216.
- Maddrell, Avril, and James D. Sidaway, editors. *Deathscapes: Spaces for Death, Dying, Mourning and Remembrance*. Ashgate, 2010.
- Moretti, Franco. *Atlas of the European Novel: 1800-1900*. Verso, 1999.
- Paudyal, Binod. "Breaking the Boundary: Reading Lahiri's The Lowland as a Neocosmopolitan Fiction." *South Asian review*, Dec. 2015, pp. 15-31.
- Pile, Steve. "Memory and The City." *Temporalities, Autobiography and Everyday Life*, edited by Jan Campbell and Janet Harbord, Manchester UP, 2002, pp. 111-27.
- Plesske, Nora. *The Intelligible Metropolis: Urban Mentality in Contemporary London Novels*. Transcript, 2014.
- Probyn, Elspeth. *Outside Belongings*. Routledge, 1996.
- Proglgio, Gabriele. *The Horn of Africa Diasporas in Italy: An Oral History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.
- Schmid, Heiko, Wolf-Dietrich Sahr, and John Urry, "Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning." *Cities and Fascination: Beyond the Surplus of Meaning*, edited by Heiko Schmid, Wolf-Dietrich Sahr, and John Urry, Routledge, 2016, pp. 1-13.
- Smith, Mick, et al., editors. "Introduction: Geography and Emotion – Emerging Constellations." *Emotion, Place and Culture*. Ashgate, 2009, pp. 1-18.
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values*. Columbia UP, 1990.
- Urry, John. "The Place of Emotions Within Place." *Emotional Geographies*, edited by Joyce Davidson, Liz Bondi, and Mick Smith, Ashgate, 2007, pp. 77-83.
- Westphal, Bertrand. *Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Spaces*. Translated by Robert T. Tally, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.
- Yuval-Davis, Nira. *The Politics of Belonging: Intersectional Contestations*. SAGE, 2011.

Horcrux or Hallow?

Magical projections of the psyche in *Harry Potter*

Alessandra Petrina

Università di Padova

*T*wenty-five years after the publication of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, after the wizarding world created by Joanne Rowling has spawned not only books, but films, websites, plays, a huge readership and a whole entertainment industry, and Rowling herself has moved to writing different sorts of fiction, it is possible to look back at the original seven novels and consider how they progress from children's school stories to young adults' spy stories, and how in this progress the role of magic develops and transforms. The present article charts this progress, starting from the hypothesis that the development of magic and the changes in its use are revelatory in narrative and psychological terms. It is only once Rowling makes magic fully part of the characters themselves that it becomes structurally, and not just superficially, satisfying. In the second part of the series magic becomes at last a fundamental element of the story, while hitherto it had been used, in what had been first and foremost a boarding school narrative setting, as an element of entertaining but almost superfluous decoration. The dichotomy between Horcruxes and Hallows, highlighted in the final volume of the series, becomes an articulate metaphor of the ways in which good and evil are reflected in the individual psyche; the very ambiguity of the magical objects highlights the impossibility of a Manichean approach to such a dichotomy. Within this perspective, the fourth volume of the series was a turning point, as highlighted by Rowling herself, who in an interview shortly following the

publication of the book declared, “This book was the culmination of 10 years’ work, and something very big in terms of my ongoing plot happens at the end, and it rounds off an era; the remaining three books are a different era in Harry’s life” (Jensen online).

To those excited readers queuing in bookshops on 8 July 2000, the opening pages of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* reserved a surprise, clearly showing that the tone had changed. Earlier volumes had dutifully opened with the Roald-Dahl-like atmosphere of the Dursley household and the familiar and domestic horrors attached to it, with Harry being mistreated and patiently awaiting the first of September and the beginning of school: a device that had become predictable by the third volume of the series. *Goblet of Fire*, instead, introduced us to a totally new dimension: the action began no longer in Little Whinging, Surrey, but in the more sinisterly named Little Hangleton; the class setting moved from stolid middle class to what is supposedly minor aristocracy; and the reader’s attention was focussed not upon a boring present made of lawns to be mowed and houses to be cleaned, but on a horrific tragedy. Fifty years earlier, in the village manor, once beautiful and imposing and now “damp, derelict and unoccupied” (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* 7), the Riddle family had been mysteriously killed. Readers at this point were already familiar with Voldemort, his untraceable killing methods and his murderous past, and no-one liked the Riddle family anyway, but the tale of this mass murder was chilling in its cold detail.

Readers, on the other hand, could enjoy an advantage over the bemused Hangletonians for whom the tragedy had remained inexplicable, and there was a certain intellectual satisfaction in re-tracing Voldemort’s early career in crime. What was really surprising was the section immediately following this flashback, which saw Voldemort, in the present time of the novel, re-visiting the scene and choosing the decayed manor as his temporary home. The scene was set from the point of view of a marginal and hitherto unknown character, Frank Bryce, the old gardener of Riddle House, and it concluded suddenly with his unnecessary, casual murder. Death had always been present in the Harry Potter series, evoked or narrowly escaped in the adventures of the hero, but what we were faced with at this point was the actual brutality of dismissive assassination.

By inserting this scene Rowling played deliberate havoc with readers’ expectations: having announced in interviews preceding the publication of *Goblet of Fire* that a character would be killed, she introduced in the opening

pages this murder, which might have been seen as the answer to her hint. But at the conclusion of the book there is another grim surprise: an equally casual and sudden killing, though this time of a better known and loved, if still secondary, character, Cedric Diggory. Opening and closing the book, the two acts of violence mirror each other, targeting the defenceless and the potentially lovable (Bryce and Diggory are slightly humorous, harmless and occasionally comic but endearing in their integrity) and enclosing a narrative in which danger and deceit may visit any place and lurk even in the sanctuary of Hogwarts. By the time we reach the climax of the story, one of Harry's mentors and his possible role-model, Mad-Eye Moody, is revealed as an impostor – in fact, as Voldemort's most faithful servant: a pattern reversing the bad-guy-revealed-to-be-good at the end of *Prisoner of Azkaban* (and even in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*), and teaching a lesson of mistrust to the trio of protagonists. After *Goblet of Fire*, the world is no longer innocent.

The move was not unexpected, since Rowling had always maintained that her central characters would be growing in the course of the novels and leaving childhood, accompanying their readers through the rites of passage towards maturity (Jones 56-60); it has been easy for literary critics to highlight this change in their analysis of characters and interpersonal relations. Typical themes of adolescent narrative were introduced, such as a growing interest in sex, the thuggish behaviour of organised gangs, the early pulls towards the choice of a career or the increasing need for financial independence. Though some themes (such as the experimenting with drugs) were rather improbably ignored, and others introduced at surprisingly late stages, it was clear that Harry, together with his friends, was at long last growing up: his world was no longer the wide-eyed world of childhood but the grimmer and more confused world of adolescence; adulthood was looming near.

Of course, positing this change inevitably introduces the delicate issue of what we mean when we talk of children's literature. The issue is complicated by recent developments in the marketing of books – especially when, as in the case of the Harry Potter novels, they command an extraordinarily large audience. The demands of the reading (and buying) public extend also to the external appearance of the volumes, as shown by the proliferation of “adult” dust jackets that highlight the “crossover” quality of novels ranging from C.S. Lewis's Narnia books to Terry Pratchett's *The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents* (Falconer 1-2). Recent

discussions on “crossover fiction”, partly prompted by the very popularity of Rowling’s works, show critical awareness of the matter, and testify to the difficulty of categorizing very recent and very successful literature, since immediate resonance may interfere with critical assessment. Sandra L. Beckett’s excellent introduction to her *Crossover Fiction* highlights the problem when, after stating that “crossover literature is generally seen as a new trend” (Beckett 1), she correctly notes that there are older examples of fiction appealing to different age groups, and cites the playwright John Gay saying of his friend Jonathan Swift’s *Gulliver Travels* that “it is universally read, from the Cabinet-council to the Nursery” (Beckett 2). She might have gone further back and cited Philip Sidney, referring to a tale “which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner” (Sidney 113).

The risk, however, is to confuse description with prescription. Trying to define children’s fiction is especially difficult at a time in which it is enjoying such renown, and the Harry Potter novels, immensely successful in spite of their disobeying prescriptive norms such as the required brevity and simplicity, were setting the rules rather than obeying them. Structuring the novels as a continuum rather than as single episodes in a similar setting obviously had great implications on the saga as a whole, and it evidently cost Rowling some pains in overall organization. Early on in the series she tried to make each new volume independent, giving a short summary of Harry’s peculiarity and of the unique nature of the double world in which he lives, and implicitly asking readers to focus on this single adventure. But the attempt was abandoned in the later books, and indeed it would have been impossible to consider each book as a single adventure story, given the presence of so much narrative material. Readers’ and critics’ response to this structural choice has generally been favourable: writing in 1999, after the appearance of the first three novels had appeared, Nicholas Tucker observed: “The decision to make him grow older with every book, and coping with the problems that will arise while still trying to satisfy younger readers, suggests a serious and committed novelist who deserves respect and, so far, the benefit of any doubt” (Tucker 230). The choice had also a deep impact on the audience’s reception and expectations: as Harry Potter and his friends grow, so do the intended readers, who supposedly mirror the protagonist’s age and expectations (if we believe that the age group of fictional protagonists mirrors the ideal readers’). No longer children eager for amusing, occasionally even gratuitous, bits of magic, they are adolescents who set their own experience in the context of a wider

perspective, absorbing everyday reality through the news and the media. This is clearly underlined by the spatial dimension: if initially Hogwarts is all the parallel world Harry knows and needs to know, by degrees the world widens, including a village, a state prison, a sports ground, a hospital, a ministry, London itself. Harry explicitly muses on this widening horizon during the Quidditch World Cup: “it was only just dawning on Harry how many witches and wizards there must be in the world; he had never really thought much about those in other countries” (*Goblet of Fire* 75).

Rowling’s consciousness of the shift, furthermore, is underlined by a greater stress on events set in the non-magical world in the opening pages of the volumes following *Goblet of Fire*. For instance, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* deceptively opens in the somnolent atmosphere of the Dursley home, as in earlier instalments, but this time Harry is punished by the exasperated Dursleys not for trying to do his homework or to operate magic, but for his attempt to listen to the (non-magical) news on television: since Vernon Dursley condemns the attempt as an instance of odd behaviour (Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 9), the reader should suppose that this is indeed the right thing to do. It is as if the book was signalling the importance not to enclose oneself in the (childish?) magical world, and to explore the adult world of non-Magical news and international events. As for *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, its opening pages feature the even more surprising apparition of the British Prime Minister, a sort of clueless Tony Blair, thus forcing the readers to realise the implication of the narrated events to the wider world, and mirroring Rowling’s own troubled take on contemporary Britain (Westman 306-08).

The radical change of tone imposed by the decision to introduce a growing body of reference to actual reality in the Harry Potter saga cannot but bear deep implications for a number of factors in the narrative, from the development of the characters to the relation between events far apart in time; and since one of the most important factors in the novels is magic, it is interesting to explore what happens to it in this pattern of change that entails the abandonment of illusions. We may consider *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* the central book in more ways than one: it represents a pivotal moment, transforming our expectations as concerns the following volumes of the series, and turning us from child readers into adult readers. Magic, one of the key features of the series, cannot be uninfluenced. Rowling’s departure within a well-established genre from the imaginary

into the real, first observed in her decision to set her novels in contemporary England though focussing on a fantastical setting (Cockrell 15-26), makes her handling of magic an extremely delicate matter. Magic may simply be another name for technology: in both cases we use what we cannot explain. Harry or Ron then cannot mend their broken wands just as we (with few exceptions) cannot repair our run-down smartphone. Owls are possibly more reliable but certainly less fast than email (not to mention the fact that they do leave bird-droppings everywhere), and microwave dinners could certainly help solve Mrs Weasley's eternal struggle with a perpetually hungry family (Oakes 117-28; Petrina 161-82; Sheltrown 47-64). All things considered, and in spite of the strenuous defence of some *Harry Potter* readers, magic remains an unsatisfactory substitute for technology, though its novelty and unexpectedness makes it much more entertaining.

Therefore, the early books of the *Harry Potter* series often present magic as the innocent transformation of objects for the purpose of amusement: a tap-dancing pineapple or a self-shuffling pack of cards are delightful inventions, though they may not help the progress of the narrative or solve the challenges of everyday life. But, Rowling seems to say, they certainly help the development of the characters: a computer eternally spewing forth video-games and cyber-wars may be what is turning Dudley Dursley from a spoilt brat to a dangerous bully, while animated chess and moving posters of the Chudley Cannons keep Ron lovable and imaginative, in spite of his frequent mood changes. There is a constant playful element in the bizarre outcome of wand-waving: and it is significant that *Goblet of Fire* first broaches the idea that playing with magic may be a respectable way of making a living, and that the two pranksters of the story, the Weasley twins, might be saved by eternal childishness by using magic as the central concern of consumerist production and trade – two very adult pursuits. Though Fred and George Weasley dutifully appear at the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* to help Harry in the final Hogwarts battle, and pay dearly for their loyalty; and though some of their inventions prove crucial at various narrative points, yet their efforts are clearly directed towards entertainment: their trademark shop, Weasleys' Wizard Wheezes, is a creation of well-engineered fun, and fits well in the shopping mall that is Diagon Alley. As Harry says when materially helping the twins to realise their project, "I could do with a few laughs. We could all do with a few laughs" (*Goblet of Fire* 635). The importance of magic at this level is psychological rather than structural, and it is certainly far from metaphysical.

The products of technology (constantly called “Muggle artifacts” in the books) follow a slightly different course: if it is true that “the classics of children’s fantasy literature are Luddite, or at best ambivalent, in their attitudes toward modern community culture” (Teare 329), it might be argued that Rowling follows the trend by focussing on the products of twentieth-century technology only as ugly junk (while the nineteenth century, as exemplified by the steam-powered train which takes the students to Hogwarts, is reserved a more favourable treatment), or as comic props: the broken toys in Dudley’s bedroom, the useless plugs obsessively collected by Arthur Weasley, and the squalid Portkeys disseminated all over England in preparation for the Quidditch World Cup Final are all evidence of a contemporary landscape transformed into a gigantic rubbish dump by rampant materialism (Westman 308), a landscape in which children, magicians and pranksters can find the means for further entertainment – for themselves as well as the readers – by breaking, misusing or endlessly reinventing the products of technology: the transformation of the debris of technological progress is also a very effective means of escape. Astutely, Rowling dwells on electricity (a word lovingly used, if mispronounced, by Arthur Weasley) but ignores electronics, the readiest substitute for magic in the contemporary world, and the element that arguably has contributed most to changing the *Weltanschauung* of the younger generations.

If we consider magic a narrative device to track psychological development and change, then some of the recurring elements in the novels are more interesting than simply self-serving magical objects: even in the early volumes of the series we are presented not only with tools, such as the wand, and with means, such as the charms, but also with ghostly emanations of the wizards themselves, that is, Dementors and Patronuses. It is not by chance that these contrasting forces suggest a symmetry partly replicated by Horcruxes and Hallows in the last two novels. Closely associated to, and possibly echoing, the spectres and dæmons created by Philip Pullman in *His Dark Materials*, these apparitions are explained immediately as closely connected with the personality and state of mind of the wizard (Langford 156-57). This is Remus Lupin’s description of Dementors: “Dementors are among the foulest creatures that walk this earth. They infest the darkest, filthiest places, they glory in decay and despair, they drain peace, hope and happiness out of the air around them [...] Get too near a Dementor and every good feeling, every happy memory, will be sucked out of you” (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 140). It is unsurprising that

Sirius Black managed to escape them, and by implication the prison they guard: the fight against this particular brand of magic is a question not of wizarding ability but of strength of mind, the same strength that enables him to transform into a dog at will, without using a wand. Even more clearly, Patronuses are described as a projection of the magician's personality: concentrating on "a single, very happy memory" (*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* 176), each wizard produces a unique Patronus – reflecting one's love, desire, aspirations.

Following this line of reasoning, it might be argued that the real magic of the early books resided not so much in single inventions and objects, but in the setting, a setting so constructed that the opposition between magic and technology is mirrored by an implicit opposition between the magical, beguiling past and the technological, repellent present. The point is highlighted by the fact that an archaic, traditionally magical place which has no connection with technology and human development but only with natural forces, such as the Forbidden Forest, turns out to be among Rowling's least interesting creations. It is what mankind has built over the centuries that lends itself more easily to the writer's power of transformation. The Harry Potter novels by now have established a vogue in children's and young adults' fiction; but as noted by Julia Eccleshare in one of the best early discussions on the series, the real oddity of the *Harry Potter* series was, at least initially, the fact that a boarding-school setting could appeal to such a wide, international readership: "To set a book in such an institution runs strongly against the current vogue for social realism" (47). The odd setting, and the sort of old-world magic it projects, is exactly echoed by Diagon Alley, which provides Harry (and the reader) with the first glimpse of the magical world, and which has been rightly described as having a "Dickensian quaintness" (Eccleshare 52): what the early books evoke is a sort of magic of nostalgia, which allows the readers to be transported back in time to a world of imperfectly known medievalism, made of quill pens and mullioned windows. Not so much Wizardland as Merry Old England, the world created by Rowling is the result of an adaptation of the familiar "into something magical and unusual [which] highlights her invention while ensuring that its basis is secure" (Eccleshare 67).

So, as Harry's fight against Voldemort progresses from child's adventure to young man's drama, the reader may suspect that the employment of magic, together with the magical community's steady rejection of technology, actually puts obstacles in our hero's path, distracting him with

useless details just as technology does. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* is once more central to this argument, since it is here that the most jarring discrepancies between the magical and the Muggle worlds are highlighted, only to be smoothed out with somewhat clumsy devices. In the close connection created between Muggles and wizards during the Quidditch Cup Final, memory charms multiply in frequency, since they are increasingly (and embarrassingly) necessary to cover up the narrative discrepancies. By the same token, halfway through the Triwizard Tournament we are treated to an explanation on why technology could not work in Hogwarts: “All those substitutes for magic Muggles use – electricity, and computers and radar, and all those things – they all go haywire around Hogwarts, there’s too much magic in the air” (*Goblet of Fire* 475-76). This rather lame explanation completes what had been said earlier in the same book, on the problem of congregating a hundred thousand wizards in a Muggle-free site for the Cup Final, or on the difficulty of public transport (65-66). The very problem of the coexistence of two communities in England, apparently bent on ignoring each other, is solved at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* in the very funny chapter titled “The Other Minister,” in which, as noted above, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is presented and given a darkly comic meeting with the Minister for Magic. But the semi-adult world of *Order of the Phoenix*, *Half-Blood Prince* and *Deathly Hallows*, magic needs to take on a different role if it is to remain a central part of the narrative.

The very focus hitherto maintained on *Goblet of Fire* in this analysis shows how this novel, chosen by Rowling as the major turning point of her narrative construction, should also reveal all the narrative shortcoming the change entails. What will happen in the three final volumes of the saga is not simply a transformation in genre – from boarding school novel to spy story, or, as some scholars maintain, from fairy tale to mythological quest tale (Pond 184) – or in the characters’ psychology; our view of magic is also transformed, allowing the writer to use it less as entertainment, or as a means to solve a contingent problem, and more and more as an essential part of the development of the story and its characters. The Harry Potter saga, for all its insistence on enchanted castles and scarlet steam engines, is in fact a study in *Bildungsroman*, and the characters’ psychology maintains primary importance in spite of the richness of details in the settings. It is only once Rowling makes magic part of the characters themselves that it becomes structurally, and not only superficially, satisfying. I would

contend that in the second part of the series magic becomes at last part of the story, while hitherto it had been used, in what had been first and foremost a boarding school narrative setting, as an element of entertaining but almost superfluous decoration.

The definite shift in tone can be found between book 4 and 5, and it strongly influences the reader's perception of magical objects. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* closes with an unparalleled display of highly entertaining but also problematic magic – the duel between Harry and Voldemort generates a parallel world of geometric shapes and *revenants*, a triumph of visual artifice and wonder. Everything has been triggered by the two wands meeting with similar and opposite force, and in its development the duel becomes no longer a question of skill or speed, but a battle of wills, as shown by this long insight into Harry's mind:

Don't break the connection.

I know, Harry told the music, I know I mustn't... but no sooner had he thought it, than the thing became much harder to do [...] He concentrated every last particle of his mind upon forcing the beads backwards towards Voldemort, his ears full of phoenix song, his eyes furious, fixated... and slowly, very slowly, the beads quivered to a halt, and then, just as slowly, they began to move the other way... and it was Voldemort's wand that was vibrating extra-hard now... Voldemort who looked astonished, and almost fearful...

One of the beads of light was quivering, inches from the tip of Voldemort's wand. Harry didn't understand why he was doing it, didn't know what it might achieve... but he now concentrated as he had never done in his life, on forcing that bead of light right back into Voldemort's wand... and slowly... very slowly... it moved along the golden thread... it trembled for a moment... and then it connected... (576-77)

Harry's effort triggers an effect that surprises both duelling wizards: the momentary resurrection of all the people Voldemort has killed. It is a moment of fear and pain for the villain, but of joy and love for Harry, who is for the first time re-united with his parents, if only very briefly. Magic has become the projection of the innermost fears and desires of the two characters; winning here depends on the power of the mind not only to concentrate, but to feel the appropriate emotions. The scene enacts what Dumbledore had stated at the conclusion of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*: "It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities" (245).

By contrast, the opening episode of the following book, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*, shows the development of the narrative use of magic from a totally different angle. As noted above, we are back in Little Whinging, among well-mowed lawns and mean relatives, but this time Harry has little time to feel bored or exasperated, as he is threatened by far more than Dudley's bullying: just as their constant bickering is degenerating into a fight, Dementors invade their space, and it is only by thinking of his true, if absent, friends, Ron and Hermione, that Harry is able to drive them away, saving not only himself, but Dudley, a character hitherto viewed in a purely negative light, who from this point will begin, although in a minor key, to walk his own path of redemption. The two scenes, at the end of one book and at the beginning of the next, are obviously meant to be juxtaposed: Harry's victory over Voldemort is the result of his feelings of hope and love, while the apparition of the Dementors comes out of his frustration and despair; the Dementors themselves will be vanquished by loyalty and love. In the space marking the development between the two novels, a clear message is given the reader: magic is part of ourselves, inextricably linked with our deepest feelings of love and hate, as well as with our willingness to self-sacrifice. This process entails a gradual detachment from magical objects, whose function changes radically.

One of the most striking casualties of the development traced here is a magical object very dear to the reader, and much mentioned in the early volumes of the series: Harry's broomstick, the Firebolt. The broomstick is an object of perpetual desire and renewed negotiations throughout the first three volumes; it is also a fundamental accessory to Harry's victory of the Triwizard Tournament in *Goblet of Fire*. But once we abandon the world of games and enter a real struggle, at the end of the novel, the broomstick is silently discarded. As we progress through the following books, what emerges is another means of transportation: Apparition. Though Harry still professes to prefer the former after his first Apparition experience (*Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 60), broomsticks practically disappear in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, and even Harry's own Firebolt disappears unobtrusively in the opening pages; instead, people apparate and disapparate together and separately, a performance reflecting their state of mind or situation. The broomstick is a magical object essentially external to the magician: it can be bought, sold and advertised, it may even possess a will of its own or be manipulated by others, as shown in some of the Quidditch accidents Harry is victim of. Apparition, on the other hand,

is especially difficult for children because it requires unusual focus and willpower (mockingly underlined by the instructor's mantra, "Destination, Determination, Deliberation," *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* 360), but needs no wand or other instrument. In a way, magicians have to become their own wands in order to perform this particular spell, putting their whole body at the service of their mind; it is significant that *splincing*, the separation of a part of the body during the Apparition process, seems to be the most obvious risk, reflecting a split or unfocussed will. The progression is part of a deliberate strategy on Rowling's part, as shown by other magical objects, less central to the story and therefore appearing more rarely: it is the case of Dumbledore's Deluminator, a harmless and amusing "universal lighter" in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, and a guide to Ron's own soul in the last book of the series (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 391). Objects by themselves are no longer the centre of attention: they simply work as litmus paper for the soul, and in this function are essential to the narrative development.

More and more, as the saga proceeds, magical objects are made to focus on one main function, that of projecting the psyche of the user. This theme is indeed present from the beginning, and as usual in Hogwarts, it is the headmaster that guides us in this realisation. From the first volume, Dumbledore seems the least serious about the power of enchantments – his references to magic, something which he never actually teaches, always allude to something far beyond its power, whether it be music or love. Harry (and with him the reader) understands this lesson only slowly, but Dumbledore's purpose is clear, and becomes even clearer when he starts giving Harry private lessons in *Half-Blood Prince*: while Harry and his friends anticipate "really advanced defensive magic, probably... powerful counter-curses... anti-jinxes" (97) what Dumbledore actually gives Harry is knowledge and a key to a new object: the Horcrux. The crucial moment of transformation occurs during these lessons, as Harry immerses himself in Voldemort's past life: Tom Riddle's obsession with objects ("this magpie-like tendency," *Half-Blood Prince* 260) induces him to transfer his very soul into a number of prized artefacts, which he collects by resorting to the most extreme means. Harry's task from then on will be to destroy the objects, reversing this tendency towards acquisition, achieving an almost ascetic status of freedom from material possessions – the same material possessions that are reduced to very bare necessities in the first half of *Deathly Hallows*, when Harry and his friends, travelling across England

in search of Horcruxes, have to fight a much more basic and daily struggle for food and fire. Revealingly, it is at this point that Rowling introduces one of the basic rules about the magical world: Hermione notes that “Food is the first of the five Principal Exceptions to Gamp’s Law of Elemental Transfigur[ation]”, and when Ron urges her to “speak English”, she flatly states, “It’s impossible to make good food out of nothing” (241). It is a stark instance of the real world intruding in the magical one. The material possessions that do count are those that enable you to survive.

Horcruxes – together with their counterparts, Hallows – are the focus of the last two novels, and among the most significant markers of change. Although they appear very late in the story, there were interesting anticipations already in the early volumes of the series, the most important probably being the Sorting Hat. Initially presented in its main function of directing students to the most suitable House, the Sorting Hat reappears at the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* with a completely different task: it produces for Harry, at the moment of his most desperate need, the sword of Gryffindor. This is a supposedly magical object which, however, never operates on its own: it is simply a very good sword that will obey not superior skill on the part of the swordsman but superior loyalty to the house it represents. Interestingly, the sword is connected with the whole question of Horcruxes, since it is associated with Tom Riddle’s diary and later believed to be a possible Horcrux itself, as part of the series we might call founders’ objects: magical objects that represent the four mythical founders of Hogwarts. Besides, it is with reference to the sword at the end of *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* that Dumbledore delivers his subtle disquisition on the difference between our talents and our decisions – a key theme in the later books, and crucial to our understanding of Horcruxes and Hallows.

Though Horcruxes and Hallows are obviously magical objects, their power is different from anything we saw before. They do not help people to accomplish something; they are not a magical extension of the wizard’s arm as in the case of wands, they do not transform (at least outwardly) and they do not seem to project any energy towards their surroundings; they do not allow travel in time or space, do not put on or off lights. They can even be organic, living beings, as in the case of the snake Nagini, but even Nagini is curiously passive, simply obeying its master’s orders. The only one among the Horcruxes which shows some sign of animation is the locket, which springs to life the moment it is threatened by destruction. This is something

that is not shared by other Horcruxes, but Rowling makes it clear that the animation has little to do with the object itself (or even the fragment of soul it incorporates), and more to do with the moral battle fought by the person who is entrusted with its destruction, Ronald Weasley. What Ronald sees in the “living eye” inside the locket is simply a projection of his fears of betrayal, of his sense of inferiority, or of his resentment. The ability to destroy the locket then will not depend on skill or knowledge, or even on magical power, but simply on moral strength (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 305-07). It is therefore not surprising that, once Ron has passed this test, the destruction of the remaining Horcruxes, confided in turn to Harry, Ron, Hermione, and finally to Neville Longbottom, will present no difficulties.

Horcruxes seem to exist only in order to be found and destroyed: in an early review of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* they were described as “wizards plot tokens – embedded correlatives for knowledge of morality and the past” (Kaveney 19). But though the definition is striking, it leaves a false impression: these plot tokens are not to be collected, like most magical objects in fairy tales, but to be eliminated. Conversely, for each Horcrux we have an image of Voldemort collecting it – often by murderous means. Turning an object into a Horcrux can only be done through murder: the magician destroys a life in order to animate an artefact. Collecting is therefore equated with evil: true, beneficial knowledge and power can be achieved only by discarding objects. Rowling is even careful to make some of them aesthetically appealing, as in the case of Hufflepuff’s cup or Ravenclaw’s diadem, so that there is an added pang of regret to their destruction. Finding them is difficult and often very dangerous, but there can be no satisfaction in the possession: the physical or intellectual challenge of acquisition is accompanied by the moral challenge of renunciation. For those who do not pass this supreme test, the final punishment is extreme: the King’s Cross scene at the end of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, while freeing Harry from his role as Dumbledore’s lethal weapon, also shows us the ultimate fate of Voldemort, finally deprived of his material supports. He now appears as a repellent, naked creature, “its skin raw and rough, flayed-looking [...] unwanted, stuffed out of sight, struggling for breath” (566); having confided his whole being, even his soul, to material culture, once he is deprived of objects he is left, inevitably, gasping for breath. In the same scene, Harry is also naked, but unscathed, without the need of glasses, in a sort of pre-lapsarian state (565-66). As with the lilies

of the field in the Gospel according to Luke, which need neither spinning nor toiling, yet are splendidly arrayed (Luke 12.27), so Harry may find warm, clean robes the moments he wishes for them: having renounced possessions earlier, he will now find that they are freely given to him.

A Horcrux is described early on as an object that will possess its owner, the moment it is truly possessed: this is shown in an interesting scene at the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. Here Harry is discussing the properties of these objects together with his two friends, and Hermione points out that, while a human body can be killed without harming the soul within, “the fragment of soul inside [the Horcrux] depends on its container, its enchanted body, for survival” (90). This leads to a recollection of what happened in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, when Ginny Weasley was temporarily possessed by one of the earliest Horcruxes, Riddle’s diary. Can then an object invade another soul? Once again Hermione provides an answer, remembering how close (emotionally as well as physically) Ginny was to the diary: “You’re in trouble if you get too fond of or dependent on the Horcrux” is her conclusion (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 91). This anticipates what will happen to Ron with Slytherin’s locket (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 251-54). This episode clears the way for the destruction of the subsequent Horcruxes – the battle seems to be between the cursed objects and the strength of Harry’s friendship with Ron and Hermione, so that the reader is never left in any real doubt as to the outcome. Once more, though the objects themselves and their search provide narrative suspense, the burden of the story is on the battle between souls – the evil souls encased in the Horcrux, and the pure soul required to destroy it. Rather than the object themselves, it is the proto-capitalist love of objects that is the basis of evil.

On the other hand, though Harry is entrusted with the mission of destroying the Horcruxes, and relentlessly pursues it throughout the last novel, he is also enticed by the possession of other objects – the Hallows. It is here that true temptation resides: a temptation that made even Dumbledore fall. Resisting the lure of the Hallows makes Harry a true hero, far above his former master and mentor, given how desirable these objects are: not connected with evil, but rather with Harry’s own ancestry and with the mythology of fairy tales, the Hallows seem to represent both the solution to the ongoing battle with Voldemort and the answer to Harry’s never-extinguished desire to be re-united with his parents. Though explicitly contrasted with the Horcruxes in Harry’s quest (as shown by the recurring

Horcrux-or-Hallow dilemma in the chapter headed “The Wandmaker,” *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* 386-92), they actually appear to represent a move in the right direction: they have positive associations, and are evidently desirable since they would allow Harry to fulfil his dearest wish, that of being re-united with his family. For all these reasons, it will take great courage on Harry’s part to abandon them; and while in the case of the Horcruxes the three friends help each other in the effort to destroy them, in this case their eventual destiny will generate a great deal of dissension, and Ron at least will try to contrast the decision to discard them to the very end. In this perspective, Hallows had been foreshadowed by an object that appears very early in the series, the Mirror of Erised: showing the viewers their innermost desire, it could lead to madness or to self-knowledge – a bifurcation that anticipates the dichotomy between obsessed, evil Voldemort and self-sacrificing, good Harry.

What is even more confusing for the reader is that these objects may be associated with the everyday concerns of the magical world (already populated with wands and invisibility cloaks) or even be already in Harry’s possession: *per se*, they do not express any evil force or purpose. Their relations with their owners are complex, and in the case of wands allow us a further exploration into the moral dimension of the characters. Wands, like other magical objects of everyday use, pass through phases: initially they are described as powerful objects determining the fate of their owners (“the wand chooses the wizard,” *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* 65); by the end of the saga, they will obey a mature and self-aware magician even in preference to their original owner. As has been observed, the seventh and final volume of the saga “is not literally a story about casting youth and magic aside and breaking your wand; it is, however, a book about moving beyond parents, mentors and their expectations, about fighting your own battles, not the wars of earlier generations” (Kaveney 19). The intricate story of the Elder Wand creates the wrong expectations in the reader about its relevance – in the end, this wand is not only discarded, but turns out to be useless, and the whole *peripeteia* of this magical object, which the reader has followed with some difficulty, turns out to be irrelevant in comparison with the moral development of the hero. It is a nice touch: the readers themselves must learn to discard facile narrative pleasures in exchange for sterner moral lessons.

“[The conjurer] shakes up the solidity and smugness of objects, conquering the reality of the material world by impregnating it with

the nimbleness and effervescence of wit and skill” (Bhownagary 32). Nimbleness and effervescence were indeed the characteristics of the first volumes of the series, imbued with the light magic of children’s literature. The quasi-adult world of the last volumes has lost this lightness of touch, and though carefully eschewing metaphysical overtones, introduces a moral dimension that weighs on the readers and imposes on them the burden of choice and judgement. In view of Rowling’s own involvement with the commodification of intellectual culture, the changing relation with magical objects she develops gives us a useful insight into the narrative sequence. It has been made clear by the writer, in a number of interviews and through her website, that she is occasionally uneasy with the mass-marketing of her creation. Ironically, one of the effects of the success of the Harry Potter books, the proliferation of objects and gadgets connected with them, runs directly counter to Rowling’s own teaching in the novels, which underlines individual will and personality rather than external possession. The definitive evaluation on Rowling’s very human brand of magic comes, unexpectedly, from one of the least loved characters of the books, Bellatrix Lestrange: you can’t do magic just like that. You need to mean it (*Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* 715).



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Beckett, Sandra L. *Crossover Fiction. Global and Historical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Bhownagary, Jehangir. "Creativity of the Magician." *Leonardo* 5 (1972): 31-35.
- Cockrell, Amanda. "Harry Potter and the Secret Password. Finding our Way in the Magical Genre." In *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter. Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002, 15-26.
- Eccleshare, Julia. *A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels*. London: Continuum, 2002.
- Falconer, Rachel. "Crossover Literature (Part II: Forms and Genres)." In *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*. Abingdon: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004, <file:///Users/alessandra/Downloads/ProQuestDocuments-2022-11-28.pdf>.
- Jensen, Jeff. "J. K. Rowling Talks about Writing *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*." *Entertainment Weekly*, 7 September (2000): <<https://ew.com/books/2000/08/04/jk-rowling-harry-potter-and-goblet-fire/>>.
- Jones, Malcolm. "The Return of Harry Potter!" *Newsweek*, 10 July (2000): 56-60.
- Kaveney, Roz. "The End Game." *Times Literary Supplement*, 27 July (2008): 19.
- Knutsen, Torbjørn L. "Dumbledore's Pedagogy. Knowledge and Virtue at Hogwarts." In *Harry Potter and International Relations*. Ed. Daniel H. Nexon and Iver B. Neumann. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006, 197-212.
- Langford, David. *The End of Harry Potter?* London: Gollancz, 2006.
- Oakes, Margaret J. "Flying Cars, Floo Powder, and Flaming Torches: The Hi-Tech, Low-Tech World of Wizardry." In *Reading Harry Potter. Critical Essays*. Ed. Giselle Liza Anatol. Westport: Praeger, 2003, 117-28.
- Petrina, Alessandra. "Magia e tecnologia: l'universo bifronte di Harry Potter." In *Tempi moderni nella children's literature: storie, personaggi, strumenti critici*. Ed. Francesca Orestano. Milano: Cuem, 2007, 161-82.
- Pond, Julia. "A Story of the Exceptional: Fate and Free Will in the Harry Potter Series." *Children's Literature* 38 (2010): 181-206.
- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London: Bloomsbury, 1997.
- . *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*. London: Bloomsbury, 1998.
- . *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

- . *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. London: Bloomsbury, 2000.
- . *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. London: Bloomsbury, 2003.
- . *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. London: Bloomsbury, 2005.
- . *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. London: Bloomsbury, 2007.
- Sheltrown, Nicholas. "Harry Potter's World as a Morality Tale of Technology and the Media." In *Critical Perspectives on Harry Potter*, second edition. Ed. Elizabeth E. Heilman. New York: Routledge, 2009, 47-64.
- Sidney, Philip. *An Apology for Poetry*. Ed. Geoffrey Shepherd. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1973.
- Teare, Elizabeth. "Harry Potter and the Technology of Magic." In *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter. Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002, 329-42.
- Tucker, Nicholas. "The Rise and Rise of Harry Potter." *Children's Literature in Education* 30 (1999): 221-34.
- Westman, Karin E. "Specters of Thatcherism. Contemporary British Culture in J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series." In *The Ivory Tower and Harry Potter. Perspectives on a Literary Phenomenon*. Ed. Lana A. Whited. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002, 305-28.

Germanistica

Das Feenland *Dschinnistan*: Ursprung und Fortleben eines literarischen Motivs

Renata Gambino

Università degli Studi di Catania

[Der Mensch ist] ein fiktionsbedürftiges Wesen
Wolfgang Iser

Einführung

Märchenlandschaften, Schauererzählungen und utopisches Denken haben die Menschheitsgeschichte seit ihren Anfängen begleitet und werden immer wieder, besonders in Zeiten der Krise und des Umbruchs, lebendig: Dies ist auch der Fall der fortlaufenden intertextuellen Bezüge zum imaginären Feenland *Dschinnistan*. Die Geschichte jener orientbezogenen mythologischen Landschaft, die der Fantasie deutscher Autoren entspringen ist, wird hier als „fortlebende Denkfigur“ interpretiert, nach Walther Benjamins Idee der Geschichte als Zusammenhang des „Lebens“ und „Nachlebens“ (Benjamin, 1972 IV: 11). Diese Formulierungen kommen mehrmals im Werke Benjamins¹ vor (Weidner, 2011) und beziehen sich auf Aby Warburgs Idee des „Nachlebens“: Ein Konzept, das besonders von Georges Didi-Hubermann (2010) aufgegriffen worden ist, um die Resilienz eines Anachronismus, das Wiederhallen einer Emotion in Elementen der künstlerischen Repräsentation zu bezeichnen. Da Bilder und besonders „Denkbilder“ in einem komplexen biokulturellen Netzwerk verwurzelt sind, erfordert eine solche Untersuchung einen breiten Ausblick über jene intertextuellen Bezüge, um die Relevanz einer solchen hinterlassenen ‚Spur‘ zu deuten.

Unsere Untersuchung steht im Rahmen der Kulturwissenschaft, die sich auf das Paradigma des kulturellen Gedächtnisses bezieht, welches als kollektiv, identitätsprägend und *embedded* verstanden wird (Erll, 2003). Dazu werden wir uns an den Forschungsansatz der Literaturanthropologie anlehnen, der, nach Riedel, die Fiktion als spezifisches Instrumentarium einer Kulturanthropologie sieht, die das Konzept „Geist“ mit dem der „Kultur“ übereinstimmen lässt (Riedel, 2004: 338).

Demgemäß werden wir von der ersten bekannten Erwähnung des Namens *Dschinnistan* im deutschsprachigen Raum ausgehen und der Linie intertextueller Bezüge in den Werken einiger deutscher Autoren der Sattelzeit folgen, um schließlich über den anthropologischen Wert dieses rekurrierenden Denkbildes zu reflektieren.

Die Veredlung des Menschen

Mit seiner Schrift *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit* (1774) hatte der Philosoph, Anthropologe und Ethnologe Johann Gottfried Herder bereits im Jahre 1774 den Grundstein eines Humanitätsideals gelegt, das auf einer holistischen Vision des Individuums als „ganzer Mensch“ basierte (Schings, 1992: 75-99) und die Entwicklung der individuellen Seele mit der des sozialen Körpers in Verbindung setzte. Beide, Individuum und Gesellschaft, würden seiner Meinung nach einem Prozess des Wachstums und der Verbesserung untergehen, der die Verwirklichung des höchsten Potenzials der Menschheit als Gebot stellte (Hermes/Kaufmann, 2014: 12). Dieses Bildungsideal zeichnete den Höhepunkt des utopischen und freimaurerischen Denkens des 18. Jahrhunderts; es erregte großes Aufsehen besonders in den Jahren vor dem Ausbruch der Französischen Revolution als programmatischer Teil der damaligen Diskussion über die Gefahren der mystisch-theosophischen Schwärmerei (Paolucci, 2014: 204), in der die deutsche Gelehrtenengesellschaft das Ergebnis einer hedonistischen Kultur sah, die ständig auf der Suche nach Neuem war, um Sinne und Verstand zu verführen.

Herders Text *Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts* (1774a) hatte zudem die Poesie als Instrument der Rückbindung an eine Ursprungszeit dargestellt, in der die Verbindung mit der Gottheit noch zu vervollkommen sein sollte. Diese utopische Projektion fand ihren natürlichen Ausdruck in der allegorischen und wortgewandten Prosa der Märchenwelt des späten 18. Jahrhunderts. Der Rückgriff auf Fantasie

und Allegorie versprach die Möglichkeit, die Geheimnisse der Welt zu enthüllen, bis hin zur Wiederentdeckung des ursprünglichen göttlichen Funkens und damit, dem Chaos der anstehenden Revolution entgegenzustehen. Da nach Gottfried Herder – und gegen Kants Prinzipien – die Gottheit nur durch Einbezug der menschlichen Einbildungskraft erreicht werden konnte, förderte dieser Gedanke in erster Linie die Stimulierung der Sinne in ästhetischen Praktiken, in welchen Körper und Geist zusammenwirken sollten (Paolucci, 2021: 13-18). Damit schlug Herder eine Betrachtungsweise der Welt vor, die sich auf die wolffsche Systemphilosophie und die ihr inhärente Erkenntnistheorie bezog (Harth, 1978: 44). Der von Herder erwünschte Erziehungsprozess sollte durch das pädagogische Potenzial der Kunst stattfinden, sich des Schönen als Wegweiser bedienen, und Körper und Geist als fühlende und denkende Einheit zusammenfügen. Die Erziehung des Ich wurde als Ziel der Kunst gesetzt, die durch den Eingriff in die moralische Disposition und durch die Leitung der Affekte, die Menschen zu ihrer Verbesserung führen sollte (Košenina, 2016). Diesbezüglich wird das „rhetorische Interesse an der Fabel“ als „Instrument der Menschenführung im 18. Jahrhundert mit dem Gedanken moralischer Erziehung durch Kunst“ verbunden (Siekmann, 2017: 299).

Auf der Grundlage dieser Prämisse, ging Herder davon aus, dass die Menschheit, ja die ganze Welt, einschließlich der unbelebten Wesen, einem einzigen Transformationsgesetz unterliegen, welches überall anwendbar ist: ein kreisförmiger Prozess führe vom Schlechten zum Guten, vom Guten zum Ausgezeichneten, vom Ausgezeichneten zum Minderen und wieder zurück zum Schlechten. Dieser ewige Zyklus würde, nach Herders Sicht, eng mit der kognitiven Entwicklung des Menschen verknüpft sein. Dabei wäre die Sprache nicht nur Ausdruck von Denken und Empfindungen, sondern auch ein Instrument zur Gestaltung der Welt. Die Sprache ist in der Tat der Kern der menschlichen Erfahrung und der Objektivierung von Natur und Kultur, Geschichte und Tradition (Herder 1774, II). Innerhalb der zyklischen Evolution könnte nach Herder dem Menschen geholfen werden, indem ihm ein Weg zur Veredelung gewiesen wird. Hier zeichnete sich die Initiationsreise als beliebtes Muster zur positiven Transformation aus, die nicht nur zur Erkenntnis des Numinosen führt, sondern auch die ideale Vereinigung der gesamten Menschheit in eine kosmopolitische Gesellschaft anstrebt (Gambino/Pulvirenti, 2019).

Die tief empfundene Krise der traditionellen Werte, die in den Jahren um und nach dem Ausbruch der Französischen Revolution die übliche Weltordnung umgeworfen hatte, wies gerade auf die Literatur als dasjenige Medium hin, in dem philosophische Gedanken, Hoffnungen und apokalyptische Vorahnungen ihre imaginative Darstellungsmöglichkeit entfalten konnten. Besonders in den Erzählungen von wundersamen Reisen und utopischen Ländern drückten sich eskapistische Gedanken und Hoffnungen zu einer möglichen Verbesserung der Menschheit aus. Es ist also nicht erstaunlich, dass gerade in jener Krisenzeit literarische Königreiche erfunden oder wiedergefunden wurden, die einerseits als Allegorie der damaligen Situation zu verstehen sind, andererseits auf eine mögliche bessere utopische Welt hindeuten wollten. Sie stellten meistens Welten dar, die von transkulturellen Gesellschaften bewohnt sind und die auf den Grundsätzen von Gerechtigkeit, Toleranz und Freiheit beruhten. Dies ist besonders der Fall bei der Erfindung von märchenhaften und mythischen Ländern wie *Atlantis* oder von phantasmagorischen orientalischen Landschaften wie *Dschinnistan*.

Das Land der Dschinn

Im Vergleich zu Frankreich und England, welche sich wegen ihrer kolonialen Interessen relativ früh mit dem Orient befassten, begann in der deutschen Literatur die Beschäftigung mit diesem Thema später. Zunächst entstand in Europa eine Reihe von literarischen Werken, welche „die Ideale der Aufklärung in orientalische Gewänder“ (Schimmel, 1990: 549) kleideten, und den Orient in einen Ort der Auseinandersetzung mit den Aufklärungsidealen verwandelte. Die Humanitäts- und Toleranzgedanken erschufen einen fernen utopischen Orient und eine indirekte Kritik der Staats- und Gesellschaftsordnung. Bis Mitte des 18. Jahrhunderts dominierten im deutschsprachigen Raum eher historische Darstellungen des Nahen Orients: Eines der berühmtesten Werke in dieser Hinsicht war die *Geschichte des osmannischen Reichs nach seinem Anwachsen und Abnehmen* vom Philosophen und Historiker Demetrie Kantemir, die im Jahre 1745 in deutscher Übersetzung in Hamburg erschien. Im Werk dieses Beraters des russischen Zaren Peter I und Mitglied der Berliner Sozietät der Wissenschaften werden die Dschinn als böse Geister mit teuflischem Witz beschrieben:

Dschinn ist bey den Türken der Name einer gewissen Gattung Teufel, die von größerem Zeuge gemacht sind, als Schejtan (der Satan); und von denen sie glauben, daß sie männlichen und weiblichen Geschlechtes seyen, und Kinder zeugen, wie die Menschen. Daher werden bey ihnen im verblühten Verstande sehr spitzfindige und scharfsinnige Personen Dschinn genennet; und wenn sie einen Menschen andeuten wollen, der seine Gaben andern zum Schaden misbrauchet: so pflegen sie von ihm zu sagen; Dschinn *ākīllū dūr*, er hat einen teuflischen Witz oder Verstand (613).

Diese Vorstellung wird sich bald ändern: Das Land der Dschinn wird das erste Mal auf der deutschen Bühne im Zeichen einer friedlichen Begegnung zwischen Osten und Westen erwähnt. Im Drama *Nathan der Weise* von Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1779) beschwört Saladin in seinem Dialog mit dem Templer das utopische Reich herauf:

SALADIN

[...]

ich könnte Dich fragen: wo du denn die ganze Zeit

Gesteckt? in welcher Höhle du geschlafen?

In welchem Ginnistan von welcher guten

Div diese Blume fort und fort so frisch

Erhalten worden? [...] (164).

In Lessings Drama steckt diese Märchenwelt noch in den Kinderschuhen der Moderne und wird als ein Ort der positiven Traumlandschaft dargestellt, in der es keine Trennung zwischen Religionen und Volkstraditionen gibt. Diese von Herder stammende Idee eines gemeinsamen Ursprungs aller Völker im orientalischen Teil der Welt wurde auch von den Wissenschaftlern aufgenommen und tatsächlich erhoben sich einige wichtige Forscherstimmen zu diesem Thema. Eine der berühmtesten war jene von Sir William Jones, Linguist, Übersetzer und Richter der *East India Company* in Kalkutta, der 1784 die „Asiatische Gesellschaft von Bengalen“ gründete, um die indische Zivilisation zu erforschen (Hodder, 1993: 403-38). Seine 1784 verfasste Vorlesung *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India* (III: 319-398) bietet eine geschmeidige, flexible und weitreichende Perspektive auf den Mythos, der den Vorstellungen von Johann Gottfried Herder und seinen romantischen Nachfolgern weitgehend nahekam. Indien wurde als ein Überbleibsel des goldenen Zeitalters der Menschheit betrachtet, als Heimat der Weisheit und der Philosophie, in der Vernunft und Gefühl, Kunst und Religion,

Wissenschaft und Fantasie in synthetischer Harmonie existierten. Wie fast alle seine Zeitgenossen sah Jones sowohl die griechisch-römische als auch die hinduistische Mythologie als zur biblischen Geschichte gehörend, was bedeutete, dass auf der Ebene der Interpretation einzelner Mythen Wege gefunden werden mussten, um die antiken Mythologien in den biblischen Rahmen der Weltgeschichte einzufügen. Um das zu erzeugen, behauptete Herder in seinem berühmten Werk *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, dass die Menschen aller Zeiten und Breitengrade durch dieselbe grundlegende innere religiöse Spannung des Geistes gekennzeichnet seien und dass also jede mythologische Figuration zum grundlegenden menschlichen Streben nach Erkenntnis gehöre:

Unser zweydeutiges Streben nach Erkenntnissen, die uns nicht ziemen, der lüsterne Gebrauch und Misbrauch unsrer Freiheit, die unruhige Erweiterung und Übertretung der Schranken, die einem so schwachen Geschöpf, das sich selbst zu bestimmen erst lernen soll, durch moralische Gebote notwendig gesetzt werden mußten; dies ist das feurige Rad, unter dem wir ächzen und das jetzt doch beinah den Cirkel unsres Lebens ausmacht (2: 337).

Die allgemeingültige Spannung nach dem Sinn des Lebens sowie der Wunsch nach Unsterblichkeit kennzeichnen alle Kulturen der Welt, doch entfalten sie sich in verschiedenen mythologischen Figurationen. Herder behauptete, dass der ‚Ursitz‘ aller Traditionen, die ‚Urquelle‘ „der Paradiesischen Ströme“ sich in einer „Gegend zwischen den indischen Bergen“ befinden sollte (Herder, 1785, II: 399). Daraus ergäbe sich die Notwendigkeit „die Gewohnheit aller sich verpflanzenden, alten Völker, die Sagen vom Berge der Urwelt, den Bergen und Strömen ihres neuen Landes zuzueignen und solche durch eine Lokalmythologie zu nationalisieren“ (Herder, 1785, II: 400). So entstand in seiner Abhandlung *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* das Reich Dschinnistan als „weit verbreitete Mythologie“, aus der alle möglichen wunderbaren Gestalten, Abenteuer und Erzählungen entspringen konnten:

Auch der Indier erzählt von Riesen, die nach der Speise der Unsterblichkeit gruben: auch der Tibetaner spricht von seinen durch eine Missetat herabgesunkenen Laben; nichts aber, dünkt mich, reicht an die reine Tiefe, an die kindliche Einfalt dieser Sage, die nur so viel Wunderbares behält, als zur Bezeichnung ihrer Zeit und Gegend gehöret. Alle Drachen und Wundergestalten des über die Asiatischen Gebürge sich erstreckenden uralten Feenlandes, der Simurgh und Soham, die Lahen,

Dewetas, Dschins, Divs und Peris, eine in tausend Erzählungen vom Dschinnistan, Righiel, Meru, Albordj u.s. weit verbreitete Mythologie dieses Weltteils, alle diese Abenteuer verschwinden in der ältesten Tradition der Schriftsprache und nur der Cherub hält Wache an den Pforten des Paradieses (Herder, 1785, II: 338).

Die Debatte über den Orient als literarische Erfindung hatte sich in Frankreich weit verbreitet, doch der mythologische Kosmos, der zum Denkbild Dschinnistan reifte, erlebte im deutschen literarischen Panorama seine definitive Gründung kurz vor Ausbruch der Französischen Revolution, als Christoph Martin Wieland eine dreibändigen Märchensammlung mit dem Titel *Dschinnistan. Oder auserlesene Feen- und Geistermärchen* herausgab.² Die neunzehn Märchen dieser Sammlung sind – wie der Autor und zugleich Herausgeber in der Einleitung zum ersten Band erklärt – von der barocken Tradition der *Contes des Fées* inspiriert, einer literarischen Gattung, die sich Ende des 17. und zu Beginn des folgenden Jahrhunderts besonders in Frankreich nach dem Vorbild des italienischen Volksmärchens von Straparola (1553-1556) und Basile (1645) entwickelte. Am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts wurde in Frankreich das Genre der *Contes des Fées* durch mehrere umfangreiche Sammlungen berühmt: Diese legten die stilistischen Normen, den Erwartungshorizont und die theoretischen Motivationen fest, die jene Erzählungen zu einem durchschlagenden Erfolg machten. Die Eigenarten solcher Feengeschichten lassen sich in dem Bezug auf die kontextuelle historische Situation, dem Aufgreifen kosmopolitischer Ideen, der Wahl barocker Stilelemente und der Erfindung orientalistischer Lebenswelten zusammenfassen. Das Genre entstand aus dem Zusammentreffen von zwei literarischen Projekten: Perraults Vorsatz, diese Gattung in seinem Kampf für die Moderne einzusetzen, und dem Versuch einiger Autorinnen, die Ressourcen der neuen Erzählform zu nutzen und die Freiheit, die es ihnen bot, zu ergreifen (Sermain, 2005). Meistens waren diese letzten Angehörigen des französischen Hofes Ludwigs XIV, die interessanterweise ihre Märchen als erfolgreiche Allegorien abzeichneten, um Misshandlungen und frauenfeindliche Konventionen anzuklagen. Diese Erzählungen, von einer langen mündlichen Tradition inspiriert, versuchten ihre Form und ihren Inhalt zu einem künstlerischen Produkt herauszubilden, der alle Sinne in Anspruch nahm und gleichzeitig die didaktische Funktion des *prodesse et delectare* nicht vergaß.

Die erfolgreiche Veröffentlichung von Gallands *Tausend und eine Nacht* (1704-1717) trug dazu bei, dass die Mode für den „orientalischen

Stil“ wuchs (Said, 1978) und sich auch in Bezug auf den verschiedensten Wissensbereichen – Theologie, Philosophie, Biografie, Geschichte, Politik – entfaltete.³ Im 18. Jahrhundert bekam das ambitionierte Projekt der Sammlung der *Contes des Fées* europäische Relevanz, besonders nach der Veröffentlichung des *Cabinet des Fées ou Collection choisie des contes des Fées et autres contes merveilleux* (1785-1789). Diese Sammlung erschien in 41 Bänden und enthielt die französische Übersetzung von den Geschichten der *Tausendundeine Nacht* zusammen mit Texten von etwa vierzig anderen Autoren und Autorinnen, darunter Charles Perrault, Madame d'Aulnoy, Mademoiselle Leprince de Beaumont, Mademoiselle de La Force, Jean-Jacques Rousseau usw. Diese monumentale Sammlung sollte das europäische kulturelle Palimpsest der Zukunft bilden, d.h. ein narratives Kaleidoskop, in dem sich Traditionen trafen, sich kreativ vermischten, um eine vielgestaltige und mehrdeutige Realität darzustellen. Das europäische Publikum hatte hiermit, die Möglichkeit sich zur Probe zu stellen, über Ideale zu sinnen und das Fantasiebild einer Gesellschaft der Zukunft zu entwerfen.

Dank der kulturellen Vermittlungsarbeit von Johann Heinrich Voß – dem wir die erste deutsche Übersetzung von der Sammlung *Tausend und einer Nacht* (1781-1785) verdanken – wurden der Orient, das Wunderbare und das Magische bald zu einem festen Bestandteil der deutschen literarischen Produktion (Hofmann, 2020). Den Erfolg der Erzählungen aus den *Nächten* und aus dem *Cabinet des Fées* ist durch zahllose weitere Sammlungen bezeugt: So z.B. Friedrich Immanuel Bierlings Werk *Cabinet der Feen*, das zwischen 1761 und 1766 erschien, und Friedrich Justin Bertuchs Reihe *Blaue Bibliothek aller Nationen*, die zwischen 1790 und 1800 in zwölf Bänden veröffentlicht wurde. Einerseits entwickelte sich in Deutschland bald das Interesse für das Magische und Fabelhafte, das den Ursprung aller Völker zu prägen schien, andererseits dasjenige für die europäischen volkstümlichen Erzähl- und Dichtungstraditionen, wie die Sammlungen von Johann Karl August Musäus *Volksmärchen der Deutschen* oder die von den Brüdern Grimm herausgegebene *Kinder und Hausmärchen* bezeugen.

Wielands Dschinnistan

Das Land der Dschinn als mythologische Welt findet seine definitive Behauptung mit der Veröffentlichung von Wielands Werk *Dschinnistan*. Drei Hauptprinzipien liegen dieser Märchensammlung zugrunde: ihre pä-

dagogische Valenz; ihr identitätsbildendes Potential; ihre Fähigkeit, die Gegenwart kritisch darzustellen. In seiner *Vorrede* erklärte der Autor, die pädagogische Kraft beruhe auf dem Prinzip des *prodesse et delectare*:

Man kann es nicht oft genug wiederholen: wer die Menschen von ihren Irrthümern und Unarten heilen will, muß seine Arzeneien durch Beymischung irgendeines angenehmen Saftes oder geistigen Liquors angenehm zu machen wissen; und man unterrichtet und bessert sie nie gewisser, als wenn man das Ansehen hat sie bloß belustigen zu wollen (I: X).

Darüber hinaus wirke das Märchen als Instrument der Identitätsbildung einer Nation wegen seiner Macht, Geschichte, Religion und Kultur in einer einzigen komplexen Darstellung zu vereinen:

Die Geschichte der Völker fängt mit redenden Thieren und Theophanien an: Götter und Halbgötter in Menschengestalt, Genien und Feen, Zauberer und Zauberinnen, Zentauren und Zyklopen, Riesen und Zwerge, spielen die erste Rolle in den ältesten Zeiten der Nationen: jede hat ihre Mythologie, ihren Vorrath uralter Märchen, die mit ihrer eigenen Vorstellungs- und Lebensweise, mit Ihrer Geschichte, Religion, klimatischen, sittlichen und bürgerlichen Verfassung so stark verwebt ist, daß keine Zeitfolge sie ganz daraus vertilgen kann. (I: IV)

Schließlich behauptete Wieland, dass die Gattung des Märchens, dank ihrer besonderen Illusionskraft, sich auch am besten eigne, die Gegenwart kritisch zu deuten:

Man fand, daß Wiz und Laune, ja sogar Philosophie und selbst Philosophie von der esoterischen Art, sich mit dieser popularen, von aller Prätension so weit entfernten Dichtart sehr wohl vertrage; und daß sie eine sehr gute Art sey, gewisse Wahrheiten, die sich nicht gerne ohne Schleier zeigen, in die Gesellschaft einzuführen: oder solche, die in einem ernsthaften Gewande etwas abschreckendes haben, gefällig und beliebt machen (I: VIII-IX)

Wieland erzeugte eine kaleidoskopische und überraschende Fantasiewelt, die den Leser intellektuell und emotional fesselt: Charaktere und Landschaften aus den verschiedensten Orten und Epochen der Welt treffen im Königreich Dschinnistan aufeinander. Altgriechische Figuren in leichte Gewänder gehüllt bewegen sich innerhalb mittelalterlicher Burgen; orientalische Schönheiten treffen bewaffnete nördliche Ritter; Köpfe werden verwechselt und leichtsinnige Königinnen werden in rosarote Schafe ver-

wandelt (Gambino, 2020). Alles ist möglich in diesem Reich und dennoch gibt es Regeln und Gesetze, die keine der Figuren missachten kann.

Wieland war sich der Notwendigkeit eines Wandels der sozialen Verhältnisse bewusst, denn ganz Europa stand am Rande eines historischen Umbruchs, wie er in seinen Aufsätzen zur Französischen Revolution behauptete. Seiner Meinung nach, hatte gerade die moralische Belehrung als konstitutives Element des Märchens ein hohes Potential für die Bildung der neuen Gesellschaft der Zukunft. Stilistisches Geschick und Sprachgewandtheit waren notwendig, um eine konstante Spannung und ein Gleichgewicht zwischen den beiden Eckpfeilern der Märchenerzählung aufrechtzuerhalten: dem Wunderbaren und dem Wahrhaftigen (oder dem Natürlichen). Denn gerade diese Spannung zwischen den beiden Extremen würde das menschliche Vorstellungsvermögen anregen und aktivieren (Wieland ,1786, I: VI).⁴

Noch wichtiger erscheint die Tatsache, dass Wieland durch die märchenhafte Verkleidung historischer Tatsachen und Sitten die neuen Generationen zur Beherrschung der Gefühle, Ausbildung der Vernunft und zur kritischen Haltung zu erziehen beabsichtigte. Diesem ambitionierten Projekt entsprachen einem raffinierten Stil der Sprache und erstaunlich komplexe Gliederungen der Handlungen, mit reigenartigen Berichten, sowie eine Vielfalt von ineinander verwebten narrativen Ebenen. Er griff das Erzählmodell barocker und französischer Tradition auf, führte Sagen und Legenden romanischer und germanischer Herkunft mit pastoralen und archaischen Motiven zusammen. Es bewegen sich in diesem magischen Ambiente Charaktere verschiedener Religionen, Sitten und Gebräuche, die aus entfernten Hemisphären stammen und niemals eindeutig als gut oder böse zu beurteilen sind, sondern immer zwischen beiden Extremen hin und her schwanken. Ihre Ambiguität scheint programmatisch zu sein, um den Lesern und Leserinnen zu zeigen, wie zweideutig das Leben in Wirklichkeit sei, obwohl nach aufklärerischer Vorgabe jedem Ereignis ein Zusammenhang zwischen Ursache und Wirkung zugrunde liegen sollte. Jedes Märchen wird zur Rahmenstruktur einer Kette von weiteren Erzählungen in einer Vervielfältigung der erzählerischen Perspektiven. Das Lesepublikum wird somit aufgefordert, den wahren Ablauf der Ereignisse selbst zu rekonstruieren, aber auch den Fallstricken, den Umkehrungen und den Stereotypen des Weiblichen und des Männlichen⁵ zu entgehen. Dank der Übertreibung und des Witzes wird der Wert des einfachen Alltagslebens bezeugt, in dem sich die Tugend mit dem gesunden kriti-

schen Urteilsvermögen verbindet. Die Märchen, die das Publikum des vorigen Jahrhunderts in den Gärten und Rokokosalons der europäischen Höfe so sehr erfreut hatten, werden nun zu einer Allegorie der Korruption und der Widersprüche der gesamten europäischen Gesellschaft.

Dadurch wirkt dieser erfolgreiche Märchenkosmos, der sich mit der Zeit zum stabilen Denkbild kristallisiert, als Allegorie einer dystopisch-empfundene Welt, in welcher die Gewalt der Geschichte als ein wiederkehrendes Übel dargestellt wird und die menschlichen Laster, nur schwer zu mäßigen scheinen. All das führt zu einem definitiven Urteil seitens Wielands: Die Geschichte zeigt, dass die Menschen hauptsächlich von Natur aus unwürdig sind. Deswegen weist Wieland auf die Notwendigkeit eine Bildung durch das Schöne zu gestalten, um den einzigen Weg zur Veredlung der Menschheit zu eröffnen. Diese der menschlichen Geschichte innewohnende Antithese zwischen Unwürdigkeit und Teilhabe am Göttlichen widerspiegelt sich im oxymorischen Motiv des verlorenen und des wiederzugewinnenden Paradieses und wird das Kernmotiv des fortlebenden Dschinnistan-Denkbildes. In der Welt der Dschinn stehen Religion und Esoterik, Empirie und Alchemie, bürgerliche Tugend und aristokratische Korruption, die Strenge der Logik und die Kraft der Fantasie gegenüber und nebeneinander. Den Leserinnen und Lesern steht die Aufgabe zu, durch die Fülle der Figuren und Erzählsituationen, den richtigen Weg zur Wahrheit, zur Natur und zur Verbesserung der Welt zu finden.

Das Fortleben eines Denkbildes

Die Geschichte des Reiches Dschinnistan endete nicht mit Wielands Sammlung; sie beeinflusste auch die nachfolgende Generation der romantischen Autoren: allen voran Novalis, der einige von Herder geäußerte Ideen aufgriff und Traumwelten und utopische Landschaften im Zeichen Wielands Dschinn literarisch zur Probe stellte, um das Potenzial des menschlichen Vorstellungsvermögens, die Kraft der Intuition und die Tiefen des Ichs zu erkunden.

Die von Herder postulierte Evolution der Menschheit erforderte, nach Novalis, die Kenntnis auch der tiefgründigen Individualität, die über jede mit den Instrumenten der Vernunft erforschte kognitive Dimension hinausgeht. Der Poesie schrieb er diese schwierige Aufgabe zu, die Gesetze der Natur und der menschlichen Individualität miteinander zu verbinden. So

behauptete Novalis in seinem Entwurf des *Allgemeinen Bouillons*: „Die Poesie mischt alles zu ihrem großen Zweck – der Erhebung des Menschen über sich selbst“ (Novalis, 1960-1977, II: 535). Das Ideal einer Veredlung der Menschheit benötigte, in seiner Sicht, zu einer Reise in die Tiefen der Innerlichkeit durch die Poesie, denn die ersehnte Vereinigung von Subjekt und Objekt konnte nur durch einen schöpferischen, dichterischen Akt erreicht werden. Das Kunstwerk stellte diesen kreativen Akt *par excellence* dar und war im Stande, der Menschheit den Weg zu einer höheren Stufe ihrer Existenz hinzuweisen. So stellt Novalis in seinem berühmten, unvollendeten Bildungsroman *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* eine Reise ins Zentrum seines eigenen Bewusstseins dar, die am Ende des ersten Teils zur allegorischen Welt des berühmten Klingsohr-Märchens führt (Kremer, 2007: 128). Hier wird – mit klarem Bezug auf Wielands Märchensammlung – die feenhaftige Tochter des Mondes, namens Ginnistan, dazu beitragen, ein goldenes Zeitalter zu gründen. Als Amme der Figuren von Eros und Fabel, verkörpert sie das Geheimnis und die Anmut der orientalischen Welt, von der sich ihre beiden Schützlinge ernähren. Novalis' Amme Ginnistan besitzt in der Tat viele Eigenschaften eines von Wieland beschriebenen Dschinns, die jeden Schein durchschauen, aber auch Täuschungen und Illusionen erzeugen, Menschen von Krankheiten heilen und sie trösten oder bedrohen (Laughlin, 2015: 67-78). Dschinn sind weder menschlich noch sterblich; sie bewohnen die Erde, teilen die Erfahrung der Sterblichen. Ihre Geschichte knüpft an berühmte Mythen an, wie die von dem König Salomon und der Königin von Saba, und werden oft als Bewohner einer verlorenen harmonischen Urwelt beschrieben, in der Liebe und Schönheit regierten. Sie symbolisieren die Qualitäten der menschlichen Vorstellungskraft und erscheinen als Verkörperung der vermittelnden Kraft zwischen der irdischen und der göttlichen Welt.

Das Klingsohr-Märchen stellt durch eine Reihe von allegorischen Figuren die Utopie der Welterlösung durch die Kraft der Poesie und der Liebe dar: Das Bild des künftigen Goldenen Zeitalters besteht also aus einer utopischen Umkehrung der bestehenden Ordnung. Ginnistan reist mit Eros nicht zurück zur orientalischen Quelle des Lichts. Sie reist zum Mond, um die Nachtseite der Welt als neues Reich der Erkenntnis zu entdecken. So wird im abschließenden *Astralis*-Gedicht der Traum als neue Quelle der Erkenntnis behauptet: „War die Welt vorher zum Traum geworden, so sollte nun der Traum Welt werden.“ (Novalis, 1802: 367). Auch die Figur des Genius *Astralis* hat viele Kritiker beschäftigt und zu einer Vielzahl

von Interpretationen geführt: sie könnte als „Selbstdarstellung des universellen Geistes, dessen schöpferische Kraft den gesamten Kosmos verklärt“ gedeutet werden, oder als Figuration der „Geburt des siderischen Menschen“ (Viotor, 2001: 233). Unserer Meinung nach bezieht sich seine Erfindung noch einmal auf Wielands elementare Kraft der Dschinn, die dem Menschen den Weg zur Erhebung über das Reale hinweisen. Die Kehre nach innen wird als Erlösung und Heilmittel gegen eine Zeit und eine Wirklichkeit gedeutet, die als entseelt und menschenwidrig empfunden wird. Auch in diesem Fall scheint das Interesse zur Märchengattung und der Bezug auf das von Wieland entworfene Denkbild einem Wunsch der rohen Realität zu entfliehen, dem Traum einer Idealen Menschenwelt zu entsprechen.

Nach langer Zeit, am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts, gerade zu Beginn einer neuen Umbruchzeit, wird das Denkbild Dschinnistan in einem neuen literarischen Werk heraufbeschworen. Diese Geisterwelt erscheint wieder in der zweiteiligen Erzählung *Ardistan und Dschinnistan*,⁶ aus dem Spätwerk des deutschen Schriftstellers Karl May. Das Grundthema dieses Werkes ist erneut die Entwicklung des Menschen: Von einem vermutlich irdischen, niedrigen Anfang (Ardistan, „Bodenland“) muss der Erzähler dieser abenteuerlichen Reise zu einer höheren Stufe gelangen, die im Reiche Dschinnistan, („Geistesland“) ihre Verwirklichung erleben wird. Nach May war eine solche Entwicklung des Menschen gescheitert, wie die Ereignisse und die Tatsachen des Alltagslebens bezeugten. Jede Ethik, sowie die wertvollen Elemente der Tradition waren verloren gegangen. Abenteuer und Fantasie blieben, seiner Meinung nach, die einzigen Möglichkeiten, um das Böse zu erkennen, und sich dem Guten zuzuwenden. Dschinnistan ist als Reich der „Edelmenschen“ und der Hoffnung dargestellt und zugleich ist die lange und schwierige Reise dahin der Beweis dazu, dass die Menschen dem Bösen und dessen verführerischer Kraft ausgestellt sind. Die orientalische Kulisse, in der sich die Charaktere bewegen, stellt einen starken Kontrast zu den brutalen und kriegslustigen Völkern dar, denen die Reisenden begegnen. Der Weg zum Idealen humanistisch handelnden Intellektuellen, den der Autor anstrebt, ist sehr lang und kann nur dank der Weisheit der Sultinin von Sitara, Marah Durimeh, und der Hilfe von übernatürlichen Mächten erreicht werden. Das Land Dschinnistan wird weiterhin in mehreren Werken Mays erwähnt und ist immer als eine idyllische Landschaft beschrieben „Das Glück saß vor jedem Hause“ (May, 1909: VIII).

Karl May hat seine Kritik an der Gesellschaft gut zu verbergen gewusst. Die Janusköpfigkeit deutscher Bigotterie und deutschen Untertanengeists sind in diesem Werk nur allegorisch wiedergegeben und das literarische Projekt einer erträumten Heimat für alle, die an den Regeln der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft litten, und die in einer erträumten Wirklichkeit einen Zufluchtsort suchten, findet seine Realisierung nur im Lande Dschinnistan. Das Abenteuer führt den Hauptcharakter aber nicht nur nach Orient: Er muss viel weiter reisen und außerhalb der Weltkugel den Planeten Sitara (Schmidt, 1998) erreichen, auf dem sich sowohl Ardistan, das Reich der Gewalt- und „Egoismismenschen“ als auch Dschinnistan, das Land der „Edelmenschen“, befinden (Sudhoff/Vollmer, 2013).

Karl Mays utopische Reiseerzählung, die am Vorabend des Ersten Weltkrieges geschrieben wurde, handelt von einem nun verzweifelten idealistischen Traume. Die Ereignisse, die sich auf Sitara abspielen, haben keinen Musterwert für eine positive Transformation der Gesellschaft: sie stellen vielmehr ein Gegenbild dar. Die Realität ist inhuman, egoistisch geworden und strebt nur nach Krieg und Gewalt. Die Fee Marah Durimeh verkündet weise am Ende des Romans: „Die Erde sehnt sich nach Ruhe, die Menschheit nach Frieden, und die Geschichte will nicht mehr Taten der Gewalt und des Hasses, sondern Taten der Liebe verzeichnen“ (May, 1909: 188). Doch bricht trotzdem Krieg zwischen Ardistan und Dschinnistan aus und der Herrscher von Dschinnistan wird siegen, dadurch dass er den befeindeten und gewaltsamen Herrscher letztendlich gewinnen lässt. Dieses erneute Königreich der Dschinn gibt nicht mehr Anlass zur Hoffnung, sondern stellt die ferne Landschaft eines tröstlichen Traums dar.

Schlussfolgerung

Das Denkbild Dschinnistan scheint somit eine wichtige Rolle in der Konstruktion von fiktiven Welten gespielt zu haben, besonders bei Autoren die die geschichtliche und gesellschaftliche Umbruchzeiten allegorisch darzustellen anstrebten und den Osten als verlorenes Paradies und gleichzeitig als Traumlandschaft einer ideellen Zukunft ansahen.

Wielands Königreich ist eine literarische Erfindung des reifen 18. Jahrhunderts, doch scheinen seine kapriziösen Arabesken, die überraschenden Umkehrungen, das stetige Schwanken zwischen Wirklichkeit und Illusion immer wieder eine kritische Reflektion gegen das drohende

Chaos der Geschichte anzuregen. Im Zeitalter der Vernunft weist Wieland den Weg aus der Unmündigkeit durch Bildung, Ordnung und Mäßigung der Emotionen: Alle seine Märchenfiguren streben nach emotionaler Reife und nach dem Gleichgewicht zwischen den Sinnen, der Emotionen und dem Verstand. Tatsächlich kritisierte dieser Autor all jene, die behaupteten man könne nur durch Rationalität und Vernunft und einer Fülle von Erfahrungen den steilen Weg zur Erkenntnis erklimmen. Poesie, Natur und Empfindungen seien, seiner Meinung nach, die wichtigsten Grundelemente der menschlichen Natur. Die höhere Erkenntnis wäre also nur durch Erfahrungen, welche die emotionale Ebene miteinbeziehen, möglich. Im Feenreich Dschinnistan hören wir eine Stimme, die uns auffordert, den Täuschungen und Verirrungen der Macht, dem Konformismus und Fanatismus, der Schmeichelei, dem Drang der Begierde und dem Opportunismus des leichten Gewinns zu entkommen. Leser und Leserinnen aller Zeiten werden immer wieder daran erinnert, wie wichtig es sei, dem Schönen auf dem Weg zum Guten zu folgen, indem man respektvoll mit der Natur umzugehen lernt. Diese Aufforderung bringt die fundamentale und fortdauernde krisenhafte Spaltung zwischen Natur und Kultur ans Licht. Die wiederkehrenden literarischen Bezüge zum Reich der Dschinn lassen sich schließlich als Alarmglocke deuten: das Denkbild Dschinnistan scheint immer wieder die dichterische Phantasie zu fangen, besonders in Momenten des Ungleichgewichts zwischen Subjekt und Welt, Vernunft und Einbildungskraft, um dabei den Raum für eine utopische Perspektive zu eröffnen. Dieses utopische Vermögen gilt auch für unsere Gegenwart, in welcher sich die Beziehung zwischen dem Menschen und der Natur so problematisch erweist, da unser Alltag von Pandemien und Kriegen bedroht ist.

Wir messen heutzutage Gefahr und Erlösung meist an empirischen und ökonomischen Regeln und nähren unsere Existenzangst mit einer unendlichen Serie von dystopischen Kunstwerken. Es fehlt uns der Trost der vom Schönen kommt, denn Poesie, Illusion und Traum sind dem Menschen unentbehrlich. Dagegen scheint das zyklische Wiederkehren des utopischen Landes der Dschinn beständig auf neue Wege aus den drohenden Katastrophen hinweisen zu wollen. In der poetischen Welt des Geistes, die sich der Brutalität des Realen entgegenstellt, wirkt das erdichtete Königreich der Dschinn als ideale poetische Burg, die den von der Geschichte und der menschlichen Grausamkeit verursachten Schiffbrüchen widersteht. Seine symbolischen Mauern stehen hoch und fest, um eine Idee von Gesellschaft zu schützen, die auf den Grundsätzen der Brüderlichkeit

und der Solidarität beruhen sollte. Leider hat unsere Epoche vergessen was die schöne Fee Agelie dem Dschinn Phanaor in Wielands Märchen *Der Palast der Wahrheit* erklärt: Auf Illusionen, Träume und Poesie beruhen Freundschaft, Liebe und Geselligkeit, also all jene Werte „die das Glück und die Freuden unseres Lebens sind“ (III: 237).



- 1 So z.B. in Benjamins Aufsatz über Eduard Fuchs ist das geschichtliche Verstehen „als Nachleben des Verstandenen“ aufgefasst, dessen „Pulse bis in die Gegenwart spürbar sind“ (Benjamin 1977, II: 468). Im *Passagenwerk* schreibt er: „Geschichtliches ‚Verstehen‘ ist grundsätzlich als ein Nachleben des Verstandenen zu fassen und daher [...] als die Grundlage der Geschichte überhaupt zu betrachten“ (Benjamin 1991, V: 574).
- 2 Wielands Märchensammlung *Dschinnistan* wurde von Heinrich Steiner in Winterthur in drei Bänden in den Jahren 1786, 1787 1789 veröffentlicht. Von den neunzehn Erzählungen sind zwölf von Wieland, vier von Friedrich Hildebrand von Einsiedel, zwei von August Jacob Liebeskind. Das letzte Märchen *Der Palast der Wahrheit* stammt ursprünglich aus der Feder von Caroline von Wolzogen, wurde aber von Wieland fertiggeschrieben.
- 3 Vgl. Hanna Dyâb, *D'Alep à Paris. Les pérégrinations d'un jeune Syrien au temps de Louis XIV. Récit traduit de l'arabe (Syrie), et annoté par Paule Fahmé-Thiéry, Bernard Heyberger et Jérôme Lentin*, Arles: Actes Sud (collection La bibliothèque arabe. Les classiques), 2015.
- 4 Vgl. dazu auch Wielands *Vorbericht eines Ungenannten* in seiner späteren Sammlung *Das Hexameron von Rosenhain* (Wieland 1805: 14).
- 5 So passiert es z. B. in den Märchen *Neangir und seine Brüder, Argentine und ihre Schwestern* (Wieland, 1786 1: 204).
- 6 Diese zweiteilige Erzählung wurde zunächst von 1907 bis 1909 in der katholischen Zeitschrift „Deutscher Hausschatz“ unter dem Titel *Der Mir von Dschinnistan* veröffentlicht. Sie erschien dann als Buchausgabe im Jahre 1910 als 31. und 32. Band der *Gesammelten Reiseerzählungen* im Verlag Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld. Im Jahre 1969 im Zusammenhang mit der Gründung der Karl-May-Gesellschaft wurden die zwei Bände des Romans als Band XXXI und XXXII der *Gesammelten Werke* veröffentlicht. Im Jahre 2008 haben sich die Karl-May-Gesellschaft, der Karl-May-Verlag und die Karl-May-Stiftung zusammengefunden, um die historisch-kritische Werkausgabe Karl Mays, die bereits 1987 von Hans Wollschläger und Hermann Wiedenroth begonnen worden war, fortzuführen. Die Herausgabe der historisch-kritischen Ausgabe begann 1987 im Verlag Franz Greno und wurde von 1993 bis 2007 im Bücherhaus Bargfeld weitergeführt. Leider ist dieses Vorhaben ins

Stocken geraten und die historisch-kritische Ausgabe dieses Romans ist nicht erschienen, trotz der trotz der vielen Wiederauflagen. Vgl. <<https://www.karlmay-gesellschaft.de/index.php?seite=karl-mays-werke&sprache=de>> [Abruf am 3.01.2022].



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Basile, Gianbattista. *Lo Cunto de li Cunti overo Lo trattenemiento de peccerille de Gian Alesio Abbattutis*. Napoli: Camillo Cavallo 1645.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Gesammelte Schriften*. Sieben Bände. Berlin: Suhrkamp 1972-89.
- Bertuch Friedrich Justin. *Blaue Bibliothek aller Nationen*. Gotha: Ettingerschen Buchhandlung 1790-1800.
- Bierling, Friedrich Immanuel. *Cabinet der Feen*. Nürnberg: Raspe 1761-1769.
Cabinet des Fées ou Collection choisie des contes des Fées et autres contes merveilleux. Amsterdam/Ginevra: Charles Georges Thomas Garnier 1785-1789.
- Didi-Hubermann, Georges. *Das Nachleben der Bilder. Kunstgeschichte und Phantomzeit nach Aby Warburg*. Berlin: Suhrkamp Verlag 2010.
- Dyâb, Hanna. *D'Alep à Paris. Les pérégrinations d'un jeune Syrien au temps de Louis XIV. Récit traduit de l'arabe (Syrie), et annoté par Paule Fahmé-Thiéry, Bernard Heyberger et Jérôme Lentin*. Arles: Actes Sud 2015.
- Erl, A. *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen*. In: Nünning, A., Nünning, V. (Hg.). *Konzepte der Kulturwissenschaften*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-476-02745-0_8>.
- Friedrich, Hans-Edwin. *Utopie*. In *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturwissenschaft. Neubearbeitung des Reallexikons der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*. Berlin/ New York: Walter de Gruyter 2003, III: 739-743.
- Galland, Antoine. *Les Mille et une nuit*. Paris- Lyon: La Veuve Claude Barbin 1704-1717.
- Gambino, Renata. *Creature d'ardore. Il regno delle fate nella Germania del Settecento*. In: Ch. M. Wieland. *Jinnistan. Fiabe. Edizione integrale*. Milano: Mimesis 2020: 9-26.
- Gambino, Renata/Pulvirenti, Grazia. „*Quel che conta è l'azione, tutto il resto è solo ombra, mero ragionamento*”. *Herder precursore delle teorie sull'Embodiment e sulla cognizione incarnata*. In *Cognitive Philology*, 12(2019): 1-27.
- Grimm, Jacob & Wilhelm. *Kinder und Hausmärchen*. Berlin: Reimer 1812-1815.
- Hardenberg Friedrich von [Novalis]. *Heinrich von Ofterdingen. Ein nachgelassener Roman* (1802), Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1999.
- Hardenberg Friedrich von [Novalis]. *Schriften in 5 Bde*. Hrgs. von Peter Kluckhohn / Richard Samuel. Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer 1960-1977.

- Harth, Dietrich. *Christian Wolffs Begründung des Exempel- und Fabelgebrauchs im Rahmen der Praktischen Philosophie*. In *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*. 52.1(1978): 43–62.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Abhandlung über den Ursprung der Sprache*. Berlin: Voß 1770.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. Älteste Urkunde des Menschengeschlechts. Riga: Hartknoch 1774a.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*. Riga: Hartknoch 1774b.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*. Bd. 2. Riga und Leipzig: Hartknoch 1785.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried. *Über die neuere deutsche Literatur. Fragmente: Erste Sammlung*. In *Werke in zehn Bänden*. Frankfurt a. M.: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag 1985, I: 367-540.
- Hermes, Stefan/ Kaufmann, Sebastian (Hg.). *Der ganze Mensch – die ganze Menschheit: Völkerkundliche Anthropologie, Literatur und Ästhetik um 1800*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2014.
- Hodder, Alan D. „*Ex Oriente Lux*“: *Thoreau's Ecstasies and the Hindu Texts*. In: *The Harvard Theological Review*. 86. 4(1993): 403–38.
- Hofmann, Michael. *Humanitäts-Diskurs und Orient-Diskurs um 1789: Herder, Lessing, Wieland*. In Gabriele Charis Goer u. Michael Hofmann (Hrsg.). *Der Deutschen Morgenland: Bilder des Orients in der deutschen Literatur und Kultur von 1770. bis 1850*. München: Wilhelm Fink 2008.
- Jones, William Sir. *On the Gods of Greece, Italy, and India* (1784). In: *The Works of Sir William Jones*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press 2013, III: 319-398.
- Kantemir, Demetrie. *Geschichte des osmanischen Reichs nach seinem Anwachsen und Abnehmen. Nebst den Bildern der türkischen Kaiser. Geschrieben von Demetrie Kantemir, ehemaligen Fürsten von Moldau*, Hamburg: Herold 1745.
- Košeniina, Alexander (Hg.). *Literarische Anthropologie. Grundlagentexte zur Neuentdeckung des Menschen*. Berlin: De Gruyter 2016.
- Kremer, Detlev. *Romantik*. Stuttgart: Metzler 2007.
- Laughlin, Vivian A.. *A Brief Overview of al Jinn within Islamic Cosmology and Religiosity*. In *Journal of Adventist Mission Studies*. 11.1(2015): 67-78.
- Lessing Gotthold Ephraim. *Nathan der Weise. Ein dramatisches Gedicht in fünf Aufzügen*. Berlin: Voß 1779.
- May Karl. *Ardistan und Dschinnistan II*. In *Karl Mays Reiseerzählungen*, Band XXXII. Freiburg i. Br.: Verlag von Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld 1909.
- Musäus, Johann Karl August. *Volksmärchen der Deutschen. Für die Jugend ausgew. und bearb. von Moritz Wilh. Gotthard Müller*. Stuttgart: Thienemann 1887.

- Paolucci, Gianluca. «*Vieni! Guarda e senti Dio*». *Teologia performativa in Herder*. Macerata: Quodlibet 2021.
- Paolucci, Gianluca. *Ritualità Massonica nella letteratura della Goethezeit*. Roma: Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici 2014.
- Perrault, Charles. *Contes de ma Mère l'oye*. Paris: Claude Barbin 1697.
- Riedel, Wolfgang. *Literarische Anthropologie. Eine Unterscheidung*. In: Braungart W./Ridder K./Apel F. (Hg.). *Wahrnehmen und Handeln. Perspektiven einer Literaturanthropologie*. Bielefeld: Aisthesis Verlag 2004: 337–366.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books 1978.
- Schimmel, Annemarie. *Orientalische Einflüsse auf die deutsche Literatur*. In *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwissenschaft*. Wiebelsheim: AULA Verlag 1990, V: 546-561.
- Schings Hans-Jürgen. *Der ganze Mensch. Anthropologie und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert*. Stuttgart: Metzler 1992.
- Schmidt Arno, *Sitara und der Weg Dorthin: Eine Studie über Werk und Wirkung Karl Mays*. Berlin: Fischer 1998.
- Schmidt, Jochen. *Die Geschichte des Genie-Gedankens in der deutschen Literatur, Philosophie und Politik 1750–1945*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1985.
- Sermain, Jean-Paul. *Le conte de fées - Du classicisme aux Lumières*. Paris: Desjonquères 2005.
- Siekmann, Henning. *Wolf und Lamm. Zur Karriere einer politischen Metapher im Kontext der europäischen Fabel*. Bamberg: University Bamberg Press 2017.
- Straparola, Giovanni Francesco. *Le piacevoli notti*. Venezia: Comin da Trino 1553-1556.
- Sudhoff, Dieter/ Vollmer, Hartmut (Hg.), *Karl Mays „Ardistan und Dschinnistan“*. Hamburg: Igel Verlag 2013.
- Vietor, Sophie. *Astralis von Novalis: Handschrift, Text, Werk*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann 2001.
- Voß, Johann Heinrich. *Die tausend und eine Nacht. Arabische Erzählungen*. Bremen: Cramer 1781-1785.
- Weidner, Daniel. *Fort-, Über-, Nachleben: Zu Einer Denkfigur Bei Benjamin*. In *Benjamin-Studien*. II(2011): 161–78.
- Wieland, Christoph Martin. *Aufsätze über die Französische Revolution*. In *Sämtliche Werke*, Leipzig: Göschen 1797, XXXI. 1-329.
- Wieland, Christoph Martin. *Betrachtung über den Standpunkt, worin wir uns in Absicht auf Erzählungen und Nachrichten von Geistererscheinungen befinden*. In *Der Teutsche Merkur* II(1781): 226-239.
- Wieland, Christoph Martin. *Das Hexameron von Rosenhain*. Leipzig: Göschen 1805.
- Wieland, Christoph Martin. *Dschinnistan oder auserlesene Feen- und Geistermärchen*, Winterthur: Steiner 1786-1789.

La pluralità politica come tentativo di mediazione ne *La montagna magica* di Thomas Mann

Erik Schilling

University of Bern, Switzerland

1. La storia del mondo e la trama del romanzo¹

“[...] mio cugino e io parlavamo per caso proprio della guerra.”
“Me ne sono accorto” rispose Naphta. “[...] Discutevate di politica?
Dibattevate della situazione mondiale?”
“Oh no” rise Hans Castorp. “Come avremmo potuto! [...]”
(Mann, *Montagna* 559)

Come mostra la citazione, in gran parte de *La montagna magica* il protagonista Hans Castorp si presenta come ‘impolitico’ allo stesso modo del suo autore Thomas Mann qualche anno prima con le sue *Considerazioni di un impolitico* (*Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*). Nonostante ciò, la politica e la storia sono temi centrali ne *La montagna magica*. Il romanzo è ambientato negli ultimi anni dell’Impero tedesco e termina nell’estate del 1914 con il “tuono” (Mann, *Montagna* 1054) dell’inizio della guerra, che per Thomas Mann è stato ben presto individuato come obiettivo della trama. Già il 22 agosto 1914 scrisse al suo editore Samuel Fischer: “[I]n questa depravazione del mio ‘Zauberberg’ la guerra del 1914 deve irrompere come soluzione, questo era certo dal momento in cui è iniziata” (*Selbstkommentare* 11; traduzione mia).

Quando, nel 1924, il romanzo viene pubblicato, la situazione politica è drasticamente cambiata rispetto al 1912/13, epoca in cui il lavoro fu avviato. Allo stesso modo, nel corso degli anni, è mutato l’atteggiamento di Thomas Mann nei confronti della politica: Dopo l’inizio della guerra, Mann

interrompe il lavoro su *La montagna magica* per dichiarazioni politiche, come *Pensieri in guerra* (*Gedanken im Kriege*, 1914), ma soprattutto per le *Considerazioni*, che vengono pubblicate poco prima della fine del conflitto bellico nel 1918. Quattro anni dopo, nel 1922, Mann tiene la conferenza *Della repubblica tedesca* (*Von deutscher Republik*), in cui spiega la sua nuova posizione politica – il monarchico diventa repubblicano – sullo sfondo di numerose continuità.²

Non è un caso che *La montagna magica* si collochi nel contesto di altri grandi romanzi degli anni tra la prima e la seconda guerra mondiale, come *L'uomo senza qualità* di Robert Musil, *I sonnambuli* di Hermann Broch o *Ulysses* di James Joyce. *La montagna magica* presenta una retrospettiva di un'epoca scomparsa; allo stesso tempo, però, è anche un romanzo della Repubblica di Weimar (Mayer 113). Così *La montagna magica* è per molti aspetti un “romanzo del tempo” (Mann, *Montagna* 803),³ come spiega Mann stesso nella sua introduzione:

È un romanzo del tempo in due sensi: in primo luogo, storicamente, in quanto tenta di creare il quadro interno di un'epoca, il periodo prebellico europeo, ma anche perché il tempo stesso è il suo soggetto. (*Einführung* XXIII; traduzione mia)

Nel presente articolo considererò il significato della politica e della storia nella loro rilevanza per *La montagna magica* in quattro passi. Nella prima sezione, descriverò alcune caratteristiche dell'ambientazione politica e storica del romanzo. Nella seconda sezione, analizzerò i dibattiti tra Naphta e Settembrini, che costituiscono il nucleo delle controversie politiche. Nella terza sezione, contestualizzerò gli elementi politici sullo sfondo delle *Considerazioni di un impolitico* e della conferenza *Della repubblica tedesca*. Infine, nella quarta sezione, ricorrendo alle figure di Hans Castorp e Mynheer Peepkorn, spiegherò come Thomas Mann evita il problema del chiaro posizionamento politico ne *La montagna magica* attraverso una polifonia di voci – qualcosa che non era possibile nei manifesti politici.

2. Il contesto storico di *La montagna magica*

Politica e storia nel senso del contesto macrostorico sono particolarmente presenti nelle prime e nelle ultime pagine de *La montagna magica*. Il prologo comincia con le parole: “La storia di Hans Castorp che

intendiamo raccontare [...] risale a tanto tempo fa, è per così dire già tutta ricoperta da una nobile patina d'antico" (Mann, *Montagna* 3). Se si tiene presente che il tempo in cui è ambientata la storia si collocava poco più di un decennio prima della pubblicazione del testo, questa affermazione apodittica del narratore può sorprendere. Ma testimonia già il tema più importante del romanzo: il tempo e la sua percezione soggettiva. Anche se, in termini fisici, gli eventi hanno avuto luogo solo pochi anni prima, con la caduta dell'Impero tedesco, la Prima Guerra Mondiale e la Repubblica di Weimar sono avvenuti cambiamenti politici così significativi che esiste un distacco tra la percezione fisica e politica del tempo – un distacco che viene descritto nel prologo come “più remoto passato” (Mann, *Montagna* 3).

Quando la scrisse, Thomas Mann concepì *La montagna magica* come un documento di un'epoca passata. Il 12 aprile 1919, Mann annota nel suo diario che il romanzo “deve essere fortemente presentato come una ‘storia dei vecchi tempi’” e che contiene “abbastanza satira sull'epoca passata” (*Tagebücher* 194; traduzione mia). Ma il romanzo non offre solo una retrospettiva delle condizioni politico-sociali degli anni precedenti alla guerra. Con la sua pluralità di voci, rispecchia anche la giovane Repubblica di Weimar con le sue tendenze conflittuali tra comunismo e nazionalismo:

Il confuso spettro di raggruppamenti intellettuali e sociali della Repubblica di Weimar poteva sentirsi rappresentato qui nel suo insieme, così come ogni singolo partito poteva trovare qui il suo eroe: i repubblicani il loro Settembrini, la reazione il loro Naphta, i nazionalisti tedeschi il loro Joachim, il vitalismo il suo Peeperkorn, il cittadino confuso il suo Castorp. (Kurzke 163; traduzione mia)

Alla fine del romanzo, c'è “un tuono epocale [...] che scosse la terra dalle fondamenta e che per noi è il tuono che fa saltare la montagna magica, mettendo indelicatamente alla porta colui che ha dormito come uno dei sette dormienti” (Mann, *Montagna* 1058–59). Il narratore passa ai campi di battaglia della prima guerra mondiale, dove adesso si trova Hans Castorp. Nonostante l'ambientazione storica, tuttavia, ciò che viene narrato rimane estremamente vago:

Dove siamo? Che cos'è? Dove ci ha gettato il sogno? Crepuscolo, pioggia e sporczia, rossi bagliori nel cielo cupo, ininterrotto brontolio di roboanti tuoni che riempiono l'aria umida [...]. (Mann, *Montagna* 1064)

Non si tratta di un campo di battaglia chiaramente designato, ma di una prospettiva rappresentativa di tutti i campi di battaglia della prima guerra mondiale, anzi di tutte le guerre in generale.⁴ Gli orrori storici immediati vengono ripresi. È proprio nella scena più orribile che la narrazione di *La montagna magica* si spegne:

Il prodotto di una scienza abbruttita [...] esplose là sotto con pazzesca e atroce violenza sollevando nell'aria una fontana alta come una casa, una fontana di terriccio, fuoco, ferro, piombo e brandelli di carne umana. Perché proprio lì giacevano in due ... due amici che nel pericolo estremo si erano gettati a terra uno accanto all'altro: ora, mischiati insieme, sono annientati. Vergogniamoci, noi, di aver cercato riparo nell'ombra! Andiamo via! No, non raccontiamolo! (ibid. 1068)

Dove la storia diventa immediata, il narratore ne prende le distanze. *La montagna magica* conferisce così agli eventi storici concreti una componente atemporale che può essere generalizzata in una domanda: Ci sono delle dimensioni psicologiche, politiche, sociali o antropologiche in questo racconto che si possono considerare come una grammatica universale della storia?

Questo gioco di vicinanza e distanza dalla storia, di orientamento degli eventi storici e di astrazione generalizzante è caratteristico del romanzo nel suo insieme. *La montagna magica* non può essere pensata senza le condizioni storiche concrete; allo stesso tempo, si distanzia da esse in vari modi, sia attraverso una presa di distanza esplicita, sia attraverso l'osservazione ironica degli eventi, sia attraverso la presentazione di una moltitudine di voci politiche che non sono sintetizzate in una sola.⁵ Quest'ultimo processo diventa particolarmente chiaro nelle figure (che sono in conflitto tra di loro e con sé stesse).

3. I dibattiti politici tra Naphta e Settembrini

I conflitti politici essenziali ne *La montagna magica* si svolgono al livello dei personaggi.⁶ La storia collettiva e quella individuale sono interconnesse. Il narratore lo formula esplicitamente: "L'essere umano non vive solo la sua vita di singolo individuo, bensì, consciamente o inconsciamente, anche quella della sua epoca e dei suoi contemporanei [...]" (Mann, *Montagna* 47). Settembrini e Naphta in particolare funzionano come tali figure di procura.⁷

Settembrini si presenta come un filosofo illuminista, un uomo di umanità e civiltà: “Ogni costumatezza, ogni perfezionamento morale nasceva dallo spirito [...] dell’umanità e della politica. Anzi, tutte queste cose erano una cosa sola [...]: civilizzazione!” (ibid. 233). Di conseguenza, Settembrini si impegna nella “Lega per l’Organizzazione del progresso” (ibid. 358). I mezzi per il progresso sono “la fondazione di università popolari, il superamento delle lotte di classe [...] e, infine, l’eliminazione dei conflitti tra i popoli, e cioè la guerra, per mezzo dello sviluppo del diritto internazionale” (ibid. 359).⁸

L’antagonista di Settembrini, Naphta, invece, è più segnato dalle contraddizioni. Un tempo era un ebreo con convinzioni marxiste; al momento della trama del romanzo, è un gesuita reazionario, nei cui contributi al dibattito, tuttavia, brillano ripetutamente posizioni inaspettate, come un debole per la rivoluzione. Naphta come personaggio permette a Thomas Mann di esprimere una convergenza di opposti che lui stesso trova caratteristica della situazione politica della Repubblica di Weimar.⁹

I temi storico-politici che Naphta e Settembrini trattano nei loro dibattiti coprono un ampio spettro. Si comincia con la politica quotidiana, per esempio quando Naphta chiede: “Ma che ne sarà degli accordi di Reval, Lodovico, se i suoi turchi progressisti avranno fortuna? Edoardo VII non potrà più concedere ai russi l’accesso ai Dardanelli” (ibid. 560). Allo stesso tempo, i due collegano gli eventi attuali a dimensioni storiche:

[Settembrini:] “Ah, Vienna! Lei si preoccupa di questo intralcio universale probabilmente perché nel marcio Imperium di cui è la capitale Lei riconosce la versione mummificata del Sacro Romano Impero di nazionalità tedesca!”

[Naphta:] “Io trovo invece che Lei sia russofilo, presumo per simpatia umanistica nei confronti del cesaropapismo.” (ibid. 561)

In un altro passo, trasferiscono gli eventi politici concreti e il loro radicamento storico in contesti ideologici:

[Settembrini:] “Lo stesso Voltaire approvò la guerra in favore della civiltà consigliando a Federico II di combattere i turchi.”

[Naphta:] “E invece Federico II si alleò con loro, eh, eh. E la Repubblica universale, poi! Farò a meno di domandare che cosa ne sarebbe del principio del moto e della ribellione qualora la felicità e l’unione fossero realizzate. A quel punto la ribellione diventerebbe un crimine...”

[Settembrini:] “Lei sa molto bene [...] che si tratta di un progresso dell’umanità potenzialmente inesauribile.” (ibid. 563)

È qui che entrano in gioco i termini ideologici centrali (civiltà, repubblica, ribellione, progresso, umanità), che sono usati da entrambi gli avversari e che possono assumere molti significati. Di conseguenza, le posizioni politiche di Naphta e Settembrini non sono così nette come potrebbero sembrare. Questo diventa evidente, per esempio, quando i dibattiti toccano la legge. Prima di tutto, le opinioni giuridiche riflettono gli atteggiamenti politici:

[Settembrini:] “Ebbene nel diritto dei popoli, signor mio, è vivo il pensiero del diritto naturale e dell’universale ragione...”

[Naphta:] “Bah, il suo diritto dei popoli, ancora una volta, altro non è che un rousseauiano imbarbarimento dello ius divinum, il quale non ha nulla a che fare con la natura né con la ragione, e si fonda invece sulla rivelazione...” (ibid. 565)

Poi però gli atteggiamenti si incrociano: improvvisamente, il filosofo illuminista assume una posizione sorprendentemente ‘reazionaria’ quando fa derivare la legge da Dio; l’arcicattolico, invece, appare sorprendentemente ‘progressista’ quando invoca la legge positiva.

E anche per quanto riguarda la religione, i dibattiti di Naphta e Settembrini sono in primo luogo politicamente fondati e in secondo luogo ambigui. Naphta, per esempio, paragona il politico al cattolico: “Nel gesuitismo [...] l’essenza politico-pedagogica del cattolicesimo si manifesta con evidenza; l’Ordine ha sempre considerato propri domini l’arte di governare e l’educazione” (ibid. 653). Naphta pensa quindi al cattolicesimo come orientato al mondo e alle persone. Settembrini, invece, che in realtà si posiziona coerentemente come ateo, propone una struttura di governo con caratteristiche religioso-autoritarie:

[Settembrini:] “La lega mondiale dei massoni non esiste. Il giorno in cui sarà realizzata [...] non c’è dubbio che essa si riconoscerà in un’unica confessione religiosa, la quale avrà come motto: ‘Écrasez l’infâme’”. (ibid. 763)

Naphta e Settembrini non solo non riescono a trovare una soluzione nella disputa, ma sono persino lontani da una posizione coerente e unitaria per loro stessi. Anche il narratore del romanzo commenta le contraddizioni dei suoi personaggi: “e anzi qui la confusione, che era poi sempre la

stessa, risultò addirittura irrimediabile e tale che, letteralmente, nessuno più riuscì a capire chi fosse il paladino della fede e chi l'esponente del libero pensiero" (ibid. 687). Le conversazioni di Naphta e Settembrini non raggiungono quindi una sintesi o un'intuizione superiore, ma finiscono in uno stato di confusione totale (Sina 215).

4. *Contesti*: Considerazioni di un impolitico e Della repubblica tedesca

La confusione politica è caratteristica non solo de *La montagna magica*, ma anche del più importante "studio preliminare" (Tscholadse 183; traduzione mia) per il romanzo, le *Considerazioni di un impolitico*. Thomas Mann le scrive negli anni 1915–1918 e le pubblica poco prima della fine della guerra nel 1918. Le *Considerazioni* possono essere intese come un commento dettagliato sugli eventi della guerra e sono allo stesso tempo la prova di un duro confronto con suo fratello Heinrich, che – a differenza di Thomas – aveva ben presto preso le parti della democrazia e della repubblica. Con *La montagna magica*, le *Considerazioni* condividono la prospettiva di un libro che è "caduto fuori dal tempo" (Jahraus 64; traduzione mia) – però, laddove questo anacronismo è una componente funzionale ne *La montagna magica*, nelle *Considerazioni* è dovuto ad altre circostanze.

Che le *Considerazioni* siano un libro altamente politico nonostante il loro titolo è indiscusso sia nella loro immediata ricezione che nella letteratura secondaria (Alessiato; Borchmeyer; Müller). Ciò che ha portato a dibattiti controversi, d'altra parte, è la questione se le dichiarazioni politiche nel libro siano direttamente attribuibili al loro autore Thomas Mann o se ci sia una distanza tra autore e testo. Trasformata narratologicamente, la domanda sarebbe: Ci sono un narratore o dei personaggi che parlano indipendentemente o almeno in parte in modo autonomo rispetto all'autore? Strettamente legata a questo è la questione del genere a cui il libro appartiene: è un saggio, un manifesto, una presentazione di discorsi, o persino un romanzo?

Si può mostrare che le condizioni convenzionali per un saggio non vengono realizzate perché il testo lavora con meccanismi letterari (Schilling 51–53). Oltre alla sovvertita classificazione di genere, le *Considerazioni* rendono difficile posizionarsi chiaramente per quanto riguarda la separazione o la connessione di autore e voci nel testo, attuando quindi l'ironia postulata dal testo in termini di contenuto a livello formale

e narrativo. Tuttavia, quanto più le asserzioni del testo sono viste come separate dal loro autore da un'istanza narrativa o da un personaggio, tanto più forte si pone la domanda sul perché Thomas Mann non abbia poi fatto ricorso a un genere genuinamente romanzesco per le sue osservazioni – come fa ne *La montagna magica* con i dibattiti di Naphta e Settembrini.

Con una modifica del concetto di 'romanzo polifonico' di Mikhail Bakhtin, le *Considerazioni* possono essere descritte come un 'saggio polifonico'. Sono un tentativo di convergere l'opinione politica e la distanza artistica. La prefazione delle *Considerazioni* giustifica tale interconnessione di voci diverse con un argomento storico-contemporaneo:

Quell'epoca infatti era tale che non si riusciva più a distinguere quel che a ciascuno importava da quello che non gli importava; tutto era eccitato, sconvolto, i problemi ribollivano l'uno dentro all'altro e non si potevano più districare; si poneva in evidenza la correlazione, l'unità di tutte le cose dello spirito, il problema stesso dell'uomo si poneva in tutta la sua responsabilità che implicava la necessità di una presa di posizione politica, una scelta della volontà.

(Mann, *Considerazioni* 8)

Certo, l'argomento della connessione dell'individuo con il generale è alimentato dal conflitto personale con Heinrich Mann. Nonostante ciò, la prefazione descrive un procedimento narrativo che, con Bakhtin, può essere chiamato 'polifonico'. Dove l'individuo e il generale si mescolano, si mescolano anche le voci che lo esprimono; invece di un'istanza narrativa chiaramente contorta c'è un conglomerato di più voci che parlano con diversi gradi di distanza da ciò che viene detto. In questo modo, nelle *Considerazioni* i vari punti di vista non possono essere riuniti in una posizione argomentata e unitaria. Ne *La montagna magica*, invece, è proprio questo che si rivela un elemento di concezione essenziale.

Dopo la fine della prima guerra mondiale, Thomas Mann è politicamente disorientato, per due motivi: in primo luogo, dalla scomparsa del vecchio ordine politico con cui egli si identificava; in secondo luogo, dall'instaurazione di principi repubblicani che egli rifiutava (Stammen 27). Nel saggio *Della repubblica tedesca*, pubblicato nel 1922, però, Mann cambia la sua posizione politica.¹⁰ Adesso si pronuncia a favore della repubblica come nuovo ordine politico. Questo non è principalmente per convinzione, ma per riconoscere i "fatti" ("negarli significa mentire"; Mann, *Repubblica* 13): "La Repubblica è un destino: un destino verso il quale l'unico atteggiamento giusto è quello dell'*amor fati*" (ibid. 14).

Nella ricerca si è discusso a lungo sulla questione di “conversione o continuità” (Jahraus 63; traduzione mia) tra le *Considerazioni e Della repubblica tedesca*. La “trasformazione di Thomas Mann da monarchico a repubblicano” è “un processo che è difficile da comprendere” (Kurzke 157; traduzione mia); il discorso non è “affatto una ‘svolta’ democratica nelle opinioni politiche di Thomas Mann”, ma una “continuazione del pensiero politico delle *Considerazioni*” (Crescenzi 186; traduzione mia). Mann stesso traccia una linea a partire dai suoi precedenti atteggiamenti sulla separazione del ‘nazionale’ e della ‘repubblica’ e sul concetto di umanesimo. La repubblica, sostiene, è solo la “norma costituzionale”, mentre “la vita nazionale è di gran lunga più potente e più influente” (Mann, *Repubblica* 17).¹¹ Perché “quello che si suol chiamare democrazia” (ibid. 11) è semplicemente lo stesso di ciò che egli aveva chiamato ‘umanità’: “una via di mezzo tedesca” fra “romanticismo e illuminismo, fra misticismo e razionalismo” (ibid. 22).

Umanità come concetto centrale di *Della repubblica tedesca* può quindi essere inteso come un insieme di elementi liberali e conservatori (Crescenzi 183). La nuova idea di ‘umanità’ e la ‘via di mezzo’ diventano determinanti per *La montagna magica* (Tscholadse 185). Per questo, *Della repubblica tedesca* è essenziale per il romanzo che cerca di presentare una posizione intermedia tramite il personaggio Hans Castorp.

5. La pluralità politica come tentativo di mediazione

Hans Castorp assume una posizione di mezzo tra gli altri personaggi, soprattutto nei confronti di Settembrini e Naphta. Tale posizione è, per così dire, ‘nel suo sangue’: le sue origini familiari lo predestinano al ruolo di moderatore. Viene dalla città anseatica di Amburgo, dove – attraverso il commercio – diverse culture convergono. La sua famiglia è stata politicamente attiva per generazioni. Lo stesso Castorp si trova tra la tradizione familiare e il progresso moderno, dedicandosi allo studio dell’ingegneria.

Dopo aver ascoltato diversi dibattiti tra Settembrini e Naphta, ha il coraggio di intervenire nella conversazione con un’osservazione sintetizzante:

[Q]ui si parlava di progresso [...] e dunque in un certo senso di politica, della repubblica celebrata dagli oratori e della civiltà dell’Occidente colto, e lui pensava

allora che la differenza o [...] l'antitesi tra vita e religione era da ricondurre a quella tra tempo ed eternità. Poiché il progresso può esistere solo nel tempo; nell'eternità non esiste, disse, come non esistono politica ed eloquenza. Lì, per così dire, ci si affida mani e piedi a Dio e si chiudono gli occhi. Era questa, espressa confusamente, la differenza tra religione e morale. (Mann, *Montagna* 682)

Castorp cerca di assegnare le posizioni della politica e della religione rappresentate da Settembrini e Naphta alle loro rispettive sfere. La politica esiste nel tempo, la religione nell'eternità. Ma se le posizioni apparentemente contrarie sono semplicemente assegnate a sfere diverse, allora non sono più in conflitto tra loro.

Attraverso il personaggio di Castorp, Thomas Mann realizza così una prospettiva intermedia; nel 'sogno della neve' in particolare, Castorp "riconosce la condizione umana nelle sue impure mescolanze" (Sina 218; traduzione mia). Eppure, come si sa, *La montagna magica* non finisce con il 'sogno della neve', ma alcune centinaia di pagine dopo. La posizione intermedia di Castorp ha solo una validità limitata perché le posizioni che incorpora omettono un aspetto essenziale: la vita. Sia Settembrini che Naphta non possono integrare la vita nelle loro idee razionali: "Settembrini nega tutto ciò che della vita non è conforme alla ragione [...]. Per Naphta, invece, la vita è vera solo come sofferenza e debolezza del corpo" (Engel 427; traduzione mia).

Una soluzione (temporanea) appare sotto forma di Mynheer Peeperkorn. Nella sua posizione vitalista e antispirituale, Peeperkorn, con un "Chiu-so" (Mann, *Montagna* 817), elimina sia l'ideologia del progresso di Settembrini che la posizione conservatrice di Naphta.¹² Dopo aver osservato Peeperkorn per qualche tempo, Castorp nega il politicismo di Settembrini concentrandosi sulla vita: Mentre Settembrini confessa che "la situazione mondiale [lo] turba" (ibid. 943), Castorp si concentra sul gioco delle carte: "'Otto e tre. Fante, regina e re. Andiamo bene. Lei mi porta fortuna, signor Settembrini'" (ibid. 944). Essere ridotto al ruolo di portatore di fortuna invece di portatore di spirito deve offendere Settembrini.

Paradossalmente, però, anche lui – e Naphta – non sono immuni da soluzioni pragmatiche e orientate alla vita. Alla fine del romanzo, non sono le parole ma i fatti a separare il massone e il gesuita, sotto forma di un duello. Questo è preceduto, a sua volta, da dibattiti politici: Naphta esemplifica il problema dell'univocità politica usando l'esempio dell'omicidio di August von Kotzebue da parte di Carl Ludwig Sand. Chiede dei motivi dell'atto:

L'entusiasmo per la libertà, naturalmente. Eppure, a guardar meglio, [...] ad armare la sua mano era stato piuttosto il fanatismo morale e l'odio contro la frivolezza che confligge con il popolo. D'altro canto Kotzebue lavorava al servizio dei russi e, dunque, della Santa Alleanza; perciò Sand lo aveva effettivamente trafitto in nome della libertà... circostanza a sua volta resa inverosimile dal fatto che tra gli amici più intimi dello studente c'erano dei gesuiti. (ibid. 1038)

Settembrini risponde con severità. È deciso di impedire a Naphta “di confondere, sedurre e fiaccare moralmente la gioventù già di per sé oscillante” (ibid. 1039). Il paradosso, però, è che Naphta, subito dopo aver polemizzato contro il fatto come soluzione di conflitti, propone un fatto lui stesso, sfidando Settembrini a duello e, quando questo rischia di finire in parità, suicidandosi. Alla fine, anche Naphta si rivolge alla vita – nella variante radicale di terminarla attraverso il suicidio.

6. Conclusione

Nella prefazione alle *Considerazioni*, Thomas Mann scrive: “Non è compito mio spiegare il paradosso di tale miscuglio di dialettica e di quella mia volontà che veramente, lealmente si sforzava di cogliere il vero” (Mann, *Considerazioni* 5). Probabilmente non si offenderà troppo Mann se si afferma che non è riuscito a trovare una soluzione nelle *Considerazioni*. Lo stesso vale per *La montagna magica*. Lì, però, il fallimento è programma; il romanzo finisce, funzionalmente giustificato, nel paradosso, in una presentazione dell'ambiguità, non nella postulazione di una verità di qualsiasi tipo.

Ne *La montagna magica*, un democratico di sinistra e un sostenitore della teocrazia discutono l'uno con l'altro, e non solo: la forma letteraria rende persino possibile che le posizioni dei due, così contrarie come sembrano a prima vista, convergano nel corso dei dibattiti – il che accade già attraverso il rapido cambio di argomenti, in modo che spesso si perde la traccia di quale avversario ha appena preso quale posizione. Attraverso la sua forma letteraria, *La montagna magica* permette di mostrare l'ambiguità del posizionamento politico e ideologico. Il testo ci riesce attraverso due tecniche che differiscono da quelle del manifesto politico: in primo luogo, attraverso la separazione di autore, narratore e personaggi, in modo che i personaggi possano rappresentare una pluralità di voci; in secondo luogo,

attraverso l'ambiguità delle posizioni dei personaggi, che nel romanzo non è – come nel manifesto – un difetto argomentativo, ma piuttosto dimostra proprio l'arte letteraria dell'autore, perché rivela affinità involontarie.

La montagna magica quindi permette a Thomas Mann di commentare ironicamente il “discorso sulla concezione del mondo del tempo” (Vollhardt 24; traduzione mia), al quale lui stesso aveva partecipato con le *Considerazioni di un impolitico*. Con il suo “sguardo dal meta-livello”, Mann ora raffigura la “pluralità delle offerte” con le loro “irrevocabili contraddizioni” (ibid. 25). Per questo, *La Montagna magica* può essere intesa come una soluzione ai problemi che Thomas Mann non era riuscito a risolvere nelle *Considerazioni* così come in *Della repubblica tedesca*. La politica e la storia giocano qui un ruolo decisivo, perché il romanzo prende una posizione superiore ai dibattiti – in una retrospettiva ironico-melanconica di un tempo che è passato da così tanto che i lettori possono conoscerlo solo sotto la narrazione con “una nobile patina d'antico”.



- 1 Questo articolo è basato su una conferenza tenuta nell'ambito di un *visiting professorship* presso l'Università di Bologna. Vorrei ringraziare cordialmente Chiara Conterno per l'invito. Per correzioni linguistiche ringrazio Vicente Flores Militello. Desidero inoltre ringraziare i due reviewer anonimi per utili commenti e suggerimenti.
- 2 Il periodo di produzione di *La montagna magica* comprende quindi uno sviluppo dall'estetismo alla posizione conservatrice nazionale, fino al repubblicanesimo (Kurzke 158).
- 3 Thomas Mann diventa un 'interprete del tempo' (Engel).
- 4 Dove l'evento storico è palpabile, il "conflitto tra la volontà di vivere di un individuo e la sua società" diventa vivido (Mayer 91; traduzione mia).
- 5 Negli studi critici *La montagna magica* è stata ripetutamente esaminata in relazione a queste condizioni politiche e storiche. Hansen (63), per esempio, vede *La montagna magica* come un romanzo del tempo perché esprime essenzialmente l'unicità del presente. Argelès (72) sottolinea che ne *La montagna magica* il presente è percepito come una ripetizione di schemi di base mitici, psicologici o ontologici. Kurzke postula che *La montagna magica* alla fine non sia diventata un romanzo del tempo, ma "una metafisica schopenhaueriana che svaluta tutto il reale in allegoria" (161–162; traduzione mia). Crescenzi formula una posizione mediatrice: "Il nuovo è relativizzato dalla simultanea apparizione del vecchio, ma non negato" (193; traduzione mia).
- 6 Con Sina, si può parlare di "una polifonia interiore [dei personaggi], intesa come giustapposizione e opposizione di pensieri e 'voci' diverse e intrinsecamente contraddittorie" (201; traduzione mia).
- 7 Entrambi sono tratti da modelli reali (Wißkirchen): Settembrini, ad esempio, presenta caratteristiche del repubblicano Giuseppe Mazzini, i cui scritti politici furono pubblicati in traduzione tedesca nel 1911 e ripresi da Thomas Mann nelle *Considerazioni di un impolitico*. Nella creazione del personaggio Naphta sono stati incorporati – accanto a Georg Lukács – pensieri tratti dei libri di Ernst Bloch su Thomas Münzer e di Heinrich von Eicken su *Storia e sistema della percezione del mondo medievale* (Max 33–35, 37; Vollhardt 18). Attraverso questo collegamento intertestuale dei suoi

- personaggi, Mann raggiunge una localizzazione nel “clima intellettuale del tempo” (Mayer 109; traduzione mia).
- 8 Sulla base di questi posizionamenti caratteristici (progresso, democrazia, civiltà, diritto internazionale), Settembrini può essere visto per molti aspetti come il “letterato della civiltà” come Thomas Mann caratterizza suo fratello Heinrich nelle *Considerazioni*.
 - 9 Dopo aver letto *Storia e sistema della visione del mondo medievale* di Eicken, per esempio, Mann annota nel suo diario che percepisce lo stato di Dio ascetico come analogo alla “cultura mondiale comunista del futuro” – anche la sua “pretesa assoluta di governare [...] fallirà a causa della natura umana” (Mann, *Tagebücher* 211; traduzione mia). Naphta implementa quest’osservazione nel romanzo: “Naphta brings together what appear to be elements from irreconcilably hostile ideologies” (Grenville 146). E Naphta si dimostra addirittura una figura che, nel processo di creazione di *La montagna magica*, può rappresentare posizioni successivamente cambiate o combinarle nelle loro contraddizioni. Wißkirchen (82) ha dimostrato come Mann ha riempito la figura di Naphta di un nuovo significato varie volte, analogamente al cambiamento della situazione storica, per cui Naphta è passato da reazionario a rivoluzionario e poi a rivoluzionario reazionario.
 - 10 Lo presenta a Berlino in occasione del 60° compleanno di Gerhart Hauptmann. Poi viene stampato nella *Neue Rundschau* nel novembre dello stesso anno.
 - 11 In *Della repubblica tedesca*, Thomas Mann argomenta così “come un ‘repubblicano per la ragione’; egli accetta la repubblica come un ordine dato senza chiedere la forma statale della democrazia” (Mehring 189; traduzione mia).
 - 12 La nuova realtà nella società del dopoguerra non può essere ridotta all’antitesi Settembrini–Naphta (Mayer 111).



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Alessiato, Elena. *L'impolitico. Thomas Mann tra arte e guerra*. Bologna: Mulino, 2011.
- Argelès, Daniel. "Der 'Zauberberg' und der Erste Weltkrieg. Thomas Manns schwankende Geschichtsauffassung in der ersten Hälfte der zwanziger Jahre." *Die streitbare Klio. Zur Repräsentation von Macht und Geschichte in der Literatur*. Hrsg. v. Elizabeth Guilhamon und Daniel Meyer. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2010. 71–85.
- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Esthétique et théorie du roman*. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.
- Borchmeyer, Dieter. "Politische Betrachtungen eines angeblich Unpolitischen. Thomas Mann, Edmund Burke und die Tradition des Konservatismus." *Thomas-Mann-Jahrbuch* 10 (1997). 83–104.
- Crescenzi, Luca. "Übergang und Simultanität. Thomas Manns Rede 'Von Deutscher Republik' und die Symbolik des 'Zauberberg'." *Die streitbare Klio. Zur Repräsentation von Macht und Geschichte in der Literatur*. Hrsg. v. Elizabeth Guilhamon und Daniel Meyer. Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2010. 179–93.
- Engel, Manfred. "Der Dichter als Zeit(Krisen)Deuter. Thomas Manns Roman 'Der Zauberberg'." *Die Erfindung des Schriftstellers Thomas Mann*. Hrsg. v. Michael Ansel, Hans-Edwin Friedrich und Gerhard Lauer. Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2009. 421–34.
- Grenville, Anthony. "'Linke Leute von Rechts.' Thomas Mann's Naphta and the Ideological Confluence of Radical Right and Radical Left in the Early Years of the Weimar Republic." *Thomas Mann's "The Magic Mountain". A Casebook*. Ed. Hans Rudolf Vaegt. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2008. 143–70.
- Hansen, Volkmar. "Thomas Mann: 'Der Zauberberg,' Hans Castorps Weg ins Freie oder 'Der Zauberberg' als Zeitroman." *Romane des 20. Jahrhunderts. Band 1*. Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993. 55–100.
- Jahraus, Oliver. "Kehrtwende oder Kontinuität: Thomas Manns 'Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen' (1918) und 'Von Deutscher Republik' (1922)." *Thomas Manns "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" nach 100 Jahren. Neue Perspektiven und Kontexte*. Hrsg. v. Erik Schilling. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2020. 63–79.

- Kurzke, Hermann. "Dichtung und Politik im Werk Thomas Manns von 1914–1955." *Literatur in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 16 (1983). 153–243.
- Mann, Thomas. *Considerazioni di un impolitico*. Saggio introd., trad. e note di Marianello Marianelli. Bari: De Donato, 1967.
- . "Della repubblica tedesca." *Moniti all'Europa*. A cura di Lavinia Mazzucchetti. Milano: Mondadori, 2017. 3–44.
- . "Einführung in den Zauberberg für Studenten der Universität Princeton als Vorwort." *Stockholmer Gesamtausgabe der Werke von Thomas Mann*. Bd. 2. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1954. XIII–XXIX.
- . *La montagna magica*. A cura e con un'introduzione di Luca Crescenzi e un saggio di Michael Neumann. Traduzione di Renata Colorni. Milano: Mondadori, 2010.
- . *Selbstkommentare: "Der Zauberberg"*. Hrsg. v. Hans Wysling unter Mitwirkung v. Marianne Eich. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993.
- . *Tagebücher*. Bd. 1: 1918–1921. Hrsg. v. Peter de Mendelssohn. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979.
- Max, Katrin. "'Der Zauberberg' (1924)." *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*. Hrsg. v. Friedhelm Marx and Andreas Blödorn. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2015. 32–42.
- Mayer, Hans. "Thomas Manns 'Zauberberg' als Roman der Weimarer Republik." *Ansichten von Deutschland. Bürgerliches Heldenleben*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988. 89–113.
- Mehring, Reinhard. *Thomas Mann. Künstler und Philosoph*. München: Fink, 2001.
- Müller, Jan-Dirk. "Renaissance, Reformation und der deutsche 'Sonderweg.' Von Thomas Manns 'Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen' zum 'Doktor Faustus'." *Die Wiederkehr der Renaissance im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*. Hrsg. v. Helmut Koopmann and Frank Baron. Münster: Mentis, 2013. 233–57.
- Schilling, Erik. "Wer spricht? Gattungstheoretische und narratologische Überlegungen zu Thomas Manns 'Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen'." *Thomas Manns "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" nach 100 Jahren. Neue Perspektiven und Kontexte*. Hrsg. v. Erik Schilling. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2020. 47–61.
- Sina, Kai. *Kollektivpoetik. Zu einer Literatur der offenen Gesellschaft in der Moderne. Mit Studien zu Goethe, Emerson, Whitman und Thomas Mann*. Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2019.
- Stammen, Theo. "Thomas Mann und die politische Welt." *Thomas-Mann-Handbuch*. Hrsg. v. Helmut Koopmann. Stuttgart: Kröner, 2001. 18–53.
- Tscholadse, Maja. "'Der Zauberberg'. Thomas Manns Wandel vom Monarchisten zum Demokraten." *Sprache und Literatur im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Ästhetik. Christa Wolf zum 80. Geburtstag*. Hrsg. v. Sabine Fischer-Kania und Daniel Schäfer. München: Iudicium, 2011. 178–86.

- Vollhardt, Friedrich. "Kultur / Zivilisation. Weltanschauliche Denkmuster in Thomas Manns Essay und im Roman 'Der Zauberberg'." *Thomas Manns "Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen" nach 100 Jahren. Neue Perspektiven und Kontexte*. Hrsg. v. Erik Schilling. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2020. 15–31.
- Wißkirchen, Hans. *Zeitgeschichte im Roman. Zu Thomas Manns "Zauberberg" und "Doktor Faustus"*. Bern: Francke, 1986.

Paul Ernsts *Erdachte Gespräche* Zum Ausklingen einer beliebten Gattungstradition

Maurizio Pirro

Università di Milano

Um die Jahrhundertwende erlebt die Gattung Dialog in der deutschsprachigen Kultur Hochkonjunktur. Als eine Sonderart jenes essayistischen Schreibens, das im Grunde Brüche und Widersprüche der Moderne unter einheitlichen Paradigmen zu subsumieren und somit analytisch zu bewältigen versucht, zieht der Dialog mehrere Autoren an, unter denen Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Rudolf Kassner, Hermann Bahr, Rudolf Borchardt, Georg Lukács und Richard Schaukal zu erwähnen sind. 1900 erscheint eine Essaysammlung von Rudolf Kassner über englische Literatur und bildende Kunst im 19. Jahrhundert, die von einer Schrift in dialogischer Form abgeschlossen wird. Hier wird unter dem Titel "Stil" Kassners Anliegen thematisiert, eine platonische Linie innerhalb der westlichen Kulturgeschichte deutlich zu konturieren. Hofmannsthal veröffentlicht von 1902 bis 1907 einige *Gespräche* und *Unterhaltungen*, in denen seine Leseerfahrungen in einen differenzierten poetologischen Rahmen eingebunden sind (vgl. exemplarisch Hofmannsthal 1903)¹, während Hermann Bahr 1904 einen *Dialog vom Tragischen* auf den Markt bringt². Zwischen 1910 und 1911 schreibt Lukács eines der Meisterstücke in der kleinen Geschichte dieser faszinierenden Gattung, indem er ein Gespräch über Lawrence Sterne in *Die Seele und die Formen* aufnimmt. Darin wird neben der zur Debatte stehenden theoretischen Frage auch eine performative Funktion mit einbezogen, denn die beiden jungen Kontrahenten streiten nicht nur um einen literarischen Gegenstand, der mit der für den jungen Lukács charakteristischen

Polarisierung von Einheit und Mannigfaltigkeit zusammenhängt, vielmehr buhlen sie um die von beiden gleichermaßen verehrte Kommilitonin, die sich nach dem ermüdenden Wortgefecht schließlich für den brillanteren Rhetor entschließt. Insofern sind die *Erdachten Gespräche* von Paul Ernst, deren erste Ausgabe 1921 beim Müller-Verlag in München erscheint und Stücke enthält, die Ernst ab 1911 verfasst hatte, als späte Lese zu betrachten, die das Ende einer längeren Gattungstradition einleitet³. 1934 wird Eugen Gottlob Winkler, dem Frühvollendeten, der sich 1936 mit 24 Jahren unter nie wirklich geklärten Umständen das Leben nehmen wird, ein letzter Wurf im Verfassen dialogischer Abhandlungen gelingen, indem er in "Die Erkundung der Linie" die Beziehung von Bildlichkeit und Abstraktion kritisch darstellen, und somit eine am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts nicht zuletzt Paul Ernst vertraute Fragestellung wieder aufgreifen wird.

Die kulturgeschichtliche Brisanz des dialogischen Schreibens in der Klassischen Moderne ist eng mit einer für die ästhetische Diskussion dieser Zeit charakteristischen Tendenz verbunden. Gemeint ist die polare Struktur, die die Argumentationsverfahren prägt, die bei der Erörterung von Kategorien wie 'Kunst' und 'Leben' oder 'Geist' und 'Seele' ihre Anwendung finden. Dabei handelt es sich um kunsttheoretische Paradigmen, die zwar in ihrer gegenseitigen Widersprüchlichkeit betrachtet werden, an denen aber meist insofern synthetisch gearbeitet wird, als die jeweils entsprechenden Polaritäten mit Hilfe von vermittelnden Instanzen aufgehoben werden sollen. So erscheint 'Geist' bei Thomas Mann bekanntlich als Propädeutikum zur Kunst und zugleich als Anästhetikum, das Leichtigkeit und Unbekümmertheit der schöpferischen Persönlichkeit lähmt; als das Primäre des biologischen Lebens beeinträchtigender Störfaktor sowie als erkenntnisträchtiges Stärkungsmittel, das das Tiefgründige an der menschlichen Existenz im Zeichen des Morbiden und der 'Sympathie mit dem Tode' weiter intensivieren kann. Der oszillierende Gedankengang der Gattung Dialog, bei dem sich im Rhythmus des Wortwechsels Meinungen konstituieren und durch den permanenten Drang zur begrifflichen Klärung in ihrer Radikalität auch entschärfen lassen, reproduziert einen solchen gedanklichen Dualismus und inszeniert in performativer Art das ständige Schwanken der Argumentation zwischen unversöhnlichen Extremen und synthetisierenden Vermittlungspositionen.

Die Beliebtheit dieser kleinen Form im Rahmen der ästhetischen Reflexion der Moderne geht u. a. mit dem verstärkten Interesse einher, das mehrere Autoren Modellen der künstlerischen Zusammenarbeit entgegen-

bringen, die in ihrer gemeinschaftlichen Ausprägung eine kulturkritisch konnotierte Alternative zu den sozialen Strukturen dieser Epoche darstellen. Ersatzformen der Geselligkeit werden in Kreisen von Gleichgesinnten erprobt, die sich durch elitäre Praktiken gegenseitig in ihrem Sonderstatus bestätigen, dem eine Abwehrfunktion gegenüber symptomatischen Erscheinungen der Massengesellschaft zukommt. Kultische Pflege von ästhetisch orientierten Ritualen stabilisiert die Beziehungen innerhalb solcher bündisch konzipierten Vereine von Auserwählten, die im Modus des exquisiten Gesprächs über künstlerisch bedeutende Gegenstände ein Paradigma platonischer Herkunft wieder zur Geltung bringen, das Walter Pater in seinen einflussreichen *Lectures über Plato and Platonism* 1893 in ein neues Licht gerückt hatte (Paters Ausführungen werden 1904 von Hans Hecht im Diederichs-Verlag in deutscher Sprache vorgelegt). Der George-Kreis bietet ein deutliches Beispiel für die Ambivalenz der dialogischen Kultur innerhalb dieser nach außen hin streng abgegrenzten Gemeinschaftsstrukturen, da die für die soziale Dimension der Gruppe absolut konstitutive Praxis der öffentlichen Auseinandersetzung mit ästhetisch und kulturgeschichtlich relevanten Themen keine paritätischen Beziehungen unter den Gesprächspartnern voraussetzt, sondern auf der geistigen Überlegenheit des durch eine komplexe Herrschaftssymbolik gekennzeichneten 'Meisters' basiert.

In den *Erdachten Gesprächen* veröffentlicht Paul Ernst zuerst 44 Stücke, die zum großen Teil einen Umfang von bis zu 6-7 Seiten haben, in der zweiten Hälfte des Buches allerdings immer länger werden, so dass der abschließende Dialog ("Das Eigentum"), in dem der dramatische Charakter des Gesprächs einer erzählerisch aufgebauten Struktur weicht, 47 Druckseiten umfasst. Eine zweite Ausgabe erscheint 1931 in Ernsts *Gesammelten Werken* als sechster Band der den *Theoretischen Schriften* gewidmeten Abteilung. In diese nimmt Ernst 8 neue Dialoge auf. Diese Ergänzungen dürften gemäß der editorischen Notiz, die in den beiden Ausgaben dem Titelverzeichnis beiliegt, auf die Jahre 1921 und 1922 zurückgehen.

Thematisch kreisen die *Erdachten Gespräche* zunächst einmal um die Bestimmung einiger für den Begriff 'Persönlichkeit' konstitutiver Aspekte. Dabei rückt Ernst insbesondere den schöpferischen Habitus der in den Dialogen präsentierten Figuren in den Vordergrund⁴. Das Gestaltungsvermögen, das ihm als Steigerungsinstanz des Menschlichen schlechthin vorschwebt, wird von Ernst möglichst weit aufgefasst, und

lässt sich deutlich über die Grenzen ästhetisch definierter Tätigkeiten hinaus definieren. Die ausformende Kraft herausragender Persönlichkeiten wird sowohl mit der regulativen Wirkung einer strengen seelischen Kontrolle in Verbindung gesetzt, als auch mit der Ausführung eines formgebenden Willens, der sich auf sämtliche Bereiche menschlichen Handelns erstrecken kann. Kreatives Potential wird an seinen psychischen Voraussetzungen sowie an seiner Wirkbreite gemessen. Ernst scheint sich um eine auf Totalitätsvorstellung beruhende Begrifflichkeit zu bemühen, durch die ein pragmatisch orientiertes Verständnismodell davon erzielt werden soll, welche identitätsbildenden Faktoren die Außerordentlichkeit einer gestaltungsfähigen Persönlichkeit begründen und fördern, sowie welche hindernden Gegenkräfte sie stören, ihre Freiheit bedingen und sie von ihren Zielsetzungen abbringen. Ernsts Hauptanliegen in den Dialogen ist es, aus disparaten Beispielen und unterschiedlichen Fragestellungen ein homogenes Wissen um den Menschen als bildendes Wesen aufzubauen. Kulturkritisch ist ein solches Wissen insofern ausgerichtet, als es denjenigen Prozessen der Spezialisierung und Fragmentierung entgegenwirken soll, die Ernst als typisch für die Moderne betrachtet. Eine wie in mehreren anderen Stücken nur durch die Bezeichnung 'Dichter' lapidar präsentierte Figur, die offensichtlich mit autobiografischen Zügen ausgestattet ist, führt im Gespräch "Idealismus und Positivismus" Ernsts Standpunkt folgendermaßen aus:

Wenn ich einen Menschen sittlich nenne, so beurteile ich den gesamten Menschen von einem bestimmten Punkte aus. Alle Leute der Gegenwart, wie alle Leute jeder zivilisierten Gesellschaft, glauben, daß sie den Menschen in Teile zerlegen können, sie sagen: dieser Mensch hat Sittlichkeit, jener hat Kunst, und der dritte ist ein Trunkenbold. Aber jeder Mensch ist eine Einheit, er hat eine unteilbare Seele, und er handelt nicht vorkommendenfalls nach irgendeiner Norm, sondern er ist der, welcher er ist, und welcher vorkommendenfalls imstande ist, so und so zu handeln (262)⁵.

'Erdacht' wird in den *Gesprächen* vor allen Dingen ein anthropologisches Paradigma, dessen Gültigkeit durch die Anwendbarkeit des damit verbundenen Menschenbildes auf unterschiedliche Epochen bestätigt werden soll. Die Vielfalt der häufig anekdotischen biographischen Bezüge, die einer solchen Fiktionalisierung der Kulturgeschichte zugrunde liegen, verleiht Ernsts Anliegen weniger eine historische Prägung als vielmehr ein charakterologisches Interesse. Ernsts argumentative Verfahrensweise

zielt nicht darauf, kausale Zusammenhänge zwischen sachlich belegbaren Tatbeständen innerhalb nachprüfbarer zeitgeschichtlicher Konstellationen zu ergründen, sondern darauf, eine überzeitliche Genealogie von kongenialen Vorbildern und Eideshelfern aufzubauen, die sich in einer solchen Funktion durch geistige Souveränität legitimieren lassen. Tatkräftige Persönlichkeiten sollen im Lichte beeindruckender Charakterzüge heraufbeschworen werden. Sämtliche prägenden Eigenschaften dieser in ihrem Sonderstatus mit unerschütterlicher Willensanstrengung und handlungsstarker Leistungsfähigkeit versehenen Figuren verdichten sich im ihnen allen gemeinsamen Gestus der schaffensfreudigen Selbstwertung. In diesem Sinne lässt Ernst den sterbenden Schiller menschliches Leben über jede zeitliche Begrenzung hinaus nach der Intensität des Geschaffenen bemessen: "Wie könnte ich so ruhig sein, wenn mein Werk nicht getan wäre? Nur in unsrer beschränkten Anschauung verteilt sich das Leben auf Jahre, in Wahrheit ist das Leben unser Werk" ("Das Ende des Lebens" 80).

Von der Handlungskonstruktion her weisen die *Erdachten Gespräche* auf die Dominanz des Tragischen im Gesamtwerk von Paul Ernst hin. Die spärlichen Angaben zur Visualisierung des topographischen Kontextes verleihen den Dialogen einen bühnenhaften Charakter, aus dem sich das gesprochene Wort als das eigentlich Bedeutungsträchtige ergibt. Abstraktion und Linearität beherrschen die Art und Weise, wie das Handeln der Gesprächsakteure dargestellt wird. Kontrastierende Gesinnungen werden in bezugslosen, undefinierten Räumen artikuliert, in denen die wortgewandten Tiraden der jeweiligen Figuren eine proklamierende Evidenz erhalten, durch die eine Mystik der wertsetzenden Aussage zum Tragen kommt. Das Streben nach Monumentalität, das Ernsts Prosastücke durchzieht, greift ganz offensichtlich auf den Formwillen zurück, der für diejenigen neuklassischen Theorien ausschlaggebend war, an denen Ernst in einer der kreativsten Phasen seiner literarischen Karriere etwa um 1905 gearbeitet hatte (vgl. *Paul Ernst am Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf*). Damals hatte er die Überlegenheit der Tragödie gegenüber allen konkurrierenden Gattungen aufgrund ihrer Formbewusstheit erklärt. Anders als der naturalistische Roman, der auf der Ansammlung von disparaten Einzelercheinungen beharre, erhebe sich das Drama zu einer organischen Kultursynthese. Die Auseinandersetzung mit der Modernität habe im Roman nur auf thematischer Ebene stattgefunden, ohne ästhetische Gestaltungsverfahren wirklich zu beeinflussen. Aus der intensiven Beschäftigung mit den techni-

schen Errungenschaften, die das Bild der europäischen Gesellschaft Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts drastisch verändern, habe sich eine bemerkenswerte Erweiterung der Stoffe ergeben, die den Schriftstellern zur Verfügung stehen, ohne dass sich jedoch eine neue Kultur entwickelt habe. Diese sei nur auf der Basis einer mythenbildenden Vision möglich, die es schaffe, das Mannigfaltige an den Lebensformen der Gegenwart in einer allgemeingültigen Sprache zu vereinheitlichen.

Diese Bedingungen seien von der Gattung Tragödie insofern erfüllt, als das Tragische durch Komprimierung die Grundtendenzen einer Zeit in abstrakten, vereinfachten geometrischen Verhältnissen durchschaubar macht. Die Aktualität der klassischen Tragödie sieht Ernst insbesondere durch die Anwendbarkeit des Schicksalsbegriffs auf die soziale Situation der Moderne begründet. In der kapitalistischen Gesellschaft manifestiert sich die Macht der Notwendigkeit in einer Form, die den Menschen alle Selbstdeterminierung entzieht. Die Omnipräsenz des Geldes als universale Codierungsform sozialer Beziehungen fesselt die Menschen an eine überpersönliche Gewalt, die sich jedem Versuch entgegensetzt, frei nach einem Selbstbestimmungsprinzip zu handeln. Aus der polaren Logik der griechischen Tragödie, die Ernst im Lichte einer grundsätzlichen Opposition von Subjektivität und Objektivität auffasst, erhält die Machtstruktur deutliche Konturen, die die Existenzverhältnisse in der Gegenwart bedingt. Eine solche konfliktbeladene Dialektik versteht Ernst wohlgerne nicht im Zeichen vorgeprägter, unwandelbarer Positionsbestimmungen, sondern vielmehr als bewegten Kampf zwischen zwei widersprüchlichen Instanzen, die sich in immer neuen Erscheinungsweisen zu erkennen geben und unterschiedliche Grundformen des menschlichen Lebens zum Ausdruck bringen. In einer programmatischen Schrift aus dem Jahr 1904, die die Bestrebungen nach einem neuklassischen Theater theoretisch unterstützen sollte, fokussiert Ernst die sozialkritische Signifikanz der Kategorien, die dem tragischen Diskurs zugrunde liegen:

Je höher also der Mensch steht, desto häufiger sieht er sich im Mittelpunkt mehrerer Notwendigkeiten. Steht er dann im Konflikt, so muß er handeln mit der Freiheit, welche uns Menschen zugemessen ist, und kann nicht bloß leiden, wie der Proletarier, welcher nur einer Notwendigkeit folgt. Dann haben wir aber neben dem unerbittlichen Schicksal und der Zermalmung auch den Konflikt und die Erhebung; und die Möglichkeit der klassischen Tragödie ("Die Möglichkeit der klassischen Tragödie" 125).

Ernst plädiert also für die Wiederbelebung der Tragik als Mittel zur

Darstellung von sozialen Praktiken. Wurde die Neuklassik in ihrer Orientierung an einem vormodernen Tragödienverständnis kurzerhand als das elitäre Experiment von wenigen Formbesessenen abgewertet, so ist eine solche Vorstellung dadurch auszugleichen, dass das neuklassische Hauptanliegen eigentlich ein politisches ist (vgl. Žmegač und Sommer). Die Darstellung von sozialen Konflikten und die Erarbeitung differenzierter Herrschaftskonzepte stehen im Mittelpunkt der neuklassischen Ästhetik und beeinflussen das Werk von Paul Ernst auch dann noch, als die Kooperation mit den anderen Mitstreitern der Neuklassik-Bewegung (etwa Wilhelm von Scholz, Hans von Müller, Karl Scheffler, August und Ernst Horneffer) längst abgeschlossen ist. Die Semantik der Macht, die in den *Erdachten Gesprächen* entwickelt wird, steht in einer durchaus engen Beziehung dazu.

Das ideale Menschlichkeitsmodell, das in den Dialogen geschaffen wird, ist von der Reflexion über die Natur von Macht und Machtverhältnissen nicht zu trennen. Durch die meistens in einem entspannten Ton und im Gestus der gegenseitigen Verständigung ausgeführten Konfrontationen zwischen den dialogisierenden Figuren beschwört Ernst einen Zustand der geistigen Erlesenheit herauf (vgl. Laser 126), der sich unter zwei Perspektiven rekonstruieren lässt. Dabei handelt es sich erstens um eine in konkreten, körperlich erlebten Formen der sozialen Beziehung zum Ausdruck kommende Verhaltensweise, die sich auf Disziplinierung der Affekte und Bändigung von Trieben stützt, und zweitens um die Fähigkeit, diese psychische Veranlagung durch künstlerische, politische oder intellektuelle Leistungen zu intensivieren, daraus also ein komplexes Wissen um Gestaltung als allgemeingültiges menschliches Prinzip zu gewinnen. Die kulturgeschichtliche Relevanz der dargestellten Figuren wird durch die Fokussierung auf Momente der Infragestellung durch anders gesinnte Gesprächspartner und der Selbstbestätigung gegenüber mehr oder weniger freundlich eingestellten Kontrahenten um eine ethische Komponente ergänzt.

Dem Geschichtsschema, aus dem sich die *Erdachten Gespräche* speisen, liegt eine auf die Dominanz von Einzelmenschen angelegte Hermeneutik zugrunde. Diese sind mit überdurchschnittlichen Eigenschaften ausgestattet und wissen sich über alles Einengende zu erheben, durch das ihre Umgebung sie an der Vollendung ihrer Aufgabe zu hindern trachtet. Historisches Verständnis setzt dabei eine grundsätzliche seelische Verwandtschaft zwischen diesen herausragenden Figuren und dem

Geschichtsschreiber voraus, der in seiner fiktionalen Evozierung von geistig bedeutenden Menschen aus den verschiedensten Zeiten die Landschaft der Kulturgeschichte von einem Gipfel zum nächsten durchwandelt, ohne sich um die Geschehnisse unterhalb dieser gehobenen, allem entheiligenden Kontakt mit der Profanität der Ebene entrückten Sphäre sonderlich zu kümmern. Dass die Verdienste dieser überdurchschnittlich begabten Persönlichkeiten häufig genug in keinem Verhältnis mit der Anerkennung der Zeitgenossen stehen, die nicht nur verweigert wird, sondern vielmehr Misstrauen und barem Spott weicht, relativiert keinesfalls den elitären Anspruch einer solchen Vorstellung. Mangelnde Sympathie seitens der eigenen Zeit soll im Gegenteil gestaltungsfähige Geister in Gültigkeit und Effektivität ihrer Bemühungen bestätigen, denen keine Akzeptanz in der Gegenwart beschieden ist, gerade weil sich ihre Wirkung erst langfristig und nicht nach zeitbedingten Kriterien bemessen lässt.

Die Einsamkeit eines schöpferischen Lebens wird z. B. in dem "Der Ruhm" betitelten Dialog thematisiert. Dort wird Friedrich Hebbel von zwei jungen Literaten besucht, die sich von ihm ein Wort der Ermutigung für ihre Karrieren in der Kunst erhoffen. Eine solche Erwartung wird auf freundliche aber unnachgiebige Weise enttäuscht, weil Hebbel das Dilettantische an den ästhetischen Anschauungen der beiden angehenden Schriftsteller sofort entlarvt. Sowohl die naive Hingabe des reichen Jünglings zur unreflektierten Lebenslust, von der er sich eine unerschöpfliche Inspirationsquelle für seine literarischen Versuche verspricht, als auch der asketische Rückzug des armen Freundes, der allem Weltlichen entsagen möchte, um in mönchischem Gewand von seinen Mitmenschen als inspiriertes Genie anerkannt zu werden, prangert Hebbel als Ausdruck von Unzulänglichkeit des Talents und Mangel an innerem Gleichgewicht an. "Das Allerherrlichste sind doch die dankbar leuchtenden Augen der Frauen», so schwärmt der eine Besucher im Gedanken an die suggestive Wirkung seiner poetischen Hervorbringungen innerhalb eines leicht zu beeinflussenden Zuhörerkreises: «ich habe das Glück einmal erlebt, in sie zu sehen, als ich in einem kleinen Kreise edler und schöner Menschen meine Gedichte vorlas" (12). Mit geduldiger Miene gibt Hebbel ihm zu bedenken, dass Kunst hohen Niveaus unermüdlichen Fleiß und diejenige absolute Genauigkeit in der Gestaltung erfordert, die dem selbstverliebten Ästheteten nur versagt bleiben kann. Und als sich der andere Gast aus seiner Unbeholfenheit durch humanitäres Pathos zu helfen versucht ("Ich will aus meinen kleinlichen Verhältnissen heraus, ich will den

Menschen etwas geben!“, 14), moniert Hebbel, dass wahre Wirkung nur durch Selbstbeherrschung und Disziplinierung der eigenen Phantasien erzielt werden kann. Die ethische Norm, der sich der wirklich schöpferische Geist verpflichtet weiß, nimmt einen therapierenden Charakter an, indem der Künstler durch die Anbindung an einen höheren ästhetischen Horizont alles Subjektive aus seinem Schaffen tilgen kann. Dadurch erhält sein Werk einen Absolutheitsanspruch, der es von dem Zwang befreit, auf die Zustimmung des zeitgenössischen Publikums angewiesen zu sein. Die moralische Überlegenheit vom Künstler hohen Stils gegenüber allem ästhetizistischen Schönheitskult liegt in seiner Unabhängigkeit von den Schwankungen im Geschmack seiner Zeit begründet. Dies lässt wiederum seine Souveränität im Umgang mit den eigenen Geltungswünschen zum Herrschaftsmittel im Umgang mit seinen Mitmenschen werden, denen mit der Verbindlichkeit ihres ästhetischen Urteils ein typisches Machtinstrument in der Beziehung zwischen Künstlern und Publikum entzogen wird. Erwartungsgemäß sind die beiden jungen Schriftsteller einer solchen Standhaftigkeit gar nicht gewachsen, und sie scheiden vom mahnenden Hebbel, indem sie Enttäuschung und Befremden nur mühsam verbergen können: “Hebbel ist eine kalte Natur“, so gibt der eine durch eine stereotype Bewertung seinem Unverständnis Ausdruck. “Es fehlt ihm Empfindung, Phantasie, vor allem fehlt ihm Gemüt; und dann dieser Größenwahn!” (16).

Selbstgenügsamkeit erweist sich als ästhetische Legitimationsquelle auch in einem weiteren Stück, in dem Homer und ein Hirte als dialogisierende Hauptfiguren erscheinen. Der alte Dichter, der sich seinem Gesprächspartner zunächst einmal als ein Bettler zu erkennen gibt, vertritt eine idyllisch gefärbte Lebensauffassung, die im Zeichen von Entsagung und Abstinenz steht, und bei der es darauf ankommt, “ein wesentlicher Mensch” (“Die Macht” 34) zu werden, wie er selbst sein Ideal beschreibt. Als der Hirte erfährt, dass der Greis der Urheber derjenigen Epen ist, die ihm ein verzaubertes Weltbild vermittelt haben, lässt er sich zu einigen Aussagen hinreißen, die die charismatischen Seiten des dichterischen Berufs beleuchten:

Ich habe mir schon oft gedacht, daß ein solcher Mann eine Macht ausübt, die er nicht ahnt. Denn, weißt du, ich bin doch ein Mann aus dem Volke, ich kenne das; was befohlen wird von dem Herrn, das tut man ja wohl, weil man es tun muß, aber wenn der Herr fortgeht, und man hält es für dumm, was es ja denn auch oft ist, so tut

man es nicht mehr. Aber ein solcher Sänger weiß das, was er will, daß wir sollen, uns so schön vorzustellen, daß wir uns einbilden, wir wollen es selber, und dann es mit Freuden tun (36).

Homers Wesentlichkeitsvorstellung, die eine Programmatik der Totalitätsstiftung voraussetzt, spiegelt sich in den Worten seines Kontrahenten wider, der die künstlerische Wirkung als Ausdruck der Fähigkeit betrachtet, die Herrschaft über sich selbst in eine Herrschaft über all diejenigen zu steigern, die ästhetischen Effekten ausgesetzt sind⁶. Kunst läuft also auf Machtausübung hinaus, die in der geistigen Diätetik begründet ist, durch die gestaltungsfähige Persönlichkeiten die eigenen Leidenschaften zu bewältigen wissen.

Mit dem Zusammenhang von Kunst und Macht, auf den Ernsts *Erdachte Gespräche* hinweisen, ist eine Frage verbunden, der eine entscheidende Bedeutung in der ästhetischen Diskussion um die Jahrhundertwende beizumessen ist und mit der sich Ernst mehrfach auseinandersetzt. Ob Fiktionalität das Elementare am subjektiven Erlebnis gewaltig unterdrückt, oder doch in eine höhere Dimension steigert, darüber diskutieren Gustave Flaubert und Guy de Maupassant in einem der schönsten Stücke der Sammlung. In "Das Land der Dichtung" prüft jeder der beiden Schriftsteller in Flauberts Arbeitszimmer den eigenen Werdegang auf die Lebens- und Kunstansichten des jeweils anderen hin. Maupassants Glaube an die freie Erfindung eines Originalstoffes als unentbehrliche Voraussetzung für ästhetisches Schaffen stellt Flaubert das entgegen, was Thomas Mann bei seinen Überlegungen zum Wesen der künstlerischen Leistung als die "Beseelung"⁷ einer bereits vorhandenen Materie bezeichnet hatte. "Das Leben ist armselig", so Flaubert zur Ernüchterung seines den Wert der direkten Erfahrung über alle Maßen preisenden Gesprächspartners; "die Wirklichkeit ist gemein, ein Ding ist wie das andere, und eine Empfindung gleicht der anderen" (45). Gegenüber der Bedeutungslosigkeit und Austauschbarkeit des Faktischen setzt sich Kunst als Wahrheitsprinzip durch, das aus menschlichen Begebenheiten das Zufällige auslöscht, und das Zerstreute am historischen Geschehen sinnstiftend bündelt.

Das Semantisierungsverfahren, das Flaubert der gestaltenden Tätigkeit des Künstlers in Ernsts Worten zugrunde legt, erfolgt durch mühevollen Arbeit am Detail und geduldige Reproduktion des Erlebten. Dabei wird aber gar keine realistische Praxis intendiert, sondern eine transfigurierende Darstellungsweise, die dem Objekt zu einer Art Neugeburt ver-

helfen soll. Die kunstreligiöse Substanz einer solchen Vorstellung nimmt durch eine komplexe Strategie der Entsagung konkrete Konturen an, aus der sich die Programmatik einer im Zeichen von radikaler, unerbittlicher Machtausübung durchzuführenden Ausschaltung des Ursprünglichen und Primitiven ergibt. Ästhetische Moral gibt sich bei Flaubert als affirmativer Lebensdiskurs zu erkennen, dem eine autoritäre Komponente durchaus nicht fremd ist. Der Drang zur Regulierung derjenigen Erscheinungen, die sich der normierenden Kraft des Formwillens zu entziehen trachten, schlägt in die Entwertung alles Vitalen um, was wiederum das Erkenntnispotential der Ästhetik und damit eine entscheidende Grundlage zur Legitimation der Kunst zu schwächen droht. Künstlerische Ausformungspraktiken sind also der Gefahr der Verselbstständigung ausgesetzt, die das harmonische, therapierende Verhältnis von Kunst und Leben durch die Reduzierung der Form auf ein selbstbezogenes Konstrukt zerstören kann. Bei seinem wortgewandten Plädieren für ästhetische Autonomie drängt Flaubert Kunst mehr oder weniger unbemerkt ins Prokrustesbett der lebensfremden Eigengesetzlichkeit: "Wir sind die Reichen, denn weil wir arm sind, so können wir den Reichtum in der Vorstellung genießen, wir sind die Glücklichen, denn weil wir unglücklich sind, so genießen wir das Glück in der Sehnsucht. Vorstellung und Sehnsucht sind ja das einzig Wirkliche, das Tatsächliche ist nur ein Selbstbetrug des Philisters" (47).

Dass eine machtbezogene Dimension von den *Erdachten Gesprächen* keinesfalls wegzudenken ist, wird durch die Art und Weise bewiesen, wie der stets auf Geselligkeit angelegte Erzählmodus durch konfliktbeladene Eingebungen gebrochen wird. Dabei handelt es sich nicht nur um die Positionierung der Kontrahenten innerhalb der dialogischen Konfrontation mit dem Zweck, den eigenen Thesen die Oberhand über die Gegenargumente der anderen Partei zu sichern, sondern darum, dass ganze weltanschauliche Komplexe entgegengesetzt und aufeinander hin geprüft werden. Schon vom rhetorischen Aufbau der Dialoge her wird dem Leser klar, dass Ernst weniger auf Synthese setzt, als dass er sich vielmehr um die Gegenüberstellung von grundverschiedenen und miteinander nicht in Eintracht zu bringenden Ansichten bemüht. Das Menschenbild, das aus den Gesprächen hervorgeht, lässt sich insofern ontologisch definieren und stellt nicht das Ergebnis der dialektischen Überwindung von Gegenpolen dar. Das die Essaytradition prägende Vermittlungsverfahren, durch das Polaritäten objektiviert und aufgehoben werden, wird in Ernsts Dialogsammlung durch eine affirmative Gedankenführung überboten, aus der sich subjektive Wertsetzungen

bilden, die die synthetische Auflösung von entgegengesetzten Instanzen und die Entstehung einer einheitlichen Totalität unmöglich machen. An einer solchen Steigerung der weltanschaulichen Intention brechen die Topoi des essayistischen Diskurses. Das geduldige Erproben widersprüchlicher Paradigmen weicht der Eindeutigkeit der suggestiven Aussage. Die Einheit der Welt Darstellung erfolgt aus der forcierten Ausblendung der aporetischen Implikationen, die Ernsts Denken prägen und durch einen Impuls zur Sinnstiftung überwunden werden⁸. Die Anatomisierung der Gegenposition, die etwa in Lukács' "Zwiegespräch über Lawrence Sterne" die beiden Dialogfiguren als eine gekonnte Positionierungsstrategie ausführen⁹ und als Grundhaltung essayistischer Reflexion im Zeichen der "Sekundarität" (Stanitzek 337) gleichsam inszenieren, macht in den *Erdachten Gesprächen* erstarrten Kontrastvisionen Platz, die mit dialektischen Mitteln kaum mehr zu bewältigen sind. Die Verabsolutierung des eigenen Rechts lässt keinen Spielraum für Versöhnungsversuche. Die Relativierung der subjektiven Weltbilder, die Thomas Mann in den *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* im Zeichen der "konservativen Ironie" als den für den Essayisten wesenseigenen Gestus sowie als die Grundvoraussetzung urbaner Kultur auffasst (vgl. Müller und Tucci), wird durch eine autoritäre Semantik der Herrschaft ausgelöscht, die entweder dialektischen Überbrückungen den Boden entzieht oder jede Konfrontation in die rhetorische Übung von taub aneinander vorbeiredenden Meinungsträgern geraten lässt. In einer Gartenkulisse unterhalten sich ein Dichter, ein Staatsmann und ein Philosoph im Gespräch "Das Handeln des Dichters" über ihre jeweiligen Sitten. Ihre Diskussion ergibt die Feststellung, dass die Vorstellungen, die sie pflegen, nicht nur in ihrer grundsätzlichen Ausrichtung auseinandergehen und keine bindenden Gemeinsamkeiten aufweisen, sondern vielmehr mit Zukunftsprojektionen behaftet sind, die ihnen allen eine solide Beziehung zu den bestehenden Realitätsverhältnissen versagen. Die etwas umständlichen Betrachtungen des Philosophen prangern die Weltferne seiner beiden Freunde an, denen die Wahrnehmung der Gegenwart durch die trügerische Vorahnung einer alternativen Ordnung der Dinge geblendet wird:

Nun, die Dichter machen doch durchaus nicht die Lobredner der Vergangenheit, sondern sie sind die Verkündiger der Zukunft. Auch du bist es. Aber ihr seht nie die nächste Zukunft: die ist nur dem Blick des Staatsmannes erschlossen; ihr seht über die nächste Zukunft hinweg in Etwas, das man die weitere Zukunft nennen könnte; indem man nämlich, wie das ja bei dem Blick der leiblichen Augen ist, dieses Weitere

nur in seinen großen Formen sieht, in seinem natürlichen und notwendigen Wesen ohne die kleinen Zufälligkeiten, welche es nachher in der Nähe hat. So aber sieht ihr auch die Vergangenheit; ihr wißt das nur nicht. Nun, jene kleinen Zufälligkeiten, welche man in der Nähe sieht, die machen die schlechte Wirklichkeit aus, denn sie überwuchern oft genug die großen Formen des natürlichen und notwendigen Lebens, welche allein die gute Wirklichkeit ausmachen. Ein Freund hat gesagt, die Dichter schaffen Sagen. Das ist ein guter Ausdruck für diesen Vorgang. Und indem Ihr so in Vergangenheit und Zukunft die Sage seht, habt Ihr die Verbindung Beider im Gefühl, die wir Andern, welche in der Gegenwart leben, durch den Euch verbrecherisch erscheinenden Verstand suchen müssen, und dadurch, daß wir durch ihn die Gegenwart mit der nächsten Zukunft verknüpfen ("Das Handeln des Dichters" 204-205).

Dichter und Politiker, so die Hauptthese des Sprechenden, seien an objektiven Erkenntnissen durch die Neigung gehindert, den Zeitablauf prophetisch zu antizipieren. Ein solcher Drang in die Zukunft beruhe auf einer sinnstiftenden Absicht, die jedoch gerade durch die Ausblendung der Gegenwart, die ihr eigen sei, zu keiner Verwirklichung gelangen könne. Der apodiktische Anspruch auf eine höhere Wahrheit droht, in eine unproduktive Realitätsflucht umzuschlagen. Der Geist setzt sich umso mehr der Abstraktion aus, je inniger er sich vorstellt, die Welt beherrschen zu können. In den *Erdachten Gesprächen* wird eine solche Aporie in desillusioniertem Ton als unabwendbare Gefahr dargestellt, oder ihr wird doch durch die religiöse Intensivierung des Machtwillens entgegengearbeitet, der das Verhalten des um Geltung und Anerkennung ringenden Menschen bestimmt.

Über die Gesprächspartner erhebt sich zwar an manchen Stellen die von Ernst in bewegtem Ton heraufbeschworene Vision einer über alle Unterschiedlichkeit des Seins hinausgehenden Freundschaft, die sich durch Empathie und Verständigung zu erkennen gibt. In einer Pause ihrer Auseinandersetzung bekommen der Dichter und der Philosoph in "Idealismus und Positivismus" z. B. den Eindruck, "als ob [sie] durch die Blume des Weins aufgelöst seien wie die unendlich vielen, unendlich kleinen Stoffteilchen, welche sich vom Wein losgelöst hatten und nun in der Luft schwangen, als ob der Irrtum des Einzeldaseins verschwunden sei" (268). Dieses Ideal wird jedoch durch die Einsicht in die grundsätzliche Unverträglichkeit der philosophischen und der dichterischen Weltanschauung konterkariert und nichtig gemacht. Ernst sieht den philosophischen Geist durch die unfruchtbare Neigung kompromittiert, die

Welt analytisch zu zerteilen (vgl. Bastianelli). Ein solcher Habitus münde in nihilistische Wahrheitsindifferenz. Gerade in dem Moment, als er sich einbilde, das menschliche Dasein bis in seinen tiefsten Kern durchdrungen zu haben, besitze der Philosoph nichts als trügerische Scheinvorstellungen. Dem differenzierten Denken des Philosophen, dessen Profil nach der Rekonstruktion von Else Ernst aus der Auseinandersetzung mit Leopold Ziegler entsteht, setzt der Dichter im Gespräch *Gott* eine ungebrochene Totalitätsvorstellung entgegen, die sich nicht auf kategoriale Paradigmen, sondern auf die belebende Kraft des Schauens stützt: “Sie befinden sich auf der Ebene, wo man durch Gedanken und Schlussfolgerungen zu festen, begreiflichen Ergebnissen kommt; ich befinde mich auf einer Ebene, wo man Alles, das ist, in einem Bilde schaut” (“Gott” 285)¹⁰.

Dass die Wesensschau um die Jahrhundertwende von einem philosophischen Begriff zu einer der Hauptbedingungen dichterischer Existenz avanciert, ist hinlänglich bekannt. Friedrich Gundolfs George-Interpretation basiert eben auf dem Gedanken, die geistige Überlegenheit des Dichters speise sich daraus, wie effektiv dieser in der Lage sei, die Welt nicht im Lichte des Vergänglichen und Kontingenten, sondern des Bestehenden und Wesenhaften darzustellen (vgl. Braungart 1993, 1996-1997 und 1997). In seinen Dialogen kümmert sich Ernst allerdings um eine weitere Legitimationsgrundlage für die privilegierte Position des Dichters gegenüber konkurrierenden Formen der Weltwahrnehmung, und sucht sie im religiösen Bereich. In der Religion sieht Ernst die Bindung des Einzelnen an die Gesamtheit menschlichen Daseins durch ein Gefühl der gegenseitigen Zugehörigkeit von Ich und Welt verwirklicht. Dabei kommt es weniger auf historische Glaubensformen an, als vielmehr auf die Intensität mystischer Affekte. Unabhängig von normierten Religionsbekenntnissen strahlt der glaubende Mensch von seiner Seele her eine Regenerationskraft aus, die aus Ernsts Perspektive genauso wie die Kunst Ausdruck von Gestaltungspotential ist. “Erst der Mensch gibt seinem Gott den Wert, aller Wert liegt nur in deiner eigenen Brust” (282) – so fasst der Dichter in “Idealismus und Positivismus” seine Skepsis gegenüber den allzu feinen Spekulationen des Philosophen über die Natur des Göttlichen zusammen. Dem Essayismus als Spekulationsmethode wohnt bei Ernst keine die Grenzen der rationalen Erkenntnis transzendierende Kraft inne, wie sich diese in Musils Essay-Begriff ankündigt (vgl. Nübel). Der Essay gilt ihm vielmehr als diskursive Projektionsfläche, auf der unterschiedliche Modelle der Weltwahrnehmung ausprobiert, ausgeübt und

gegeneinander ausgespielt werden, bis ein religiöses Steigerungsprinzip sie alle an einen prälogischen Horizont anbindet und gleichsam intuitiv aufhebt. Diskursivität ist dabei als Vorstufe des Verstehens zu betrachten, nicht als Voraussetzung und Hauptmittel des Verstehens selbst.

Als religiös erweist sich in den *Erdachten Gesprächen* der Einblick in die unendliche Verknüpfung alles Seienden. Ausgehend von einer solchen Art des Glaubens werden christliche Gottesvorstellungen hinterfragt und durch den Vergleich mit orientalischen Religionen in ihrer historischen Bedingtheit gezeigt. Offensichtlich betrachtet Ernst den Bezug auf eine mit personalen Attributen versehene Instanz als die Reduzierung des Göttlichen auf einen anthropologisch definierten Maßstab. Das Relativierende, das darin steckt, wird im Dialog "Das Gebet" durch die leidenschaftliche Konfrontation von Martin Luther mit dem im Sterben liegenden Philipp Melancthon thematisiert. Dabei hält Luther mit unbeweglicher Beständigkeit an dem Referenzcharakter seiner religiösen Vorstellung fest und plädiert für das Gebet als lebenserhaltende Praxis, als einzig mögliche Therapie gegen die unerträgliche Beschränktheit des menschlichen Daseins sowie als Mittel zur Überbrückung der Distanz zwischen Göttlichem und Weltlichem. Dem setzt Melancthon das Vertrauen in das Göttliche als omniprésente Durchdringungskraft entgegen, die Menschliches und Übermenschliches miteinander aufs Engste verbindet, und allem Existierenden eine elementare Lebhaftigkeit verleiht, die keine Steigerung durch die Fixierung auf einen höheren Horizont benötigt. Luther sieht sich schließlich gezwungen, Religion als dem Selbstopfer und dem Selbstverlust ausgesetzte Form der Anhänglichkeit gegenüber einem keine Art der Gewalt scheuenden Herrscher zu rechtfertigen: "Ist es denn nicht das höchste Glück, das es geben kann, einen Höheren zu finden, dem man dient? Ich habe lange gesucht in meinem Leben [...]. Nun habe ich Gott gefunden; er ist der Höchste, ihm kann ich mich ganz hingeben. Mag er mich verbrennen in seinem Ofen, ich war doch da für ihn" (129).

Das Ausformende an der religiösen Erfahrung steht bei Ernst in unmittelbarer Verbindung mit der sinnlichen Kraft der Menschenseele. Ernsts kunstreligiöses Anliegen ist in einer Vorstellungsfähigkeit begründet, die es dem fühlenden Menschen ermöglicht, sich ein Bild des Göttlichen unabhängig von Gottes Existenz zu machen¹¹. Der Wesentlichkeitsbegriff, der den *Erdachten Gesprächen* zugrunde liegt, ist nicht in der realen Präsenz einer höheren Instanz verwurzelt, sondern in der Lebhaftigkeit subjektiver Einbildungskraft und in der Verinnerlichung einer *imago dei*, die sich

paradoxerweise umso anschaulicher definiert, je weniger sich ein Gott im weltlichen Leben manifestiert. Aus der Tiefe einer entzauberten Welt, von der sich das Göttliche zurückgezogen hat, erwächst die Vorstellung Gottes als ästhetische Schöpfung, die auf das Gestalterische im Menschen als das eigentlich Göttliche hindeutet. Ein beeindruckender Dialog findet während einer Kriegspause zwischen zwei Offizieren in den Schützengräben an einer der Fronten im Ersten Weltkrieg statt. In die apokalyptische Zerstörung aller zivilisatorischen Bindungen geraten, unterhalten sich die beiden Männer mit lächelnder Gelassenheit über das Verbleiben des Göttlichen. Das Übermenschliche wird als Referenzobjekt eines elementaren, affektbeladenen Impulses in der menschlichen Psyche wahrgenommen. Vor dem abwesenden Gott steht der allein gelassene Mensch in seiner ungeschützten Kreatürlichkeit nicht anders da als das harmlose Tier: “Wenn das Pferd mich sieht, weiß es darum denn etwas von mir? oder gar von meinen Absichten und Zwecken? Es fühlt nur. Und wenn wir unsern Gott nicht vor Augen haben, wissen wir darum weniger von ihm, wie das Pferd von uns? Beide wissen gleich viel – du kannst auch sagen: gleich wenig. Und auch wir fühlen unsern Gott” (“Was kommt dann?” 179). Insofern braucht der Mensch keine Gewissheit über die Existenz eines Gottes, denn Formgefühl und Gestaltungsvermögen erfüllen eine Ersatzfunktion, die eine solche Gewissheit sogar überflüssig macht: “Ich habe lange gedacht: Es ist ja gar nicht nötig, daß es Gott gibt. Es ist nur nötig, daß ich an ihn glaube. [...] wir sind Menschen; und wenn wir sein wollen, was wir sein müssen, so müssen wir den Gott fühlen, den es nicht gibt” (ebd.)¹². Gottes Schweigen wird durch eine verselbstständigte Religiosität ausgeglichen, die den mitten im Zivilisationsbruch abgetreten Gott in einer säkularisierten Form als Projektion des Menschlichen wieder auferstehen lässt und das Glauben als spekulative Option ohne Rückbindung an die sinnliche Erfahrung denkbar macht.



- 1 Dazu unter Berücksichtigung gattungsbezogener Fragestellungen Jander 185 ff. sowie jüngst Rispoli 148-162 und im Hinblick auf Grundeigenschaften von Hofmannsthals dialogisierendem Schreibstil Heise.
- 2 Vgl. dazu Werner Fricks knappe, einleuchtende Kontextualisierung (61-65).
- 3 Zu den Funktionen des Dialogischen im essayistischen Schreiben um die Jahrhundertwende vgl. Burdorf.
- 4 Einige Themenkomplexe, die ich im Folgenden anschneide, habe ich mit anderen Akzentsetzungen bereits 2016 in einem Aufsatz behandelt.
- 5 In dieses Gespräch soll Ernst Georg Lukács als Vorlage für die Figur des Philosophen aufgenommen haben (vgl. Kutzbach XXXII).
- 6 Herrschaftskonzepte bei Paul Ernst stehen im Mittelpunkt der Untersuchung von Dainat.
- 7 “Die Beseelung... da ist es, das schöne Wort! Es ist nicht die Gabe der Erfindung – die der Beseelung ist es, welche den Dichter macht” (Mann 100-101).
- 8 Zur Problematik monistischer Sinnkonstituierung in der Kultur der Moderne vgl. Schneider.
- 9 Insofern ist Peter V. Zima zuzustimmen: Bei Lukács erzwingt dieses argumentative Verfahren eine geschlossene Totalität, weil die Bewältigung des Widersprüchlichen mittels eines sublimierten Formbegriffs “die weltanschauliche Vereinheitlichung des Lebens” bewirkt (145). Zur selbstreflexiven Substanz von Lukács’ Spekulationsmethode in *Die Seele und die Formen* vgl. Müller-Funk 257-260.
- 10 Wertvolle Überlegungen zur Art und Weise, wie sich Ernst von einem dualistischen Weltbild zugunsten monistischer Vorstellungen loslöst, finden sich in Ghyselinck 113 ff.
- 11 Aus kunstreligiöser Perspektive bewertet Zupancic auch Ernsts Bearbeitung des Nibelungen-Stoffs, bei der es sich um den Versuch handele, Säkularisierungsprozessen durch die Entepisierung der Sage entgegenzuwirken.
- 12 Ebd. Ernsts «neue Religion» als Grundvoraussetzung einer «nachbürgerlichen Gesellschaft» untersucht Châtellier 209 ff.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Bahr, Hermann. *Dialog vom Tragischen*. Berlin: Fischer, 1904.
- Bastianelli, Marco. "Wörter als Fetische. Grenzen der Sprache und Sprachskeptizismus bei Paul Ernst". *Der Wille zur Form* 3. Folge, Heft 7 (2016): 41-65.
- Braungart, Wolfgang. "Gundolfs George". *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift* 43 (1993): 417-442.
- . "«Durch Dich, für Dich, in Deinem Zeichen». Stefan Georges poetische Eucharistie". *George-Jahrbuch* 1 (1996-1997): 53-79.
- . *Ästhetischer Katholizismus. Stefan Georges Rituale der Literatur*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1997.
- Burdorf, Dieter. "Gespräche über Kunst. Zur Konjunktur einer literarischen Form um 1900". In *Jugendstil und Kulturkritik. Zur Literatur und Kunst um 1900*. Hrsg. v. Andreas Beyer – Dieter Burdorf. Heidelberg: Winter, 1999: 29-50.
- Châtellier, Hildegard. *Verwerfung der Bürgerlichkeit. Wandlungen des Konservatismus am Beispiel Paul Ernsts (1899 – 1933)*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002.
- Dainat, Holger. "Die Herrscher, das Reich, die Dichter. Vorstellungen sozialer Ordnung eines konservativen Revolutionärs: «Das Kaiserbuch» von Paul Ernst". In *Paul Ernst. Außenseiter und Zeitgenosse*. Hrsg. v. Horst Thomé. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002: 101-132.
- Ernst, Else. "Erinnerungen an Paul Ernst". *Der Wille zur Form* 2. Folge, Heft 12 (1990): 32-73.
- Ernst, Paul. "Die Möglichkeit der klassischen Tragödie" [1904]. In *Der Weg zur Form. Ästhetische Abhandlungen vornehmlich zur Tragödie und Novelle*. Berlin: Hyperionverlag, 1915: 113-126.
- . "Das Ende des Lebens". In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 79-82.
- . "Das Gebet". In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 126-130.
- . "Das Handeln des Dichters". In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 199-206.
- . "Das Land der Dichtung". In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 44-49.

- . “Der Ruhm”. In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 12-17.
- . “Die Macht”. In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 33-37.
- . “Gott”. In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 285-295.
- . “Idealismus und Positivismus”. In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 261-284.
- . “Was kommt dann?”. In *Erdachte Gespräche*. München: Langen – Müller, 1931: 175-180.
- Frick, Werner. *«Die mythische Methode»*. *Komparatistische Studien zur Transformation der griechischen Tragödie im Drama der klassischen Moderne*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1988.
- Ghyselinck, Zoë. *Form und Formauflösung der Tragödie. Die Poetik des Tragischen und der Tragödie als religiöses Erneuerungsmuster in den Schriften Paul Ernsts (1866-1933)*. Berlin – Boston: De Gruyter 2015.
- Heise, Tillmann. “Das «erfundene Gespräch» als transatlantischer Dialog. Gattungsvariationen und Gedankenexperimente in Hofmannsthals Gesprächsfragment «Brief ans Dial»”. *Hofmannsthal. Jahrbuch zur europäischen Moderne* 29 (2021): 259-280.
- Hofmannsthal, Hugo von. “Das Gespräch über Gedichte” [1903]. In *Gesammelte Werke in zehn Einzelbänden*. Hrsg. v. Bernd Schoeller, Bd. 7: *Erzählungen. Erfundene Gespräche und Briefe. Reisen*. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1979: 495-509.
- Jander, Simon. *Die Poetisierung des Essays. Rudolf Kassner – Hugo von Hofmannsthal – Gottfried Benn*. Heidelberg: Winter, 2008.
- Kassner, Rudolf. *Die Mystik die Künstler und das Leben. Über englische Dichter und Maler im 19. Jahrhundert*. Leipzig: Diederichs, 1900.
- Kutzbach, Karl August. *Paul Ernst und Georg Lukács. Dokumente einer Freundschaft*. Emsdetten: Lechte, 1974.
- Laser, Alfred. *A Critical Study of Paul Ernst's «Erdachte Gespräche»*. Diplomarbeit: University of Manitoba, 1974.
- Lukács, Georg. “Reichtum, Chaos und Form: Ein Zwiegespräch über Lawrence Sterne”. In *Die Seele und die Formen* [1911]. Neuwied – Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971: 179-217.
- Mann, Thomas. “Bilse und ich” [1905]. In *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Werke – Briefe – Tagebücher*. Hrsg. v. Heinrich Detering u. a., Bd. 14/1: *Essays I. 1893-1914*. Hrsg. v. Heinrich Detering, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002: 95-111.
- Müller, Baal. “Konservatismus als erotische Ironie – Zur Poetik der Differenz in Thomas Manns «Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen»”. In *Paradoxien der*

- Wiederholung. Hrsg. v. Robert André – Christoph Deupmann. Heidelberg: Winter, 2003: 119-136.
- Müller-Funk, Wolfgang. *Erfahrung und Experiment. Studien zu Theorie und Geschichte des Essayismus*. Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995.
- Nübel, Birgit. “«Eine ganz und gar offene, moralisch im Großen experimentierende und dichtende Gesinnung». Essayismus und Experimentalismus bei Robert Musil”. In *Experimente in den Künsten. Transmediale Erkundungen in Literatur, Theater, Film, Musik und bildender Kunst*. Hrsg. v. Stefanie Kreuzer. Bielefeld: Transcript, 2012: 49-87.
- Pater, Walter. *Plato and Platonism. A Series of Lectures*. New York – London: Macmillan & Co., 1893 (deutsche Übersetzung von Hans Hecht: *Plato und der Platonismus. Vorlesungen*. Jena: Diederichs, 1904).
- Paul Ernst am Schauspielhaus Düsseldorf und die neuklassische Bewegung um 1905. Hrsg. v. Karl August Kutzbach. Emsdetten: Lechte, 1972.
- Pirro, Maurizio. “Mistica della creatività negli «Erdachte Gespräche» di Paul Ernst”. In *Piani del Moderno. Vita e forme nella letteratura tedesca del «fine secolo»*. Milano – Udine: Mimesis, 2016: 173-201.
- Rispoli, Marco. *Hofmannsthal und die Kunst des Lesens. Zur essayistischen Prosa*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2021.
- Schneider, Jens Ole. *Aporetische Moderne. Monistische Anthropologie und poetische Skepsis 1890-1910*. Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2020.
- Sommer, Loreen. “Krisen- als Formbewusstsein. Das Programm der «Neuklassik» oder Die Überführung einer Weltanschauung in Poetik”. In *Weltanschauung und Textproduktion. Beiträge zu einem Verhältnis in der Moderne*. Hrsg. v. Anna S. Barsch – Christian Meierhofer. Berlin – Bern – Wien: Lang, 2020: 157-181.
- Stanitzek, Georg. “Geist und Essay um 1900. Typografische Beobachtungen”. In *Der Essay als Universalgattung des Zeitalters*. Hrsg. v. Michael Ansel – Jürgen Egyptian – Hans-Edwin Friedrich. Leiden – Boston: Brill – Rodopi, 2016: 321-337.
- Tucci, Francesca. “Der Künstler, der Literat und die Widersprüchlichkeit des Deutschtums. Thomas Manns Essayistik 1893–1919”. In *Wege des essayistischen Schreibens im deutschsprachigen Raum (1900-1920)*. Hrsg. v. Marina Marzia Brambilla – Maurizio Pirro. Amsterdam – New York: Rodopi, 2010: 175-196.
- Winkler, Eugen Gottlob. “Die Erkundung der Linie” [1934]. In *Dichtungen, Gestalten und Probleme. Nachlaß*. Hrsg. v. Walter Warnach. Pfullingen: Neske, 1956: 81-112.
- Zima, Peter V. *Essay / Essayismus. Zum theoretischen Potenzial des Essays. Von Montaigne bis zur Postmoderne*. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012.

- Žmegač, Viktor. "Text und Kontext in der Gattungspoetik von Paul Ernst". In *Paul Ernst. Außenseiter und Zeitgenosse*. Hrsg. v. Horst Thomé. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002: 11-24.
- Zupancic, Matteo. "Caduta dell'epos e rinascita della tragedia: Paul Ernst e il «Nibelungenlied»". *Studi germanici* 11 (2017): 91-103.

I soggiorni duinesi di Rainer Maria Rilke: per una topografia della memoria tra storia e immaginazione¹

Giulia Frare

Università degli Studi di Trieste

Ich begreife im Leben der Götter (das doch wohl im Geistigen immer wieder sich erneut und abspielt und recht hat) nichts so sehr, als den Moment, da sie sich entziehen, was wäre ein Gott ohne die Wolke, die ihn schont, was wäre ein abgenutzter Gott? Duino ist die Wolke meines Wesens, fort, fort und in der Entrückung wohnen [...].
(RT 1, 66)

Con queste parole, ripensando al suo primo breve soggiorno presso il castello di Duino, il poeta praghese Rainer Maria Rilke descrive alla sua mecenate e ospite Marie von Thurn und Taxis ciò che quell'antica fortezza affacciata sull'Adriatico rappresenta per lui. La sfera semantica del religioso da cui attingono queste righe ben esprime la sensibilità del Rilke maturo, la cui produzione è percorsa da una pressoché costante vena di religiosità – mai riconducibile a una religione in senso stretto – dal sapore sincretico; le parole citate vengono però anche a connotare lo spazio della Duino rilkiana, luogo di ispirazione-rivelazione, contemplazione e “rapimento” inteso come fuga dal mondo, e anche sede in cui vengono concepite opere quali *Das Marien-Leben* e le *Duineser Elegien*, il grande capolavoro rilkiano la cui complessa e illineare stesura si concluderà a Muzot nel 1922. Presso il castello della famiglia Thurn und Taxis Rilke trascorrerà quattro soggiorni di natura e durata diverse: una prima breve visita “esplorativa” tra il 20 e il 27 aprile 1910; il lungo soggiorno invernale che si protrae dal 22 ottobre 1911 al 9 maggio 1912, solitario e ispiratore; un altro breve soggiorno tra l'11 settembre e il 9

ottobre 1912, intervallato da gite sul litorale, nella zona dei Colli Euganei e a Verona; e un'ultima visita dal 20 aprile al 4 maggio 1914, quella che Rudolf Kassner definisce "ein großer Séjour" (Kassner 53), l'ultimo raduno spensierato di nobili e intellettuali provenienti da tutta Europa immediatamente prima dello scoppio della guerra che avrebbe segnato la *finis Austriae*. Allora nessuno degli ospiti poteva saperlo, ma quello sarebbe stato anche l'ultimo saluto dato al castello nella sua struttura di allora, in gran parte distrutta sotto i bombardamenti dell'artiglieria italiana all'inizio del 1916.

Il primo impatto che la rocca e il paesaggio duinesi ebbero su Rilke è già indicativo del ruolo che quel luogo avrebbe assunto per lui. "Ich war unglücklich, die Ankunft Rilkes verpaßt zu haben," ricorda Marie von Thurn und Taxis nelle sue memorie sul poeta,

aber er gestand mir, daß es ihm sehr angenehm gewesen sei, die ersten Stunden allein zu verbringen, denn die wahrhaft unbeschreibliche Schönheit von Duino sei so überwältigend, daß er Einsamkeit brauchte, um sich zu fassen. Er wäre fast den ganzen strahlenden Frühlingnachmittag auf dem Balkon gestanden und hätte den Duft der zahllosen Irideen und den Salzgeruch, der von den Wellen heraufdrang, in sich gesogen, den Blick ins Azurblau des Meers und des Himmels verloren, ganz eingesponnen in seine einsame Betrachtung. (TT 10)

Per il poeta, reduce da una lunga serie di viaggi certamente stimolanti ma anche impegnativi, e preda di una profonda crisi creativa che dopo la scrittura delle *Aufzeichnungen des Malte Laurids Brigge* non accenna a dissiparsi, Duino viene subito a connotarsi come un luogo che risveglia e al contempo appaga il bisogno di solitudine, e che apre il contatto con il senso del sublime.

Il castello proprietà della famiglia Thurn und Taxis, schiacciato tra le rocce del Carso e l'Adriatico, non è però soltanto un luogo di isolamento per Rilke. Spesso e volentieri quello spazio è infatti animato da un via vai di ospiti più o meno illustri che gravitano attorno alla principessa Marie von Thurn und Taxis, ma anche popolato dalla memoria di chi in precedenza ha abitato quella dimora: si tratta di defunti membri della famiglia e persone a loro legate, i cui ritratti alle pareti e i cui scritti conservati nella biblioteca affasciano lo scrittore praghese e lo guidano alla scoperta delle loro storie. Queste esistenze, passate e presenti, incrociano quella di Rilke e vi lasciano una traccia – un ricordo, una curiosità, un'amicizia – che non di rado si lega alla letteratura, prendendo la via della trasfigurazione poetica, piuttosto che

venendo immortalata in una dedica o innescando uno scambio intellettuale fruttuoso e ispiratore.

Nel presente contributo si intende tentare di sistematizzare questa complessa interazione di stimoli attraverso una sorta di mappatura degli spazi geografici e dei personaggi più significativi legati all'esperienza duinese di Rilke. I "luoghi"² di questa "mappa" si riveleranno in costante rapporto con la dimensione del tempo – il tempo della vita e della storia –, assumendo in questo senso le caratteristiche del cronotopo bachtiniano. Per conferire spessore alla particolare topografia che ne risulterà e restituirle la complessa stratificazione che caratterizza lo spazio vissuto, sarà dunque imprescindibile considerare questa variabile, che trasforma luoghi e persone e mette in comunicazione realtà lontane e diverse. Nella Duino di Rilke, infatti, i piani temporali si intersecano continuamente: le vite di persone già defunte dialogano con il presente, in opere di autori geograficamente o cronologicamente lontani il poeta ritrova un riflesso del proprio sentire, gli spazi da lui esplorati portano tracce del proprio passato, e dalla nostra stessa prospettiva sono spazi profondamente mutati, fruibili attraverso la lente straniante della storia; basti pensare al castello ricostruito, al celebre "Rilkeweg" – che nel nome riporta alla memoria un poeta che non lo percorse mai realmente –, o ancora al fatto che tutto questo era parte di un impero, quello asburgico, che da lungo tempo appartiene per noi al "mondo di ieri".

Prendendo spunto dall'analisi di Peeter Torop,³ nell'accostarsi ai cronotopi della Duino rilkeana ci si renderà conto che essi si posizionano su tre differenti livelli: quello oggettivo, legato alla realtà storica, culturale e geografica indipendente dal filtro interpretativo del soggetto; quello soggettivo, dipendente da fattori emotivi e autobiografici; e infine quello dell'astrazione, su cui si collocano la mitizzazione e la rielaborazione artistica (Torop 18-19). Nella "mappatura" che segue si cercherà di mettere in luce la distinzione di questi livelli, oltre che di valorizzarne l'interazione.

È forse superfluo puntualizzare che non è questa la sede per sviluppare una critica delle opere rilkeane legate alle vicende e ai luoghi che verranno presi in esame. La ricerca qui presentata si propone tuttavia come un'utile base di riflessione per successivi lavori di interpretazione.

Luoghi

I luoghi rilkeiani sono di diversa natura. Prendendo in prestito la classificazione elaborata da Moira Paleari nell'esame dei luoghi delle *Elegie Duinesi*, possiamo riconoscerne almeno quattro tipologie: i "luoghi (apparentemente) concreti", i "luoghi metafora", i "luoghi astratti", i "non-luoghi" (Paleari 152). Tra queste tipologie non esiste una separazione netta, in quanto il processo di rielaborazione a cui esse sono soggette porta luoghi concreti ad assumere la valenza di luoghi metaforici, "non-luoghi" a ricevere la consistenza di spazi reali, e così via, in quello che Manfred Engel efficacemente descrive come un procedimento di "Verräumlichung innerer Prozesse" (RA 2, 430). Lo stesso castello di Duino, nella citazione posta all'inizio del presente contributo, si trasforma da luogo concreto a spazio dell'interiorità, metafora del nascondimento. Di questa "integrazione dei luoghi nella [...] riflessione" (Paleari 162) occorre tenere conto nel momento in cui ci si appresta a esaminare il rapporto di Rilke con la prima delle quattro tipologie di spazio sopra elencate.

Il primo "luogo concreto" a meritare attenzione considerando l'esperienza duinese di Rilke è certamente il castello dei Thurn und Taxis, rifugio e vedetta del poeta sul golfo di Trieste. L'odierno edificio, aperto al pubblico nel 2003 per volere di Carlo Alessandro della Torre e Tasso (Campaiola 15), è una ricostruzione radicale basata sulle antiche planimetrie e adeguata ai comfort del ventesimo secolo. L'opera di riedificazione fu voluta da Alexander von Thurn und Taxis e dalla sua seconda moglie, Ella Holbrook-Walker, negli anni Venti, e da quel momento in poi il castello rimase strutturalmente intatto, pur continuando a essere protagonista delle vicende storiche locali e nazionali: durante la Seconda guerra mondiale la marina tedesca stanziò lì il proprio quartier generale, in seguito la dimora ospitò i partigiani di Tito e successivamente gli Alleati; nel 1954 inoltre fu firmato lì il Memorandum di Londra che stabiliva la spartizione del territorio della regione di Trieste tra l'Italia e la Jugoslavia (Czernin 40). Fino al 1997, anno della conclusione della trattativa con lo Stato italiano, il castello era anche sede di una parte dell'Archivio della Torre e Tasso, comprendente una sezione "antica" con documenti di carattere prevalentemente amministrativo dal 1282 alla seconda metà del XIX secolo, e una "moderna" contenente le carte private della famiglia da quelle della principessa Teresa (1815-1893) a quelle del principe Raimondo (1907-1986) (Dorsi 81-

83). Di quest'ultima sezione dell'archivio fa parte la raccolta cosiddetta "Rilkeana", una serie di documenti che testimoniano il legame tra Rilke e Marie von Thurn und Taxis, tra i quali numerose lettere, un autografo delle *Elegie Duinesi*, la traduzione italiana (opera della principessa) delle poesie *Abisai I e Ritter*, e trascrizioni dai protocolli delle sedute di scrittura automatica tenute al castello (Bianco e Dorsi). Tutta la documentazione – che non si presenta completa a causa di numerosi trasferimenti, cessioni o smarrimenti (Dorsi 84-86) – è attualmente conservata presso l'Archivio di Stato di Trieste, che in questo modo diventa esso stesso "luogo rilkeano", che custodisce concretamente la memoria del poeta.

Il castello come lo conobbe Rilke si presentava dunque strutturalmente molto simile all'attuale e nella stessa posizione. Posizione che originariamente era occupata da un'antica fortificazione romana, le cui fondamenta pare siano funte da base su cui edificare il nuovo maniero. Scrive Pichler a riguardo:

L'arte progredita delle difese [...], e le continue feroci incursioni dei Turchi, furono quelle che suggerirono sullo scorcio del secolo XIV di costruire sopra i ruderi [...] di antiche mura romane, dove a molte miglia all'intorno non si trova a piombo sul mare sito più elevato che domini ad un tempo i due elementi, un nuovo castello. Da questo è circondata la torre due volte millenaria, come apparisce [...] dalla lapide in marmo dedicata al divo Diocleziano, rinvenutavi da presso alcuni anni fa, e da tutte le memorie rimaste. (Pichler 95)

L'antico torrione incluso nel perimetro del castello, insieme ai ruderi della vecchia fortezza arroccata su uno scoglio più basso poco lontano dall'edificio attuale, è ciò che rimane del complesso architettonico romano, e che, attraverso millenni di guerre e incursioni nemiche, ha percorso la storia arrivando fino a noi. La perfetta integrazione di questi elementi nel paesaggio circostante è ben delineata da Rilke stesso in una lettera del 25 ottobre 1911 indirizzata a Hedwig Fischer, in cui il poeta, presumibilmente dalla finestra della sua stanza, lascia vagare lo sguardo e la fantasia:

[...] ich bin [...] in diesem immens ans Meer hingetürmten Schloß, das wie ein Vorgebirg menschlichen Daseins mit manchen seiner Fenster (darunter mit einem meinigen) in den offensten Meerraum hinaussieht, unmittelbar ins All möchte man sagen [...], während innere Fenster anderen Niveaus in still eingeschlossene uralte Burghöfe blicken, darin spätere Zeiten um alte Römermauern die Milderungen barocker Balustraden und mit sich selbst spielender Figuren gewunden haben.

Dahinten aber, wenn man aus allen sicheren Toren austritt, hebt sich, nicht weniger unwegsam denn das Meer, der leere Karst [...]; an [dem Wildpark] liegt, verstürzt und hohl, der noch ältere Burgbau, der diesem schon unvordenklichen Schloß noch voranging, und an dessen Vorsprüngen, der Überlieferung nach, Dante verweilt haben soll. (BB 1, 294-295)

Nello spazio di Duino qui descritto si riconoscono le caratteristiche di almeno due delle diverse tipologie di luoghi rilkiani precedentemente menzionate: il castello di Duino e il paesaggio circostante sono certamente luoghi concreti, ma che si aprono verso un “tutto” squisitamente astratto. La geografia autoctona, inoltre, viene presentata nella prospettiva diacronica della sua evoluzione storica, desunta da elementi architettonici e leggende facenti capo a epoche diverse. Ecco che in questa maniera “lo spazio si intensifica e si mette in movimento nel tempo” (Bachtin 232), facendo incontrare le mura romane con gli ornamenti dell’architettura barocca e Rilke con Dante, che la leggenda vuole sia stato ospitato dai Duinati nel periodo dell’esilio e la cui memoria è eternata nel nome dello scoglio posizionato tra il nuovo castello e i resti di quello antico.

Prima del bombardamento del 1916 l’accesso al castello avveniva attraverso un massiccio ponte levatoio, oltrepassato il quale si arrivava alla volta incorniciata dall’edera rampicante che ancora oggi immette nel cortile interno. Le fonti riportano che un tempo qui si trovavano stanze adibite a depositi di grano e vino, scuderie e rimesse, oltre che una loggia dove anticamente venivano accolti i cavalieri di ritorno da tornei o battaglie e un terrazzo dal quale il castellano proclamava i suoi annunci al popolo. Al centro della corte si ergeva un cippo con una fenice, simbolo della famiglia Hohenlohe, mentre alle pareti, a mo’ di trofei di caccia, stavano appese corna di animali selvatici giunte da paesi esotici (Pichler 99-100; Campailla 39). Grazie ai racconti di famiglia raccolti da Monika Czernin, scrittrice austriaca lontana parente dei Thurn und Taxis, possiamo immaginare come si svolgesse l’accesso degli ospiti al castello ai primi del Novecento: le auto – mezzi ancora all’avanguardia e prerogativa dei nobili –, passato il ponte levatoio scivolavano silenziose nel cortile interno, accolte da un cenno di saluto del custode e dalle premure di un servitore in livrea incaricato di accompagnare gli ospiti nelle stanze preparate per loro (Czernin 9). All’incirca così, nell’ottobre 1911, dev’essere stato ricevuto Rilke, giunto al castello a bordo della lussuosa Mercedes Simplex 28/32 PS Phaeton prestata da Marie von

Thurn und Taxis, dopo un lungo viaggio in solitaria da Parigi a Duino accompagnato soltanto da Pierro, l'autista personale della principessa (Unghlaub 55).

Oltre al paesaggio, a colpire profondamente Rilke è il contrasto tra l'austera solidità delle mura del castello e il calore trasmesso dagli interni. In una lettera alla principessa rumena Else Bruckmann, il poeta si sofferma proprio su questo aspetto ricorrendo, per descriverlo, alla metafora del frutto succoso avvolto da una dura scorza: "das alte, ganz ans Meer hingetürmte Schloß hat eine ganz starke Schale, aber innen verhältnismäßig viel Fruchtfleisch, in dem es sich ziemlich saftig wohnt [...]" (BJ 152).

Gli spazi interni dell'edificio, così come l'arredamento e gli oggetti presenti al tempo, subirono, come è comprensibile, profondi mutamenti nel corso dell'ultimo secolo: a ricordo del ricco patrimonio di oggetti e opere d'arte appartenenti alla famiglia, già pesantemente compromesso da secoli di razzie e confische,⁴ rimangono oggi alcuni esemplari all'interno dell'attuale castello e le descrizioni offerte dalle fonti storiche (Campaila 35; Pichler 104-116). Come le altre stanze, anche quella di Alexander "Pascha" von Thurn und Taxis (figlio della principessa Marie), la camera che ospitò Rilke nei suoi soggiorni duinesi, non esiste più. Sappiamo che si trattava di una stanza d'angolo al primo piano del palazzo, con un'invidiabile vista sul golfo triestino: "[z]u beiden Seiten lag das Meer, links Triest und Istrien, rechts sah man bis nach Aquileja und zu den Lagunen von Grado [...]" (TT 39). Come si presentasse la stanza all'epoca, è possibile desumerlo da una descrizione della principessa:

Ich hatte unserm Gast ein nur selten bewohntes Zimmer zugeordnet, das für ihn wie geschaffen schien. Ein Eckzimmer mit Fenstern nach drei Seiten und einer kleinen versteckten Stiege, die zum Oratorium führte. Die Decke war mit sehr feinen venezianischen Stückkaturen geschmückt. Trotz der drei Fenster war der Raum ziemlich düster und immer von einer eher unheimlichen Atmosphäre erfüllt, worüber sich eine meiner Schwester schon öfters beklagt hatte. Aber Rilke liebte es so und war besonders glücklich über die große Stille, die ihn umgab; er hatte keine Nachbarn, da sich auf der einen Seite die Schloßkapelle, auf der andern, die ganze Breite des Schlosses einnehmend, der große Speisesaal befand [...]. (TT 10)

Sempre grazie alle memorie di Marie e alle lettere di Rilke stesso, è possibile immaginare il poeta trascorrere lunghe ore solitarie in quella camera, mentre legge e scrive, oppure cammina su e giù per la stanza declamando a gran voce versi appena annotati, o ancora contempla il panorama o si

intrattiene, la sera, in lunghe conversazioni con il ritratto della sua ospite da bambina che ha voluto appeso sopra la scrivania (TT 39).

Un'altra stanza cara poeta era il salottino, arredato in maniera molto spontanea, dove Rilke e Marie Taxis si diletta con la traduzione in tedesco de *La vita nuova* di Dante: un lavoro ispirato proprio dal contesto duinese e la cui solo parziale trascrizione è purtroppo andata perduta (TT 32). Racconta la principessa che, appreso della distruzione del castello, Rilke fosse particolarmente dispiaciuto per la perdita di quel "Lieblingwinkel", che descrive come segue:

Die Wände waren mit schönen alten genueser Stoffen bedeckt, die aber unter der Fülle von Stichen, Aquarellen und Pastellzeichnungen fast verschwanden; auf den Stoff waren Photographien jeden Formats geheftet, alle meine Lieblingsbilder füllten das bißchen Raum zwischen den Gemälden bis aufs letzte aus. Hier hing eine Radierung Whistlers, dort eine prächtige Zentauren-Zeichnung Tiepolos, etwas höher ein wundervoller Kopf, der von einem Fresko in einer Brenta-Villen abgelöst worden war. Dieser Nymphenkopf, der sehr an die Art des Veronese erinnerte, schaute mit großen Augen seitwärts über die Schulter herab; Rilke konnte kaum den Blick von ihm abwenden. Dann gab es noch ein schönes Porträt in Pastell meines Sohnes von Fortuny und ganz nahe an meinem gewöhnlichen Platz eine kleine hübsche Madonna auf Goldgrund [...]. Und die Blumen gaben dem Ganzen die gewünschte Harmonie. Überall und in großer Fülle waren sie aufgestellt [...]; das offene Fenster ließ alles Blau des Meeres und des Himmels ungehindert herein. Wie liebte Rilke das alles! (TT 32-33)

Oltre al contrasto, nominato in precedenza, tra l'imponenza delle mura esterne e l'accoglienza delle stanze, il castello di Duino si caratterizza agli occhi di Rilke per un'altra costante contrapposizione: quella tra il "chiuso" e l'"aperto". Soprattutto durante il lungo soggiorno dell'inverno 1911-1912, quando a causa delle temperature rigide e del maltempo l'ospite è costretto a trascorrere gran parte delle giornate all'interno dell'abitazione, la percezione, insistentemente ribadita nelle lettere a diversi corrispondenti, è quella di trovarsi rinchiuso in carcere: "Heuer bin ich in Gastfreundschaft hier auf diesem alten festen Schloß (zur Zeit ganz allein), das einen ein bißchen wie einen Gefangenen hält [...]" (RL 241) A questa sensazione di claustrofobia fa da contrappunto l'ampiezza dello spazio che si apre oltre le numerose finestre affacciate sul mare, presenza costante e ammaliatrice. Il rapporto dialettico tra la "casa" (il chiuso) e l'"universo" (l'aperto) diventa per Rilke espressione di complementarità e dinamismo, in quanto

conferisce tensione allo spazio e stimola l'immaginazione (Bachelard 69). È da notare che questo gioco di contrapposizioni diventa cifra poetologica, che trova espressione nelle stesse *Elegie Duinesi* (Paleari 162).

L'opposizione tra "chiuso" e "aperto" nel contesto di Duino si trova però messa in luce da Rilke stesso già in una lettera dell'agosto 1910 indirizzata a Marie Taxis:

[...] ich seh Ihr kleins Reich oben, die eingewohnte, von Erinnerungen dichte Welt mit dem Fenster ins ganz Große; es liegt etwas Endgültiges in dieser Einrichtung, die Nähe sehr nah heranzuziehen, damit die Weite mit sich allein sei. Das Enge bedeutet viel, und das Unendliche wird dadurch eigentümlich rein, frei von Bedeutung, eine pure Tiefe, ein unerschöpflicher Vorrath von seelisch verwendbarem Zwischenraum -. (RT 25-26)

Il passaggio citato testimonia come già dopo la prima breve visita al castello il perfetto bilanciamento degli opposti sia percepito come "in sé concluso": la finestra – che incornicia lo spazio ma al contempo lo rende fruibile – e la vastità, la vicinanza e la lontananza, la limitazione e l'infinito, non sono semplicemente dimensioni giustapposte, ma antinomie che si integrano a vicenda, riempiendosi l'un l'altra di significato (trarre ancora di più a sé ciò che è vicino perché la lontananza sia ancora più distante nel suo isolamento; percepire la concretezza di ciò che è limitato per lasciare all'infinito un'astrazione più pura, e così via). Questa tensione inestinguibile e fruttuosa tra limite e smisuratezza è la componente fondamentale di un altro lavoro che Rilke si sentì ispirato a intraprendere a Duino, precisamente nel 1912: la traduzione della poesia di Leopardi *L'infinito*.

Già a una prima e superficiale lettura della lirica leopardiana si possono riconoscere elementi e suggestioni collegabili al paesaggio duinese: lo spazio infinito che si apre al di là di un ostacolo che si frappone, il silenzio e la quiete, la voce del vento tra le piante (il quale così fortemente richiama la voce udita da Rilke nel frastuono della tempesta che gli suggerì l'incipit della prima elegia), l'accento finale al mare. Appare comprensibile che, nella quiete del castello duinese affacciato sull'Adriatico, Rilke si sia sentito in sintonia con i versi scritti da Leopardi sul colle recanatese.

Andando oltre a questi parallelismi formali, tuttavia, è interessante mettere in luce i punti in cui la traduzione rilkiana si discosta dalla poesia originale. Elena Polledri fa efficacemente notare come lì dove Leopardi utilizza termini improntati alla concretezza ("siepe", "orizzonte", "voce", "quiete"), Rilke tenda invece all'astrazione, prediligendo vocaboli

ed espressioni più indeterminati o che richiamano una dimensione trascendente (“Gehölz”, “Himmel” – al plurale –, “Lautsein”, “Stillheit”), ricreando così un “paesaggio dell’anima”, piuttosto che uno geografico (Polledri 103-104). Questa tendenza è coerente con il cambio di passo della poetica rilkeana, che da un interesse rivolto a “cose” più tangibili giunge a focalizzarsi maggiormente sull’astrazione. Tale cambio di passo è collocabile proprio tra la fine della stesura del *Malte* e il periodo duinese, e troverà nelle *Elegie* la sua massima espressione (Lavagetto 636).

Sia nel caso della traduzione de *L’infinito* che, più in generale, mettendo in luce le impressioni suscitate a Rilke dal paesaggio di Duino, ci si è soffermati sul mare. Esso non è però l’unico elemento naturale a risvegliare l’interesse e il fascino di Rilke, il quale mostra di apprezzare particolarmente anche la vegetazione del luogo, tanto da ipotizzare a un certo punto – per lo sgomento della principessa – di potersi trasferire ad abitare nel piccolo padiglione immerso nel cosiddetto “Tiergarten”, il fitto bosco di lecci dove amava passeggiare (TT 38). Il poeta fa effettivamente lunghe camminate, solitarie o in compagnia, nel parco del castello e nella zona circostante, e secondo quanto riporta Marie von Thurn und Taxis nelle sue memorie, proprio durante una di queste, un giorno di metà gennaio 1912, Rilke riceve improvvisamente l’ispirazione per scrivere le *Elegie*:

Er erhielt eines Tages in der Frühe einen lästigen geschäftlichen Brief. Er wollte ihn rasch erledigen und mußte sich mit Ziffern und anderen trockenen Dingen abgeben. Draußen blies eine heftige Bora, aber die Sonne schien, das Meer leuchtete blau, wie mit Silber übersponnen. Rilke stieg zu den Bastionen hinunter, die, vom Meer aus nach Osten und Westen gelegen, durch einen schmalen Weg am Fuße des Schlosses verbunden waren. Die Felsen fallen dort steil, wohl an 200 Fuß tief, ins Meer herab. Rilke ging ganz in Gedanken versunken auf und ab, da die Antwort auf den Brief ihn sehr beschäftigte. Da, auf einmal, mitten in seinem Grübeln, blieb er stehen, plötzlich, denn es war ihm, als ob im Brausen des Sturmes eine Stimme ihm zugerufen hätte:
„Wer, wenn ich schrie, hörte mich denn aus der Engel Ordnungen?“... (TT 41)

Non bisogna assecondare la tentazione di cercare nel viottolo qui descritto o in altri sentieri nominati dal poeta e dalla sua ospite il celebre “Rilkeweg”. Questo percorso, affrontato oggi da numerosi turisti e semplici camminatori, che si protende per circa due chilometri dalla baia di Sistiana al castello, ai tempi di Rilke non esisteva ancora. Anche se a

riguardo non sussistono fonti scritte, pare sia stato aperto in concomitanza con i lavori di ricostruzione del castello dei Thurn und Taxis nel 1922, soprattutto per dotare i principi della casata di un passaggio panoramico da percorrere a cavallo. Solo a partire dagli anni Cinquanta però – dopo essere stato a lungo inaccessibile a causa dell’occupazione militare della zona – il sentiero tornò a essere frequentato dagli escursionisti, e cominciò a essere citato nelle guide turistiche che per prime lo legarono alla memoria del poeta (Cannarella 16). Quello che percorse Rilke il giorno della genesi delle *Elegie* era solo un breve tratto lungo i bastioni ai piedi del castello, mentre gli altri sentieri di cui le memorie e le lettere parlano potrebbero essere quelli aperti a inizio Novecento, durante l’opera di rimboschimento della zona di Duino, per collegare l’attuale strada Statale 14 con i vari appezzamenti di quell’area (Cannarella 13).

Ai tempi di Rilke la costiera duinese si presentava certo più selvaggia e incolta di come la ammiriamo oggi, ma, chiaramente, la tipologia della vegetazione non è poi molto cambiata. La varietà della flora locale, con i suoi lecci, gli ulivi, gli alberi di fico, i pini marittimi, la centaurea carsica, la campanula, incantava allora come oggi per i contrasti cromatici che crea con il grigio delle rocce e blu del mare. Rilke amava immergersi nella natura, osservando i fiori e cercando di riconoscere le specie botaniche, o anche semplicemente godendo del silenzio e ascoltando le sensazioni che quel contesto gli suscitava. Suggestivo è un episodio raccontato da Marie von Thurn und Taxis:

Rilke streifte eines Tages ziellos, zerstreut und verträumt durch Gebüsch und Dornestrüpp. Plötzlich befand er sich vor einem riesigen, sehr alten Ölbaum, den er noch nicht gesehen hatte. Wie es kam, weiß ich nicht, aber plötzlich hatte er sich rücklings an den Baum gelehnt, auf dessen knorrigen Wurzeln stehend und den Kopf gegen die Äste stützend, und – ich kann nur sagen, was er mir wiederholt erzählte – sofort war er ein ganz eigenes Gefühl über ihn gekommen [...] Ihm war, als stünde er in einem anderen Leben, in einer längst vergangenen Zeit – alles was je hier gelebt, geliebt und gelitten hatte, kam zu ihm, umgab und bestürmte ihn, wollte von neuem in ihm aufleben, von neuem lieben und leiden. (TT 45-46)

L’immagine dell’albero, una delle “cose” della poesia rilkeana, è ricorrente anche nelle *Elegie*: dall’albero sul pendio all’inizio della prima elegia (“Es bleibt uns vielleicht irgend ein Baum an dem Abhang, daß wir ihn täglich wiedersähen”, RG 259-260), a quello di fico nell’incipit della sesta, che assume esplicitamente valenza simbolica (“Feigenbaum, seit wie lange

schon ists mir bedeutend, wie du die Blüte beinah ganz überschlägst und hinein in die zeitig entschlossene Frucht, ungerühmt, drängst dein reines Geheimnis”, RG 284), o ancora gli alberi delle lacrime, che nella decima elegia costituiscono, insieme ai campi della malinconia, la vegetazione della “Landschaft der Klagen”. Non si vuole qui certo suggerire di identificare gli alberi delle *Elegie* con un albero specifico del paesaggio di Duino; è tuttavia interessante come l’episodio citato, che tanto colpì Rilke da far sì che lo raccontasse con enfasi alla sua ospite, contenga già in sé lo spunto per la trasfigurazione poetica di un’esperienza contingente, che diviene stimolo e occasione per trasferire il proprio sentire su un piano astratto e generalizzato.

Persone

Come in precedenza notato, non solo i luoghi risultano significativi per l’esperienza duinese di Rilke, ma anche la costellazione di persone che vennero a legarsi, per lui, a quell’ambiente. La prima, e più importante, è Marie von Thurn und Taxis (1855-1934). Nata a Venezia come principessa di Hohenlohe-Waldenburg Schillingsfürst, sposò nel 1875 il principe Alexander von Thurn und Taxis e nel 1893 ereditò dalla madre il castello di Duino. Donna elegante e colta (parlava correntemente sei lingue), Marie Taxis trasformò la sua dimora nei pressi di Trieste in una sorta di cenacolo in cui i maggiori intellettuali dell’epoca, ma anche semplici bibliofili e appassionati di arti e scienze, si riunivano e conversavano di letteratura, filosofia, psicologia, oppure ascoltavano buona musica e, talvolta, praticavano sedute spiritiche. Il primo incontro tra Rilke e Marie Taxis avviene nel 1909 all’Hotel Liverpool di Parigi, dove, incoraggiata dall’amica poetessa Anna-Elisabeth de Noailles, la donna invita il poeta per un tè. È l’occasione per un ulteriore invito, questa volta al castello di Duino, dove Rilke si recherà l’anno successivo. Leggendo il carteggio e le memorie della principessa si ha l’impressione che, nonostante i vent’anni di differenza, il rapporto tra i due sia, da subito, spontaneo e confidenziale, basato su una profonda comprensione reciproca. Wolfgang Leppmann fa notare come Rilke e Marie Taxis si completino a vicenda: lei, dall’intelligenza vivace e capace di slanci di entusiasmo, sa cogliere con sensibilità la natura delicata e malinconica di Rilke, stemperando talvolta con ironia la sua cupezza; dall’altra parte lui, profondo e riflessivo,

conferisce alla principessa “einen geistigen Schwerpunkt” (Leppmann 306-307). A Duino, Rilke entra nel circolo della sua mecenate, conosce la famiglia di lei e ricambia l’ospitalità impegnandosi in piccole incombenze pratiche: durante il lungo soggiorno invernale, data l’assenza della sua ospite, è il poeta a supervisionare alcuni lavori di restauro eseguiti al castello (RT 87, 110-111, 124), e nello stesso periodo cura per conto di lei l’acquisto di alcuni quadri del Mareschi presso la famiglia veneziana dei Romanelli (RT 77, 81); addirittura propone di redigere un inventario degli oggetti (scialli, pizzi e altri indumenti) appartenuti alla madre e alla nonna della principessa (TT 46-47). Lo scambio intellettuale tra Rilke e Marie Taxis è vivace e fruttuoso: insieme intraprendono progetti di traduzione di opere italiane, in particolare di Dante e Petrarca, la principessa traduce alcune poesie di Rilke e ne tramanderà successivamente la memoria nelle *Erinnerungen*, mentre lui la rende partecipe della sua attività creativa. Non stupisce che proprio a lei il poeta dedichi le *Elegie Duinesi*:

[...] es ist doch kein Zufall, daß ich Ihnen die *Elegie* geben konnte, wär sie denn geworden ohne Sie, ohne unsere Gespräche, ohne Theresine, ohne Duino, ohne diese meine Retraite hier, zu der ich von Tag zu Tag mehr Muth fasse? Nein, das wäre sie nicht: und so haben Sie fast alle Schuld, daß der blaue Einband Ihnen so wiederkam -. (RT 101)

Marie von Thurn è per Rilke la più influente ma non certo l’unica donna legata al castello di Duino, luogo in cui di fatto la componente femminile è dominante. Un’altra presenza molto forte è quella della contessa Therese Thurn-Hofer und Valsassina (1815-1893), madre della principessa Marie. Si tratta di una presenza-assenza, che vive attraverso i ritratti, gli oggetti e gli scritti che ne conservano la memoria. Il castello stesso parla della contessa Therese: era stata lei, circa tre decenni prima, a riportarlo all’antico splendore dopo anni di abbandono e di confische, e sempre lei, donna appassionata di musica, pittura e letteratura, ne aveva fatto un polo di attrazione per umanisti e intellettuali del suo tempo, dando così avvio a una consuetudine che sarebbe proseguita, consolidandosi, con la figlia Marie. Tra le sue lettere spiccano corrispondenze con personaggi come Niccolò Tommaseo ed esponenti di famiglie nobili e regnanti europee, ma oltre alla scrittura epistolare ella si dedicava con profitto alla poesia, tanto che una sua creazione fu messa in musica da Franz Liszt (De Rosa 69-73). Oltre a venire a contatto con gli oggetti a lei appartenuti, a Rilke capita di trovare nominata la contessa in guide e manuali che consulta nei suoi studi

al castello, e in quei momenti la percepisce come una presenza tangibile: “[...] wenn ich dann, da und dort, unvermuthet an die Stelle heranlese, wo von der jungen Gräfin Thérèse Thurn [...] die Rede ist, da rührt michs, daß ich fast eine Sekunde lang die Zeit verwechsle und in Erwartung und Hoffnung bin, sie dort zu sehen” (RT 126-127).

Non è però la contessa la “Theresine” nominata nel brano sopra citato come ispiratrice delle *Elegie Duinesi*, bensì Teresa Reyson (detta appunto “Teresina”), un’orfana accolta dalla famiglia Thurn-Hofer und Valsassina e divenuta come una sorella per Therese. Theresine viene presentata dalle fonti come molto colta, sensibile e amante della letteratura, e l’interesse della contessa per le discipline umanistiche è senz’altro in parte dovuto a lei (De Rosa 74). Soprattutto, però, è l’autrice di un diario in cui racconta la sua infelice storia d’amore, uno scritto struggente e delicato che impressionerà profondamente Rilke:

[...] die kleine Aufzeichnungen habe ich gleich gelesen und finde sie über die Maaßen reich und rührend in ihrer Einfachheit. Sie können gewiß selbst gar nicht ermessen, wie viel von Thérèse in diesen Blättern sich erhält; [...] es ist wie ein Blättchen Marienglas über dem kleinen Bildnis und zuweilen glänzt es so, daß man nicht durchsieht [...]. (RT 108)

L’amore infelice della malinconica Theresine si accompagna, nella fantasia di Rilke, al tragico destino di altre due figure femminili legate al castello e alla famiglia Thurn-Hofer und Valsassina: Raymondine e Polyxène. Delle due giovani sorelle della contessa Therese, la prima morì a vent’anni, un anno dopo essersi sposata, la seconda appena quindicenne. Di loro sono conservati ritratti e miniature, che il poeta ama osservare e riposizionare nella vetrina del salotto, oltre che una poesia scritta da Jacopo Vincenzo Foscarini dopo la morte di Polyxène, che Rilke traduce in tedesco all’inizio del 1912 (Schnack 389). “[W]irklich scheint mir, daß Rilke in Duino unter Schatten gelebt hat” (TT 44), ricorda la principessa Marie Taxis, e davvero al castello per il poeta il tempo sembra perdere consistenza, diventando una grandezza evanescente che permette ai vivi di incontrare i morti, nel ricordo, nella fantasia e nella letteratura, ma anche nella quotidianità.

L’incontro più insolito, in questo senso, è quello con un’ombra più indistinta delle altre perché senza nome, senza volto e senza storia. Si tratta appunto di “die Unbekannte”, presenza misteriosa che si palesa a Rilke (e, in sua assenza, ad altri ospiti del castello) durante alcune sedute fatte

con la planchette. Rilke si cimenta per la prima volta in questa pratica a Duino e ne rimane affascinato: attraverso un medium (ruolo ricoperto da Pascha, figlio di Marie Taxis) può porre delle domande a uno spirito, che si paleserà attraverso risposte più o meno intelligibili e coerenti. Secondo le informazioni che si riescono a ricavare dalla “Sconosciuta”, si tratta di una “‘große Liebende’ nach Rilkes Herzen, die aus Leidenschaft ermordet war” (Magnússon 114): tanto basta per risvegliare l’interesse del poeta, affascinato dalle “grandi amanti infelici”, e per fare di questo “incontro” uno dei significativi di Duino.

La rete dei contatti duinesi di Rilke potrebbe estendersi ulteriormente se si prendessero in esame i numerosi rapporti epistolari che egli portò avanti lì,⁵ i personaggi storici di cui approfondì la vita attraverso studi e letture condotti nella biblioteca del castello,⁶ gli amici già conosciuti altrove ma con i quali proprio in quel luogo il legame si consolida (come è il caso di Rudolf Kassner, dedicatario dell’ottava elegia). Ci si limiterà tuttavia a nominare un’ultima persona, non perché con essa il poeta abbia instaurato una relazione di amicizia o perché sia stata di qualche importanza per la sua opera, ma piuttosto perché tornerà in un’occasione successiva a incrociare la vita di Rilke, e anche per la sua posizione rilevante nel contesto politico triestino. Si tratta del principe Konrad zu Hohenlohe-Waldenburg-Schillingsfürst (1863-1918), dal 1905 al 1915 – con alcune interruzioni – Governatore di Trieste e della costa adriatica e imparentato con la famiglia di Marie von Thurn und Taxis. Prima e dopo il suo incarico a Trieste, il principe ricoprì altri ruoli di rilievo nell’amministrazione asburgica; in particolare fu, per un breve periodo, Ministro degli interni della Cisleitania. Durante il suo servizio come Capitano distrettuale della provincia boema di Teplice-Schönau si distinse per aver placato uno sciopero di minatori e per aver concesso la rappresentazione del dramma di Gerhart Hauptmann *Die Weber*, azioni che gli guadagnarono l’appellativo di “Roter Prinz”. Durante il suo mandato a Trieste favorì lo sviluppo economico della città promuovendo importanti opere infrastrutturali (presso il porto e il collegamento con la ferrovia delle Caravanche), ma si oppose anche fermamente alle rivendicazioni degli irredentisti, motivo per cui dovette ritirarsi nel 1915, per evitare contrasti nella delicata fase di contrattazione dell’Austria per la neutralità dell’Italia in guerra (ÖBL 2, 393). Rilke fa la sua conoscenza a Duino grazie alla principessa Marie Taxis, e mostra di gradire particolarmente la sua compagnia: “Mittwoch hatte ich eine Stunde den Statthalter hier”, racconta in una lettera alla sua ospite mentre è solo

a Duino, “mit dem ich mich trefflich verstehe. Er hat auf Tauben gejagt und kam dann und nahm einen kleinen Imbiß hier oben bei mir, es war sehr gemütlich” (RT 109). Qualche anno dopo, nel dicembre del 1915 a Vienna, Rilke lo cercherà presso il Ministero degli interni per chiedergli di intercedere affinché gli sia evitato l’arruolamento. Nonostante i tentativi del principe Hohenlohe, che telefonerà subito al Ministro della difesa Georgi, qualche settimana dopo il poeta sarà costretto a partire per l’addestramento (Schnack 519).

Al di là della rilevanza dell’episodio in sé, è sembrato significativo concludere questa “mappatura” dei contatti duinesi di Rilke con un accenno a una personalità pubblica locale, perché ciò rappresenta effettivamente un unicum nell’esperienza del poeta a Duino. Se si pensa al fermento culturale e politico che caratterizzava in quegli anni la vicinissima Trieste, dove erano attivi Svevo, Saba, Joyce e Slataper (solo per citare qualche nome illustre in ambito letterario), saltano all’occhio, accanto a tutti gli incontri significativi nominati fin qui, anche quelli mancati, che a livello cronologico e geografico sembrerebbero plausibili ma che di fatto non avvennero. Possono rientrare in questa categoria anche i “luoghi mancati”, tra cui spicca la stessa Trieste, il fiorente porto absburgico polo di attrazione di artisti, uomini d’affari e viaggiatori, ma non di Rilke.⁷ In questo senso, riallacciandoci alla citazione utilizzata come incipit del presente contributo, Duino è veramente per Rilke il luogo della “Entrückung”, quella nuvola che nasconde la sua esistenza e la proietta in una sorta di “Zwischenraum” in cui ciò che è vicino si può trarre ancora più vicino e ciò che è lontano appare in tutta la sua estraneità.

Ecco che la mappa rilkeana qui tracciata assume le connotazioni di un’altra celebre “mappa” letteraria: le sue coordinate sembrano condividere le caratteristiche del Meridiano di Celan, capace di attraversare il tempo e lo spazio per collegare tempi e spazi che possono essere oggettivamente lontani, ma che dialogano tra loro in virtù di un’affinità profonda. Non tutti i luoghi e non tutte le persone, per quanto vicine, sono toccate dal meridiano.

Conclusioni

Le considerazioni e le informazioni qui raccolte hanno mostrato come, sulla mappa duinese di Rilke, dal punto corrispondente al castello si

originino numerose diramazioni, che sfidando le leggi cronologiche e geografiche mettono in dialogo la Duino romana con la figura di Dante, la baia di Sistiana con il colle di Recanati, gli “ordini angelici” della prima Elegia con il turistico “Sentiero Rilke”.⁸ I luoghi del castello di Duino, così pieni di suggestioni artistiche, storiche e paesaggistiche, sembrano continuamente espandersi rimandando ad altri spazi: quelli delle scene rappresentate nei quadri, delle vite nascoste dietro ai ritratti, del mare aperto. Le stesse *Elegie*, di cui le prime due e alcuni altri frammenti risalgono al periodo duinese ma le cui rimanenti parti si sviluppano tra Ronda, Parigi, Monaco e il castello di Muzot, si fanno luogo di incontro di spazi lontani ed estranei. La facoltà di mettere in comunicazione in questo modo luoghi e dimensioni diverse non può certo essere considerata una prerogativa del castello dei Thurn und Taxis. È tuttavia significativo, per lo scopo che qui ci si prefiggeva, il fatto che esso sia percepito e vissuto in questa maniera da Rilke, ovvero come un luogo che in questo senso condivide le caratteristiche dell’eterotopia foucaultiana. Mentre però per Foucault “le utopie consolano” e “le eterotopie inquietano, [...] perché minano segretamente il linguaggio, perché vietano di nominare questo e quello, [...] perché devastano anzitempo la ‘sintassi’ [...], anche quella meno manifesta che fa ‘tenere insieme’ [...] i nomi e le cose” (Foucault 7-8), l’eterotopia di Duino provoca in Rilke l’effetto esattamente contrario: scioglie il linguaggio, fa dialogare entità apparentemente estranee, dischiude alla “sintassi” nuove possibilità intrecciando nomi e cose diverse.



- 1 Il presente contributo è risultato di una ricerca condotta nell'ambito del progetto del Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici dell'Università di Trieste "Percorsi letterari nella Trieste absburgica: H. Bahr, R. Huch, R. M. Rilke", finanziato dalla Regione Friuli Venezia Giulia all'interno della proposta progettuale 2020 dell'Ateneo triestino "*Ripensare Esplorare Sperimentare* (RES): eco-logiche per la sostenibilità dei sistemi produttivi e la fruibilità del patrimonio ambientale e culturale".
- 2 Si utilizza qui il termine "luogo" in senso lato, esattamente nello stesso senso in cui Marino Freschi presenta la poesia italiana come "spazio" in cui Rilke a lungo dimora (Freschi 12).
- 3 L'analisi di Peeter Torop è concepita per essere applicata ai testi e utilizzata come base di riflessione per una traduzione che non si limiti al livello linguistico-letterale ma prenda in considerazione anche altre componenti, più profonde. In questo contesto ci si concede di ricorrere alla sua schematizzazione per meglio comprendere la diversa natura dei luoghi che verranno presi in esame.
- 4 Già Rodolfo Pichler, erudito abate per anni a servizio della famiglia Hohenlohe e profondo conoscitore del castello e del suo archivio, nel 1882 denuncia la sottrazione di numerosi oggetti di grande valore storico e artistico – in particolare le armi conservate nell'antica armeria – a opera dei francesi in epoca napoleonica (Pichler 102).
- 5 Significativo è che proprio in corrispondenza dell'inverno duinese tra il 1911 e il 1912 lo scambio epistolare con Lou Andreas-Salomé, sospeso da oltre un anno, riprenda e si intensifichi (Lavagetto 647).
- 6 A titolo esemplificativo si citino soltanto Carlo Zeno, ammiraglio veneziano che nella battaglia di Chioggia del 1380 sconfisse la flotta genovese, a cui Rilke intendeva dedicare un'opera che tuttavia non fu mai realizzata, e la poetessa veneta Gaspara Stampa, nominata nella prima elegia.
- 7 A onor del vero, va precisato che a Rilke capiterà di recarsi saltuariamente a Trieste durante i suoi soggiorni duinesi, ma si tratta di rare occasioni indotte, a quanto si apprende dagli stringati accenni nelle lettere, dalla necessità e accompagnate da un palese senso di fastidio. Solo in una lettera a Katharina Kippenberg il poeta si esprime in maniera più esplicita: "Ich

war in Triest, *mais cette ville, détestable pour mon goût, ne se prête a rien [...]*” (RK 34).

- 8 Aggiungendo un nuovo punto sulla mappa duinese di Rilke, Elena Polledri propone di mettere in relazione con il paesaggio di Duino anche il Monte Ventoso di Petrarca. Rilke infatti si interessa particolarmente a Petrarca proprio nel periodo duinese, e redige una traduzione della lettera a Dionigi da San Sepolcro che mostra alcune significative corrispondenze lessicali sia con la traduzione dell'*Infinito* di Leopardi che con le *Elegie Duinesi* (Polledri 106-107).



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Bachtin, Michail. *Estetica e romanzo*. Torino: Einaudi 2001.
- Bianco, Carmelo e Dorsi, Pierpaolo (a cura di). *Catalogo del fondo bibliografico proveniente dal castello di Duino*. Trieste: Archivio di Stato di Trieste 1999.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *La poetica dello spazio*. Bari: Dedalo 1993.
- Campailla, Ettore. *Il Castello di Duino: mille anni di storia*. Trieste: Fenice 2005.
- Cannarella, Dante. *Il Sentiero Rilke: paesaggio e poesia della costiera triestina*. Trieste: Edizioni Fachin 1989.
- Czernin, Monika. *Duino, Rilke und die Duineser Elegien*. Wien: Verlag Christian Brandstätter 2004.
- De Rosa, Diana. “Luoghi e figure della famiglia Thurn und Taxis-Hohenlohe”. In *Dottor Serafico. La memoria di Rainer Maria Rilke e l’archivio del Castello di Duino*. Trieste: Editoriale Lloyd 1999, 69-80.
- Dorsi, Pierpaolo. “L’Archivio della Torre e Tasso”. In *Dottor Serafico. La memoria di Rainer Maria Rilke e l’archivio del Castello di Duino*. Trieste: Editoriale Lloyd 1999, 81-90.
- Foucault, Michel. *Le parole e le cose. Un’archeologia delle scienze umane*. Milano: Rizzoli 2016.
- Freschi, Marino. “La cartografia italiana di Rilke”. In *Cultura Tedesca. Rilke e l’Italia* 52 (2017).
- Kassner, Rudolf. *Rilke. Gesammelte Erinnerungen 1926-1956*. Hrsg. von Klaus E. Bohnenkamp. Pfullingen: Neske 1976.
- Lavagetto, Andreina. “Commento”. In Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Poesie 1907-1926*. Milano: Einaudi 2000, 569-699.
- Leppmann, Wolfgang. *Rainer Maria Rilke. Leben und Werk*. München: Wilhelm Heyne 1981.
- Magnússon, Gísli. “Duino als magischer Ort – Rilkes außerkörperliches ‘Erlebnis’ und die Duineser Séancen”. In *In Schwingung. Rilke in Duino. Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 36 (2022), 97-109.
- Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon 1815–1950*. Wien: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften 1957-2018 (nel testo: con la sigla ÖBL e a seguire il numero del volume e della pagina).

- Paleari, Moira. “I luoghi della riflessione poetica nelle *Elegie Duinesi*”. In *Alla ricerca dello “spazio interiore del mondo” tra arti figurative, musica e poesia*. Milano: Diritto allo studio Università cattolica 2008, 149-164.
- Pichler, Rodolfo. *Il Castello di Duino: memorie*. Vittorio Veneto: De Bastiani 2018 (riproduzione facsimile dell’edizione: Trento: G. Seiser 1882).
- Polledri, Elena. “Rilkes Duineser Wendung zum ‘Weltinnenraum’ durch Petrarca’s *Besteigung des Mont Ventoux* und Leopardis *L’Infinito*”. In *In Schwingung. Rilke in Duino. Blätter der Rilke-Gesellschaft* 36 (2022), 93-107.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Briefe*. Hrsg. vom Rilke-Archiv in Weimar. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag 1987 (nel testo: con la sigla BB e a seguire il numero del volume e della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Briefe aus den Jahren 1907 bis 1914*. Hrsg. von Ruth Sieber-Rilke und Carl Sieber. Leipzig: Insel Verlag 1933 (nel testo: con la sigla BJ e a seguire il numero del volume e della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria e Kippenberg, Katharina. *Briefwechsel 1910-1926*. Hrsg. von Bettina von Bomhard. Wiesbaden: Insel Verlag 1954 (nel testo: con la sigla RK e a seguire il numero della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Gesammelte Werke*. Leipzig: Insel Verlag 1930, Band 3: *Gedichte 3* (nel testo: con la sigla RG e a seguire il numero della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. *Kommentierte Ausgabe in vier Bänden*. Hrsg. von Manfred Engel et. al. Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig: Insel Verlag 1996-2003 (nel testo: con la sigla RA e a seguire il numero del volume e della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria e Andreas-Salomé, Lou. *Briefwechsel*. Hrsg. von Ernst Pfeiffer. Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag 1989 (nel testo: con la sigla RL e a seguire il numero della pagina).
- Rilke, Rainer Maria e Thurn und Taxis, Marie von. *Briefwechsel*. Zürich: Niehans & Rokitansky 1951 (nel testo: con la sigla RT e a seguire il numero della pagina).
- Schnack, Ingeborg. *Rainer Maria Rilke: Chronik seines Lebens und seines Werks 1875-1926*. Erweiterte Neuauflage von Renate Scharffenberg. Frankfurt am Main, Leipzig: Insel Verlag 2009.
- Thurn und Taxis, Marie von. *Erinnerungen an Rainer Maria Rilke*. München, Berlin: R. Oldenbourg 1933 (nel testo: con la sigla TT e a seguire il numero della pagina).
- Torop, Peeter. *La traduzione totale. Tipo di processo traduttivo nella cultura*. Ed. italiana a cura di Bruno Osimo. Milano: Hoepli 2014.
- Unglaub, Erich (Hrsg.). *Rilkes Duineser Winter, 1911-1912: 39. Tagung der Internationalen Rainer Maria Rilke-Gesellschaft 2021 in Triest und Duino*. Bad Harzburg: Futura Edition 2020.

“Erzherzog Friedrich rief Bumsti!”: Karl Kraus e la tragedia della responsabilità¹

Maria Giovanna Campobasso

Università degli Studi di Bologna / Università degli Studi di Milano

Nel pieno del Primo conflitto mondiale lo zar di Bulgaria Ferdinand I si reca in visita a Cieszyn, Teschen in tedesco, dove Friedrich von Österreich-Toscana, Arciduca di Teschen, tiene la sede del Comando supremo di tutte le forze austro-ungariche². Tra i propositi di Ferdinand I c'è il tentativo, peraltro infruttuoso, di ottenere il consenso della monarchia asburgica all'occupazione di Pristina e Prizren. Per l'occasione, l'*entourage* dell'Arciduca programma la proiezione di un filmato di guerra in cui viene mostrato l'impatto di un mortaio austriaco da 30,5 cm. Il Conte Herbert von Herberstein, Gran maestro di corte dello stesso Friedrich, riporta come tutti gli spettatori fossero rimasti colpiti dalla proiezione, ma l'Arciduca, nel tentativo di dimostrare allo zar come la vista del mortaio non gli avesse fatto alcun effetto perché avvezzo a spettacoli del genere, avesse urlato “Bumsti!”. L'esclamazione, chiarisce Herberstein, fa naturalmente una pessima impressione e a partire da quel momento in seno al Comando supremo viene imposto all'Arciduca Friedrich il nomignolo di Herzog Bumsti, che diventa immediatamente, insieme al siparietto, di dominio pubblico (Rauchensteiner 476). Ne danno conferma i riferimenti alla vicenda in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* (1925) di Karl Kraus. La tragedia inadatta a un palcoscenico terrestre e concepita per un “Marstheater” (V 5)³, che Kraus scrive tra il 1915 e il 1918, prevede circa duecento scene legate fra loro, più che da una successione cronologica o dalla rotazione dei personaggi, dal tema portante della Grande guerra. Una brevissima scena

del primo atto (I.28) presenta lo zar e l'Arciduca che fanno da spettatori alla proiezione di un film di propaganda militare di Sascha Kolowrat-Krakowsky, il quale produrrà durante la guerra la maggior parte dei cinegiornali a carattere propagandistico voluti dal *Kriegspresssequartier*⁴; a ogni colpo di mortaio l'Arciduca Friedrich reagisce esclamando semplicemente "Bumsti!" (241). La scena restituisce nella sua essenzialità un ritratto inclemente del Comandante supremo, maldestro nelle sue funzioni istituzionali perché intellettualmente inadatto al ruolo che ricopre. In questa sede la resa letteraria dell'Arciduca è perfettamente sovrapponibile alle sue apparizioni successive in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* tanto nella forma di personaggio sulla scena quanto nelle menzioni che ne fanno le altre figure. Riferimenti a personalità della storia recente ed eventi del proprio tempo dominano il tessuto drammatico dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit*, dove Kraus mette a fuoco la rappresentazione di congiunture storiche decisive e non alla definizione del conflitto nella cornice del dibattito mediatico⁵. In linea generale, il dramma costringe il lettore a interrogarsi su come l'Austria sia stata manipolata a lanciarsi in una guerra che non era in grado di comprendere con un entusiasmo che accomunava gli intellettuali e gli strati meno colti della popolazione. L'orizzonte storico dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* non è quindi ridotto agli anni tra il 1915 e il 1918, ma abbraccia quegli eventi prebellici che hanno determinato la forma assunta dal conflitto. Anche la dimensione fondamentale della *Fackel*, bimestrale che Kraus dirige e scrive sostanzialmente in autonomia dal 1899 al 1936, è per Edward Timms il piano della storia e costituisce un'enciclopedia critica della vita pubblica europea dell'epoca (Timms, "Archetypal Pattern" 96)⁶. Kraus riporta ed esamina gli stessi fatti di cronaca, stravolgimenti politici, bollettini di guerra, indiscrezioni, uscite editoriali, necrologi, indiscrezioni su figure del panorama letterario e artistico europeo e inserzioni pubblicitarie che trovano spesso posto anche nei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit*, dove pure è quasi assente la dimensione del commento. Questa mancanza strategica è frutto del carattere performativo del dialogo, che consente a Kraus di far sì che i fatti drammatizzati si commentino da soli. Nel caso tanto della *Fackel* quanto dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* si tratta di tipologie testuali che racchiudono nella forma più pura le contraddizioni del presente, così Irene Fantappiè (21). Ridurre la scrittura di Kraus ai minimi termini dei suoi riferimenti storici significherebbe però ignorarne la dimensione immaginativa; Kraus stesso mette ripetutamente in guardia da questo tipo di lettura e segnala

come spesso i personaggi della storia si trasformano in maschere, personaggi di fantasia che portano in sé tratti della collettività, quando entrano a far parte del suo repertorio⁷. La vena comico-polemica krausiana fa sua una realtà storica che non manca di tragicità, ma che non può affidarsi alle forme tradizionali della scrittura drammatica per veicolare quella reazione di riso incredulo, l'unica alternativa al pianto angoscioso, di fronte all'orrore del "tragischer Karneval" del conflitto (F 1916, 426-430, 35)⁸. Tra il 1915 e il 1918 "Operettenfiguren [spielten] die Tragödie der Menschheit", scrive Kraus nel *Vorwort* al dramma, precisando: "Die unwahrscheinlichsten Taten, die hier gemeldet werden, sind wirklich geschehen. [...] Die unwahrscheinlichsten Gespräche, die hier geführt werden, sind wörtlich gesprochen worden; die grellsten Erfindungen sind Zitate" (Vw, 5). Kraus rivela quindi preliminarmente le fasi del proprio processo di scrittura, che si avvale di materiale autentico e di quelli che Elias Canetti qualifica come "akustische Zitate", frasi fatte o esclamazioni pronunciate per le vie della capitale, nei caffè e negli uffici governativi, o riportate sui periodici, nei comunicati ministeriali e sui cartelloni pubblicitari. Canetti distingue due espedienti polemici fondamentali nella scrittura krausiana, la "Wörtlichkeit" e l'"Entsetzen", che prevedono rispettivamente che le parole citate vengano usate nel loro significato più letterale ma al di fuori del loro contesto ideologico, e dunque snaturate e ridicolizzate, o inserite in un dialogo che ne fa motti svuotati di senso (Canetti, "Karl Kraus, Schule" 41-42)⁹. Entrambi gli approcci consentono a Kraus di isolare ed esporre il materiale autentico; quando la citazione viene estirpata dal contesto in cui trova posto abitualmente produce un effetto di dissonanza che la smaschera nella sua brutalità e contraddittorietà (Dorrer, *Neider überall zwingen* 159)¹⁰. Si stima che un terzo del dramma consista in citazioni dirette di fonti scritte e verbali (Hawig 24) e in virtù di ciò nel testo viene individuato il capostipite del dramma di carattere documentario in lingua tedesca (Deiters 108)¹¹. Una definizione riduttiva per chi, come Roberto Calasso, sintetizza il principio compositivo dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* parlando di "un teatro della ripetizione della chiacchiera vorticosa, dove le atrocità sono avvinghiate alle futilità, in un perenne giustapporsi di tutto a tutto, che non ammette sviluppo" (776). Annotare sulla pagina gli eventi più sconcertanti dell'attualità è, del resto, una costante nella scrittura di Kraus, che prima, durante e dopo la guerra mette a tema nella *Fackel* fatti e circostanze analoghi a quelli resi in forma drammatica in *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Spunti per gli articoli della *Fackel* sono ancora i discorsi, i

comunicati, le pubblicità, gli incidenti diplomatici di cui Kraus si trova a leggere sulle riviste o che gli vengono segnalati dai lettori. L'intervento polemico è un medium definito ontologicamente dal suo potenziale d'aggressione; qui con più chiarezza che altrove nella produzione krausiana si distingue l'interazione tra scrittura e azione e si percepisce come l'esperienza della *Fackel* sia stata già a partire dalla *Jahrhundertwende* un vero e proprio fenomeno sociale tanto in Austria quanto in Germania (Rose, "Polemische Transgression" 10). Tendenzialmente, un intervento polemico sulla *Fackel* si apre con una parafrasi, se non con una copia, del materiale oggetto di discussione e prosegue con un lungo attacco che ne demolisce la coerenza e formula un'accusa alla sua disumanità. L'assortimento dei bersagli polemitici sulla *Fackel* è estremamente ampio, dall'Affare Dreyfus alle coccarde in memoria dei caduti vendute per decorare i caminetti, dal declino della produzione letteraria alle foto in costume da bagno di George Bernard Shaw, dal sistema scolastico alla sponsorizzazione di saponi per le mani da parte dell'Imperatore Franz Joseph. Le differenze formali tra il saggio e il dramma impongono ai due generi una tecnica polemica diversa: dove la prosa sceglie un obiettivo da affondare ispezionando contesto, cause e conseguenze dei fatti discussi, il dramma prevede necessariamente che le scene finiscano per autocommentarsi in una struttura circolare che fa un espediente tragicomico degli stessi *Wahlsprüche* e delle *Phrasen* sensazionaliste, le citazioni acustiche, che danno sostanza alla propaganda bellica, così da smascherare la loro pervasività nel discorso pubblico come mezzo di manipolazione.

Sulla responsabilità dei membri della famiglia Absburgo nell'oscenità del conflitto Kraus è particolarmente aspro, perché convinto che il potere che questi esercitano li renda colpevoli del male inflitto all'umanità in misura chiaramente maggiore rispetto a tante altre "unmögliche Komparsen des Kriges", così Canetti (Canetti, "Der neue Karl Kraus" 245). Il colpevole principale è l'Imperatore Franz Joseph, al quale Kraus negli anni non risparmia critiche caustiche e caricature ferocissime. Leopold Deicloedt rileva come fin dall'inizio delle ostilità la *Fackel* tenda a distinguere lucidamente in Franz Joseph l'individuo e il monarca (47): se Kraus ha una certa simpatia per le qualità di signorilità e mitezza del primo, è profondamente urtato dall'ostentazione continua dell'amore paterno per l'Austria esibito dal secondo. Con l'attentato a Sarajevo il disappunto per l'operato di Franz Joseph si fa sempre più malcelato, ma durante la guerra le menzioni dirette si riducono: una reticenza che si deve sicuramente

alla volontà di evitare i problemi con la censura di Stato (55). Kraus è però in grado di colpire Franz Joseph senza farne il nome, riferendosi genericamente ai potenti che orchestrano la guerra dai loro palazzi o, ancora più ingegnosamente, citando le frasi fatte che si associavano all'Imperatore, prime fra tutte "Mir bleibt doch nichts erspart auf dieser Welt" e "Ich habe alles geprüft und erwogen"¹². Solo a partire dal 1918, senza pericolo di ritorsioni, Kraus rinuncia ai sottointesi, soprannominando l'Imperatore persino "k.u.k. Bestie" (F 1923, 622-631, 13). Nel 1920, un anno dopo la dissoluzione dell'Impero austro-ungarico, esce sulla *Fackel* un componimento satirico che porta il nome dell'Imperatore, morto quattro anni prima, e riflette a posteriori sul divario tra l'uomo e l'ufficio che ha ricoperto. "Wie war er? War er dumm? War er gescheit? [...] War er ein Körper? War er nur ein Kleid? War eine Seele in dem Staatsgewand?". In conclusione, i versi virano sulla guerra: "Wollt' er die Handlung oder bloß den Akt? Wollt' er den Krieg? [...] Hatt' er eine Spur von Tod und Liebe und vom Menschenleid?". Senza darsi alcuna risposta, Kraus rinuncia alla chiusura a effetto che spesso sigilla i suoi versi, limitandosi a constatare che mai si è visto un esempio di tale "Unpersönlichkeit" (F 1920, 551, 18). Anche all'Arciduca Friedrich è concesso apparentemente il beneficio del dubbio. Non è che un uomo incapace di contare fino a tre che sguazza "mit ahnungslosem Behagen in der Wanne eines Blutmeers [...] Dieser Heros, der 'Bumsti!' rief, als er im Kino Soldaten fallen sah, dieser Ehrendoktor der Philosophie, dieser Kretin war der Marschall unseres Verhängnisses", sentenza nel quarto atto il Nörgler, l'alter-ego letterario di Kraus (IV.29, 416)¹³. A un terzo del saggio "Nachruf" (1919), dedicato ai sacrifici collettivi compiuti inutilmente in nome di una monarchia che non ha mai davvero preso le misure della strage che si andava consumando su suo ordine, Kraus nomina tra i colpevoli della guerra un non identificato "Erzherzog, dem man vergeben muß, weil er nicht weiß, was er nicht tut" (F 1919, 501-507, 13). Il resto del testo identifica chiaramente questo portatore di uno spirito da "Blutspekulant" con il Comandante supremo. *Die Fackel e Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* restituiscono quindi l'immagine di un inetto dalla scarsa intelligenza al quale si era assegnato un incarico di grande responsabilità nonostante, se non in virtù, della sua incompetenza nelle cose di guerra. Come consuetudine nelle casate reali europee, Friedrich intraprende presto la carriera nell'esercito, diventa ufficiale a ventisette anni e, pur non distinguendosi per una particolare attitudine all'arte militare, diventa nel 1907 Comandante della Milizia

imperiale regia di difesa nazionale austriaca¹⁴. Il 25 luglio 1914 Franz Joseph nomina l'Arciduca Comandante dell'esercito balcanico e il 31 luglio Comandante supremo delle forze armate dell'Impero austro-ungarico. Il ruolo era stato già assegnato all'Arciduca Franz Ferdinand; l'attentato rende quindi la scelta di un nuovo comandante necessaria, visto che Franz Joseph non è nelle condizioni di assumersi l'incarico¹⁵. Rauchensteiner chiarisce come la decisione di affidare a Friedrich, piuttosto che a Eugen von Teschen, decisamente più abile nelle cose militari, un ufficio così impegnativo è legata solo in parte a questioni dinastiche, ma si deve soprattutto alla mansuetudine del fratello maggiore. Il Comandante supremo dell'esercito doveva sì godere di autorità ma lasciare di fatto la gestione delle operazioni all'indiscusso esperto militare del Paese, il Capo di Stato maggiore dell'intera forza armata austriaca, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf (152-153). Ci si aspettava che l'Arciduca si accontentasse di un ruolo di rappresentanza e di fornire le firme necessarie, ma che lasciasse agire Hötzendorf secondo il proprio criterio¹⁶. Effettivamente, il Capo di Stato maggiore tiene le fila della strategia militare austro-ungarica fino al 1917 e il Comandante supremo dell'esercito non viene quasi mai coinvolto nelle decisioni, ma viene informato sempre più spesso a posteriori (152-154, 258). Bisognava anche che la persona scelta si distinguesse per un'autorità data dal rango e dall'età, così da bilanciare la controparte tedesca, dal momento che l'Imperatore Wilhelm II aveva subito assunto personalmente l'incarico. Agli occhi dell'opinione pubblica la manovra è completamente trasparente e il fatto che la carica di Friedrich fosse quasi solo nominale mette spesso in difficoltà i rapporti con la Germania; lo staff a Teschen si trova costretto in più occasioni a correre ai ripari per evitare umiliazioni all'Arciduca, e dunque alla dinastia, davanti alle alte cariche dell'esercito tedesco e al popolo austriaco¹⁷. Negli incontri con l'Imperatore tedesco Friedrich si dimostra sempre assai teso, come un animale portato al macello, riporta Herberstein, che è testimone in più di un'occasione di colloqui molto penosi tra un Arciduca in estremo disagio e i vertici militari dell'Impero tedesco (539, 255). Questi prende nota di un colloquio del 1915 con Wilhelm II in cui Friedrich parla a malapena e appare confuso e disinformato. Non è poi possibile trattenerlo per più di mezz'ora nella stessa stanza dell'Imperatore perché – secondo Herberstein a ragione – in apprensione alla prospettiva di dover prendere parte attivamente a una conversazione in cui sarebbe tenuto a esprimere un'opinione (539). Per il Gran maestro di corte, lo stato d'ansia in cui versa l'Arciduca in queste

circostanze non è la conseguenza non solo di un certo livello di timidezza, ma soprattutto della sua inerzia mentale e della paura di essere colto in fallo dal proprio interlocutore (476). La proposta da parte della Germania di un comando supremo congiunto è all'inizio inaccettabile per l'Austria perché di fatto si sarebbe trattato di un'ammissione dell'inadeguatezza di Friedrich e avrebbe costituito un vero e proprio atto di sottomissione da parte di Franz Joseph. Durante le trattative Friedrich appare in evidente stato di agitazione, quasi di timore, riporta Herberstein. Il Comandante supremo risentirà politicamente dell'accordo all'interno del Comando Supremo, agli occhi dell'alleato tedesco e dei cittadini (254-255). Nel febbraio 1917, qualche mese dopo la morte di Franz Joseph, il suo giovane successore Karl Franz Joseph, ora Karl I, assume l'incarico di Comandante supremo dell'esercito austro-ungarico, dispensando l'Arciduca con tutti gli onori del caso e conferendogli una serie di cariche puramente rappresentative (648-649, 686).

Il governo centrale deve aver vissuto con molto imbarazzo l'incompetenza dell'Arciduca Friedrich e avrà cercato disperatamente, attraverso gli organi di stampa vicini al governo e i comunicati ufficiali, di nobilitarne la figura e farne un *leader* competente agli occhi dei sudditi. Kraus ne dà testimonianza indiretta nella scena III.24 in un dialogo tra gli Zwei Verehrer der Reichspost, quotidiano indipendente cristiano (1894-1938) di forte ispirazione filoabsburgica¹⁸. I due rappresentano, accanto a quelli storici e a quelli fittizi, la terza tipologia dei personaggi dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit*, figure prototipiche, stilizzate, di carattere cabarettistico, che spesso appaiono in coppia, come nel caso del Patriot e dell'Abonnet. Gli Zwei Verehrer der Reichspost incarnano la sclerotizzazione di una propaganda efficace assimilata tramite i giornali di cui si fanno i promotori ideali. Nell'universo krausiano la stampa produce materialmente l'opinione delle masse, così da renderle a tutti gli effetti "unfähig zum Richten", da suggerire loro "die Haltung des Unverantwortlichen, Uninformierten", sintetizzerà Walter Benjamin nel 1931 (335). Kraus delegittima lo sforzo bellico attraverso l'evidente discrepanza tra la narrazione propagandistica della guerra difensiva, portata avanti con vigore dall'Impero austro-ungarico come da quello tedesco, e i fatti che la quotidianità della guerra rendeva evidente agli occhi dei lettori¹⁹. Nei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* solo il Nörgler è in grado di guardare oltre la narrazione di Stato. Personaggi come gli Zwei Verehrer der Reichspost sono pronti ad adattare la propria realtà alla

versione della verità proposta dai giornali, e quindi dal governo, a prescindere dall'insensatezza delle conclusioni a cui si arriva dopo la lettura. Kraus si avvale di un lessico iperbolico e grottesco così da sottolineare per il lettore l'assurdità delle voci diffuse grazie agli strumenti della propaganda filogovernativa: Friedrich è annoverato tra gli "Helden der Tat", i membri della famiglia Absburgo impegnati nelle ostilità; di certo a nessuno stanno più a cuore le sorti del conflitto dello "höchster und erster Soldat des Reiches", l'Imperatore, delle cui "Liebe und Sorge" sono consci tutti i soldati (III.24, 298); del "Generalissimus Friedrich" si parla come di uno stratega paternamente impegnato a portare le sue truppe al trionfo. È noto come lo "Schlachtendenker" spenda le notti a studiare le carte insieme a Hötendorf e che i soldati abbiano fiducia illimitata in lui. "Unser Feldmarschall wird's schon machen!", dicono al fronte (299). Il cuore di Josef Ferdinand, un generale di fama incomparabile e un autentico commilitone per le truppe, leale, amato se non idolatrato, appartiene ai suoi soldati e tutti i cuori dei soldati appartengono a lui. Peter Ferdinand sarà ricordato per le sue gesta colossali; Josef, "Der Heldenhafte", direbbero i soldati austriaci e addirittura serbi, "sei unverwundbar"; Eugen è un nobile cavaliere, Max è proprio in gamba, Albrecht condivide la fame e la sete con i suoi soldati (300). Gli Zwei Verehrer der Reichspost non sono in grado di riflettere criticamente sulla realtà e accettano con sincera partecipazione il racconto di una guerra salvifica per l'Austria diffuso dal governo centrale. L'Erster Verehrer der Reichspost menziona in apertura *Unsere Dynastie im Felde*, un volume biografico del 1915 per la penna di Artur Gáspár, incaricato della censura per l'Ungheria al *Kriegspressequartier* (Rumpler 409). Gáspár afferma nell'introduzione di aver riportato le proprie impressioni sui "wunderbare Ereignisse" a cui assiste mentre accompagna gli eserciti tra il 1914 e il 1915 (7). Il volume è un esempio di materiale autentico che Kraus cita alla lettera, attingendo al capitolo dedicato all'Arciduca dal titolo "Der Soldatenvater". È un'enorme fortuna per l'Impero avere a capo dell'esercito un uomo che porta avanti la propria "gigantische Arbeit" pensando "in den bei tagelang währenden Schlachten oft unvermeidlichen Stunden der Entbehrung nur an ihre hehre Pflicht". Animato da grandiosa forza morale, questi studia con occhio di falco i punti più remoti del campo di battaglia con l'aiuto della sua profonda "Erkenntnis des Geheimnisses des modernen Krieges" (Gáspár 41-42). Gáspár sostiene di aver osservato una volta una truppa guidata da

Friedrich avanzare ai piedi di una collina. Un veterano del gruppo che accompagna l'autore scorge il "Generalissimus" in lontananza e non riesce a sopprimere sui suoi "harte Züge" un moto di commozione. "Dann fuhr er mit seinem wetterfesten Kavalleristenhandschuh über die Augen, in welchen etwas Verdächtiges blinkte und sagte mit einer bei ihm vorher nie wahrgenommenen Rührung: 'Der Soldatenvater...'" (Gáspár 45-46; III.24, 299-300). La fonte riporta un episodio di carattere patriottico chiaramente di fantasia che, secondo le indicazioni di scena, commuove fino al pianto gli Zwei Verehrer der Reichspost. Anche qui Kraus segnala l'incapacità dei due uomini di distinguere il vero dal falso. Lo scambio è infarcito di fraintendimenti: negli occhi del veterano brillava "etwas Verdächtiges", ma lo Zweiter Verehrer der Reichspost prende il luccichio di una lacrima per un "Lichtsignal oder was, p. v. -!" (300). L'equivoco è un espediente tipico della scrittura comica di Kraus, che coniuga così due dei suoi grandi crucci, la decadenza della lingua tedesca e l'illetteratismo²⁰, che qui si estrinseca nell'incapacità di differenziare il significato letterale da quello figurato e nella certezza che il libro di Gáspár si conquisterà il suo posto nel canone della letteratura di guerra austriaca (301). Fa da contraltare al dialogo la scena I.20, il primo accenno a Friedrich, che pure non viene nominato esplicitamente²¹. Lo scambio tra i due tenenti rimanda l'immagine di un Comandante in capo all'esercito austro-ungarico inadeguato che non riscuote tra i soldati alcun rispetto ma che viene spesso deriso per la scarsa propensione al comando. Kraus si avvale di due personaggi-prototipo, Beinsteller e Fallota, ai quali ricorre più volte per drammatizzare iperbolicamente l'indifferenza degli ufficiali per le sorti dei soldati o dei civili (III.3, V.1)²². A Beinsteller pare ci sia ai piani alti una gran voglia di attaccare; "Das is wenigstens a Abwechslung", commenta *en passant*. "Beim letzten wars zu blöd", aggiunge in riferimento all'ultimo attacco, che è costato all'esercito austro-ungarico duemila feriti e seicento morti. Per i due tenenti il problema non è tanto la morte ingiustificata dei tanti uomini mandati al fronte senza una strategia militare definita, quanto lo spreco di soldati ben addestrati, visto che con il "Menschenmaterial" si dovrebbe risparmiare. "Da hams wieder austarokiert oben. Lass mas amal stürmen, heißt's da. Wenn die Mannschaft anfängt, mit'n Dörrgemüse unzufrieden z'werden, laßt mas stürmen". Qui viene subito chiarita la leggerezza con cui è stato dato l'ordine: "Der Blade sagt nachher: Schauts, is das a Resultat? Ah was, hat's gheißen, die Leut haben sonst eh nix anderes zu

tun”. Quello al “Blade” è un riferimento al Comandante supremo che è in ultima istanza quello che firma gli attacchi. Non si tratta certo di alta strategia, osserva ancora Beinsteller, restituendo l’immagine di un Arciduca diametralmente opposto allo “Schlachtendenker” della scena III.20 impegnato giorno e notte a studiare i prossimi passi dell’Austria verso la vittoria. Friedrich non solca le colline con il suo esercito, ma si aggira piuttosto come “Gottsöberste” tra le strade di Teschen, ridicolo nel suo abbigliamento militare, con tanto di *Marschallstab*, bastone di rappresentanza che di regola veniva portato solo durante le cerimonie ufficiali (I.20, 120). L’inadeguatezza cronica del Generalissimus resta un segreto tenuto con discrezione dall’intera popolazione dell’Impero fino al 1918, quando, nel pieno dei disordini che caratterizzano gli ultimi giorni della Prima guerra mondiale, per le strade della capitale si muovono accuse pesanti all’incompetenza di Friederich come Comandante supremo dell’esercito, alla sua avarizia e ai profitti che gli sarebbero spettati durante la guerra grazie ai suoi latifondi, che rifornivano di latte la maggior parte del paese (“Bericht” 155).

L’Erzherzog personaggio compare per la prima volta in *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit* nel breve siparietto del “Bumsti” che condivide con Ferdinand I:

Hauptquartier. Kinotheater. In der ersten Reihe sitzt der Armeeeoberkommandant Erzherzog Friedrich. Ihm zur Seite sein Gast, der König Ferdinand von Bulgarien. Es wird ein Sascha-Film vorgeführt, der in sämtlichen Bildern Mörserwirkungen darstellt. Man sieht Rauch aufsteigen und Soldaten fallen. Der Vorgang wiederholt sich während anderthalb Stunden vierzehnmal. Das militärische Publikum sieht mit fachmännischer Aufmerksamkeit zu. Man hört keinen Laut. Nur bei jedem Bild, in dem Augenblick, in dem der Mörser seine Wirkung übt, hört man aus der vordersten Reihe das Wort:

Bumsti! (II.28, 241)

L’inadeguatezza della reazione dell’Arciduca a uno spettacolo a cui il resto del pubblico assiste in silenzio con l’attenzione che si confà al proprio ruolo è marcata dall’esclamazione infantile ripetuta per quattordici volte. Come spesso accade, manca nella scena un personaggio che commenti l’episodio, la cui interpretazione è lasciata al lettore. In questo *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* trovano la propria peculiarità a livello mediale se messi a confronto con passi della *Fackel* con cui condividono il nucleo tematico. L’espedito di affidare all’iterazione del “Bumsti” il ritmo della scena

ritorna infatti in una resa in prosa della II, 28, integrata in “Nachruf”. Si tratta di una delle molte istanze di autoriscrittura che legano le due fatiche di Kraus, che era solito rimaneggiare episodi già oggetto di lunghi interventi sul periodico per imbastire i dialoghi del dramma. Gerald Stieg arriva a definire la tragedia “eine konzentrierte *Fackel*, sie ist als großes Zitat ein großes Zeugnis” (“*Die Fackel*” 112)²³. Il lungo intervento apre il numero di gennaio 1919 della *Fackel*; alla quarantasettesima pagina Kraus interrompe una lunga riflessione sulla mancanza di responsabilità dei capi militari austro-tedeschi con un dialogo tra un non identificato “Schlachtenlenker” e un cittadino che ha perso un fratello in guerra. A parlare è chiaramente il Comandante supremo, come suggerisce la sovrapposizione tra questo passaggio e la scena I.28.

[Erzherzog Friedrich] fletscht die Zähne und fragt: “Ihr Bruder is g’fallen?” “Jawohl, kaiserliche Hoheit”. “Das is a Pech”. Oh, er hat selbst einmal Soldaten fallen gesehn, einen nach dem andern, im Kino des Hauptquartiers, neben Ferdinand von Bulgarien. Kein Laut im Saal. Nur eine Stimme in der ersten Reihe, nach jedem der zwanzig Bilder, die Mörser- wirkungen vorführen: ‘Bumsti!’ Bald darauf erschienen Rektor, Dekan und Prodekan aus Wien und machten ihn zum Ehrendoktor der Philosophie. Bumsti! So animalisch empfindet sich der Krieg selten [...]. Menschenleiber fallen: Bumsti! Der da spürt das Ergebnis. So nehmen wir andern das kinodramatische Ende Österreichs entgegen. Bumsti! Sollte es nicht nach der Quantität dieser Kriegshandlung, im dimensionalen Geschmack ihres führenden Geistes, im Sinne dieser ganzen Gefühlsmechanik unseres Lebens und Sterbens, der Titel des großen tragischen Karnevals sein? Dieser schwarzen Messe, die ein gedunsenes Gespenst zelebriert hat? Bumsti! — das war der einzige Lebenslaut aus einem Munde, welchem Dokumente des Generalstabs den Wunsch zusprechen, daß bald auch das ganze Hinterland in Blut ersaufe. (F 1919, 501-507, 48)

L’intervento sulla *Fackel* informa quindi l’interpretazione della scena, dove l’Arciduca stesso, a cui manca l’esperienza umana della morte sul campo, non è in grado di distinguere tra un caduto sullo schermo e la realtà dolorosa di un fratello perso sotto le armi. Qui il candore dell’esclamazione contrasta con la verbosità del passo e accentua il retrogusto macabro del piacere infantile che esibisce Friedrich alla vista delle macchine da guerra in azione. Kraus integra nel passaggio quel “Das is a Pech” con il quale l’Arciduca aveva reagito nell’autunno 1918 alla lettura pubblica del necrologio ai caduti dell’Impero austro-ungarico. L’espressione torna dopo qualche rigo, quando il generale risponde alla notizia della disfatta

austriaca con altrettanta indifferenza, con parole di mostruosa banalità, così Robert Cohen (40): “Das is a Pech’. Dann zwinkert er freundlich durch den Zwicker und weiß nicht, wie ihm geschieht”. Il focus della scena, e quindi del passo sulla *Fackel*, non è tanto la figura storica del Comandante supremo, quanto la sua mancanza di empatia e il senso di legittimità con cui ignora con distacco le conseguenze del bagno di sangue che ha contribuito a pianificare. Secondo questa lettura, gli attacchi all’Erzherzog von Teschen trascendono l’individuo e ne fanno un *exemplum* satirico di incapacità politica, configurandosi piuttosto come occasioni per discutere l’incompetenza di chi è al potere durante un evento di una portata inaspettata come il conflitto mondiale. La vuotezza di questo ‘Bumsti’ così puerile si presta a fare da titolo al carnevale tragico che è stato il conflitto, così Kraus (F 1916, 426, 38). Anche dopo la fine delle ostilità il ‘Bumsti’ viene citato nella *Fackel* senza che compaia il nome di Friedrich. Oltre a confermare come l’episodio fosse così noto da non aver bisogno di ricordare le personalità coinvolte, questa reiterazione implicita mostra la misura in cui Kraus reputa l’esclamazione rappresentativa della persona dell’Arciduca. L’espressione compare la prima volta sulla rivista nel 1916, quando Kraus scrive sulla *Fackel* del conferimento all’Arciduca del titolo di dottore in filosofia da parte dell’Università di Vienna e lo accusa, tre anni prima di “Nachruf”, di conoscere la guerra solo vicariamente, attraverso i filmati (F 1916, 426, 38). I professori e i rettori fanno ormai a gara tra chi concede più dottorati, scrive Kraus, ma sarebbe bello se chi si fregia del titolo di professore universitario usasse la testa anche nel mondo fenomenico, se sapesse distinguere tra un Napoleone e chi conosce la guerra solo grazie a uno schermo di proiezione o quando dovrebbe essere in grado di dire qualcosa in più che ‘Bumsti!’ alla vista di uomini che muoiono (F, 1916, 426-430, 15)²⁴. Nello stesso anno, in una seconda rievocazione dell’episodio, Kraus dà ampio spazio a una delle crociate che porta avanti sulla *Fackel*, quale la protesta contro la brutalità delle proiezioni di guerra, che interpreta come uno strumento di partecipazione indiretta, ma non per questo meno vile, alle bugie della guerra eroica (Lensing 684). Nel maggio 1918 dichiara di non aver piacere a recarsi al cinematografo per il senso di disgusto che gli provoca la spettacolarizzazione delle morti in battaglia che vengono mostrate nei cinegiornali prima delle proiezioni, per il fastidio che gli provocano i gridolini lussuriosi delle ragazze di fronte ad azioni perseguibili a livello penale nella vita reale – l’omicidio – e soprattutto “weil ich ja doch niedas Glück haben würde, einen

ehedem glorreichen Heerführer vor der gefilmten Prozedur hinfallender Menschenleiber zwanzig mal hintereinander ‘Bumsti!’ sagen zu hören” (F 1918, 474-483, 124). Il ricorso all’espressione infantile è ancora una volta un segnale parodico che indica inequivocabilmente al lettore il carattere comico-grottesco del personaggio. L’incongruenza tra l’inadeguatezza del ‘Bumsti’ e la generica ampollosità del passaggio nel quale si integra crea una rottura stilistica che, osserva Sigurd Paul Scheichl, nel caso di Kraus non è mai un vizio retorico ma una fioritura di forma intenzionale. Kraus ricorre programmaticamente alla rottura stilistica per tacciare le figure di inautenticità e rivelare l’inorganicità delle situazioni descritte (“Der Stilbruch als Stilmittel”, 128-134). Questo è vero soprattutto nella lirica, come nel caso del breve componimento satirico del 1920 “Herzog Friedrich”, che recita volentieri durante le sue letture pubbliche: “Als er, im Kino geschah’s, sie da fallen sah, rief er: Bumsti!” (F 1920, 551, 19). Kraus assegna significativamente al breve testo il sottotitolo “Heroischer Vers”, così da guidare il lettore o l’ascoltatore nella fruizione dei versi in chiave ironica.

Il personaggio dell’arciduca trova posto anche in due brevi rifacimenti del *Faust, Teil II* (1832) di Goethe e della *Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (1867), opera buffa in tre atti di Jacques Offenbach²⁵. In entrambi i casi si tratta di materiale noto al grande pubblico, così da consentire al lettore di riconoscere prontamente gli interventi strutturali apportati e apprezzare a pieno il processo di adattamento del testo originale nel quale viene integrato l’aneddoto del ‘Bumsti’²⁶. In chiusura del “Nachruf” Kraus colloca una breve scena Walpurgis. Le figure, tra cui l’io narrante, si muovono “kinodramatisch” tra un walzer insanguinato e un “Totentanz” come in sogno. Tutti si fermano, siedono, la festa finisce e nel silenzio assoluto si sente il tonfo di “ein gewaltiger Fall”²⁷. Una voce dalla prima fila urla solo una parola, “aber mit einem Ton, in dem alle Quantität der Leere dumpf zu Boden schlug, das große Wort des Nachrufs aller Nachrufe: Bumsti”. Phorkyas si toglie la maschera, mostra il volto di Mephistopheles e restituisce il suo bastone da maresciallo, lasciando intendere di aver assunto le sembianze di Friedrich (F 1919, 501-507, 120)²⁸. Torna nel testo uno dei motivi specifici degli attacchi contro l’Arciduca, il *Marschallstab*, simbolo della vanità ingiustificata che gli ispirava la sua stessa divisa; una sessantina di pagine prima Kraus riportava di aver sentito con le sue orecchie il Capo supremo definire il proprio bastone da maresciallo “der oberste Traum eines jeden Soldaten” (58). L’ultima comparsa significativa dell’Arciduca

sulla *Fackel* risale al 1927, quando Kraus ne fa il protagonista della parodia di un'aria tratta da *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, una delle undici operette di Offenbach che Kraus adatta in tedesco per la radio e della quale legge spesso degli stralci nelle sue *Vorlesungen*²⁹. Del lavoro di Offenbach Kraus apprezza la derisione del potere costituito e questo testo in particolare gli è molto caro (Timms, “Karl Kraus's Adaptations of Offenbach” 91, 101): con la sua “geniale Bloßstellung der dynastisch-militaristischen Wahnwelt”, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* riesce già nel “leibhaftiger Schritt vom Erhabenen zum Lächerlichen”, a far sì che la follia del discorso patriottico si sgretoli nel confronto con le contingenze (F 1927, 751-756, 79). Nella parodia krausiana l'Arciduca impersona il général Boum, che nell'operetta dà corpo al tipo del *miles gloriosus*. Kraus interviene sull'originale interpolando il testo con dettagli facilmente riconducibili all'Arciduca: der Held General Bumbum si assicura la vittoria, come le donne, a suon di “Bumsti”; cosa capita in guerra al “Menschenmaterial” gli è indifferente, visto che a lui conferiranno comunque il titolo di dottore *honoris causa* in filosofia. Kraus ironizza sull'assenza di Friedrich al fronte; der Held General Bumbum, come le général Boum, è un millantatore: “Die frechsten Feinde zittern / Vor meinem Mut, / Wenn sie den Federbusch nur wittern / Auf meinem Hut” (F 1927, 751-756, 71-72). Nel passaggio dall'intervento all'adattamento del testo letterario la scrittura di Kraus si converte da polemica in satira³⁰. Per Fantappiè alla base dell'esercizio satirico krausiano c'è un processo di vera e propria appropriazione, dove la citazione o l'omaggio tendono pericolosamente, per stessa ammissione di Kraus, verso il plagio (Fantappiè 112). A un primo sguardo il materiale della satira krausiana, il personaggio reale citato per nome, può sembrare lo stesso della polemica. La satira di Kraus si caratterizza però come una modalità di scrittura che aggiunge sempre all'argomentazione polemica una dimensione di carattere finzionale. L'esercizio libero della fantasia consente peraltro a Kraus di allargare il suo obiettivo oltre la personalità storica presa di mira e affrontare elementi tangenziali che chiudono il cerchio dell'invettiva (Timms, “Archetypal Pattern”. 94-95)³¹. Nel caso della parodia della *Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein*, come Offenbach prima di lui, usa il personaggio del generale per prendersi gioco di una classe di guerrafondai che guarda allo sforzo bellico come a uno spazio di autoglorificazione, riprendendo l'infantilità del personaggio originale, che a chiusura di ogni strofa restituisce foneticamente, esattamente come l'Arciduca, il suono delle armi.

Anche le scarse abilità oratorie del Comandante supremo degli eserciti austro-ungarici nelle occasioni ufficiali sono oggetto di scherno nei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit*. La tragedia conferma ancora una volta la distanza tra l'immagine di bonaria paternità caldeggiata dagli organismi di propaganda e la percezione pubblica dell'Arciduca, frutto non solo di indiscrezioni ma anche dell'esperienza diretta dei cittadini durante le apparizioni pubbliche. Le fonti confermano come si tratti di un ulteriore grattacapo per il seguito dell'Arciduca: anche un breve discorso prestampato poteva essere un potenziale fiasco, scrive Herberstein. Rauchensteiner riporta che per le celebrazioni del sessantesimo compleanno di Friedrich, il 4 giugno 1916, viene preparato un discorso di circostanza, i passaggi più importanti marcati in rosso e le pause segnalate ma l'Arciduca si mostra subito in difficoltà, non riesce neppure a individuare la pagina dalla quale dovrebbe iniziare la lettura (Rauchensteiner 526). Il Generalissimus è il protagonista di una seconda scena brevissima, dove finisce di leggere un discorso con sforzo evidente e perde il filo prima di trovare l'ultima pagina. Passando in rassegna i giovani ufficiali, borbotta:

ERZHERZOG FRIEDRICH (*ablesend*): – Und so – schließe ich mit den Worten: Seine Majestät unserer Oberster Kriegsherr lebe hoch hoch – (*umblättern*) hoch. (*Hochrufe. Nach einer Pause, in welcher er, feixend und die Zähne bleckend, die vor ihm stehende Reihe junger Offiziere mustert, an deren einem sein Blick haften bleibt*) Ah – das is – der Buquoy! Der – hat schon – eine Auszeichnung! (*Nach einer Pause, in der sein Blick weitergeht, um an einem andern haften zu bleiben*) Und – das da – is auch – ein Buquoy! Der – hat auch eine Auszeichnung! (*Pause des Nachdenkens*) Jetzt – ham – zwei Buquoy – eine Auszeichnung!

DER ADJUTANT (*geht auf den Armeeoberkommandanten zu und meldet*): Kaiserliche Hoheit, der Rektor der Wiener Universität mit dem Dekan und Prodekan der philosophischen Fakultät warten untertänigst auf die Erlaubnis, Euer kaiserlichen Hoheit das Ehrendoktorat der philosophischen Fakultät verleihen zu dürfen. (III.23, 297-298)

Qui Kraus riesce a condensare due degli elementi che prende sistematicamente di mira nelle canzonature del Generalissimus: la difficoltà a far di conto, vale a dire la sua scarsa intelligenza, e il conferimento del dottorato *honoris causa* in filosofia. Anche qui la menzione del dottorato ha la funzione pratica di sottolineare per assurdo la distanza tra la percezione pubblica del Duca e l'ipocrisia di chi si ostina a cercare di mascherarne

l'incompetenza. Lo stesso binomio ritornerà sulla *Fackel* nel 1920, quando Kraus dichiara di essere venuto a conoscenza di "ein echtes Dokument aus Österreichs größter Zeit – ausnahmsweise von keinem Monarchisten zu bezweifeln" con tanto di note a piè di pagina (F, 1920, 554-556, 52). Si tratta di un'ordinanza firmata dal sindaco di Teschen relativa allo stesso corteo organizzato per il sessantesimo compleanno dell'Arciduca di cui scrive Herberstein. Per Kraus, il contenuto del foglio ritrovato è rilevante anche se, e soprattutto perché, gli eventi che restituisce appartengono al passato; è chiaro lo sforzo di guardare retrospettivamente alle dinamiche di potere che hanno scandito la Grande guerra, di modo che i lettori della *Fackel* possano prendere coscienza della passività con cui gli austriaci hanno vissuto gli anni della Prima guerra mondiale. Il contributo di Kraus porta il titolo "Post-Festum", un gioco di parole tra "Festzug" e la locuzione "post festum", che sta a indicare un momento in cui è già troppo tardi per qualcosa e ogni azione risulterebbe vana. Lo studio del documento fornisce a Kraus il pretesto per tornare a scrivere, due anni dopo la dissoluzione della monarchia asburgica, delle colpe dei vertici militari nella strage compiuta ai danni dell'Austria e degli austriaci. L'articolo presenta la struttura tipica dell'invettiva krausiana scatenata dalla lettura dei periodici sotto il controllo del *Kriegspressequartier* o dai comunicati governativi: la presentazione asettica dei fatti per citazione o parafrasi anticipa una feroce dissezione delle assurdità conservate nel testo, così da generare un senso diffuso di tensione e spaesamento. Kraus riporta l'ordinanza completa:

[...] VIII. Nach dem Weihechor hält Herr Bürgermeister Gamroth eine Ansprache an die Höchste Persönlichkeit. Am Schlusse der Ansprache und zwar auf ein gegebenes Zeichen durch Herrn Revidenten Rudel erschallen Hochrufe, worauf sofort die Volkshymne angestimmt wird.

IX. Nach der Absingung der Volkshymne muß sofort unbedingte Ruhe eintreten, da die Höchste Persönlichkeit die an ihn gerichtete Rede beantworten wird. Nach Schluß der Rede der Höchsten Persönlichkeit erschallen neuerlich Hochrufe, die insolange anzudauern haben, bis die Höchste Persönlichkeit am Balkon des Schlosses erscheint.

X. Gleich nach Erscheinen der Höchsten Persönlichkeit am Balkon setzt sich der Festzug, wie folgt, in Bewegung: Die Musik bleibt vor der Auffahrtsrampe stehen. [...] (F 1920, 554-556, 53)

Se l'evento viene presentato ufficialmente come un festeggiamento di compleanno, la struttura auspicata dal sindaco, senz'altro in concerto

con il governo centrale, appare fin dall'inizio come un'autocelebrazione propagandistica del potere statale. La dimensione spaziale del corteo è anche verticale: la circostanza legittima la posizione del Comandante supremo degli eserciti austro-ungarici, che domina fisicamente il corteo dal balcone del palazzo di Teschen. Il *Festzug*, tuttavia, è pensato non tanto per l'Arciduca quanto per gli spettatori, che amano disporsi in "Gruppen und Spalier für ihre Henker". Kraus riconosce il potenziale retorico del corteo che, a differenza di mezzi di propaganda più complessi come la letteratura, riesce ad avere un forte impatto sulle masse, intrattenute dalle marce, dalla musica e dai colori (Edelman 156). È proprio di questo spettacolo coreografico di gioia, innocenza, ordine e amore per la patria che scrive Kraus, il quale critica aspramente la contraddizione tra la rappresentazione artificiale di una comunità solidale e gioiosa e la realtà dei morti del 1916. In questo senso Kraus parla "von der Erniedrigung durch die Majestät, von der Schmach dieser Feste, von der Beschmutzung lichter Kinderkleider bei einer Satansmesse, wo schon die nackte Not das Gott erhalte sang". Esauritasi la minaccia della censura, la *Fackel* torna quindi a fare il nome di Friedrich nel contesto di un'invettiva contro l'indifferenza della popolazione di fronte alla morte e alla distruzione portate dalla Grande guerra ma soprattutto contro la disumanità dell'élite. Per Kraus, questi "böartige Idioten" sono i rappresentanti di una patria, quella degli Asburgo, dai quali i nemici hanno liberato l'Austria troppo tardi (F 1920, 554-556, 55). Dal canto suo, Friedrich aveva dimostrato la sua completa distanza psicologica dall'enormità del conflitto con quel "Das is a Pech" del 1918, ricorda Kraus con una violenza verbale impensabile prima della fine della guerra:

Seit das Menschengeschlecht die sonderbare Einrichtung getroffen hat, daß böartige Idioten über ihr Gut und Blut schrankenlos verfügen können, dürfte es nie einen jämmerlicheren Anblick gegeben haben als die Höchste Persönlichkeit auf dem Balkon von Teschen, im Antlitz nichts als soldatenväterliche Glorie [...]. Und wenn man alles reiflich erwogen hat: wie es geschah und daß rings um dieses Lager dickster Genußfreudigkeit die Welt an Hungerödeme starb, während im Hauptquartier der Mordsgemütlichkeit das Blut verbrecherischer Siege mit dem eigens dafür so genannten "Schampus" begossen wurde. (*Ibid.*)

Il saggio accenna a una controversia finora trattata quasi in sordina, ossia la quantificazione delle responsabilità effettive di Friedrich nella Grande guerra. Attualmente, il dibattito storiografico sul ruolo dell'Imperatore

e dei suoi collaboratori diretti nel disastro bellico si concentra principalmente sugli scambi diplomatici e sulla censura di Stato a partire dalla documentazione raccolta dopo la fine delle ostilità ed è peraltro tutt'altro che esaurito. Andreas Weigl e Alfred Pfoser riconoscono il merito al Kraus della *Fackel* di aver esaminato la questione nella sua globalità già durante il conflitto, senza avere a disposizione il materiale documentario a conferma delle proprie supposizioni: fin dal primo numero successivo all'inizio della guerra Kraus si esprime provocatoriamente sulle operazioni sotterranee condotte dal governo per preparare mentalmente la popolazione ai sacrifici necessari, sulla noncuranza per i costi umani che avrebbe richiesto una guerra di massa, sulle vanità nazionaliste, sull'ipocrisia della buona società austriaca e sugli interessi commerciali dietro gli interventi di personalità austriache di spicco³² (356). All'interno dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* Kraus si esprime con chiarezza sull'argomento principalmente per bocca del Nörgler. Questi è fondamentale nella strategia satirica di Kraus, che gli assegna l'autorità morale del dramma e se ne serve per stabilire un punto di riferimento oggettivo sulle argomentazioni degli altri personaggi, così da mettere in prospettiva l'incapacità delle altre figure di leggere le incongruenze tra la retorica ideologica promossa dall'Impero e la realtà dei fatti. Gran parte delle scene del Nörgler sono rielaborazioni di diversi interventi già pubblicati sulla *Fackel*; nella conversione da monologo a dialogo Kraus inserisce l'Optimist, una spalla che contraddice o incalza il Nörgler con domande ingenui. I due sviscerano faticosamente il repertorio di motivi dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit*, creando i primi anelli di diverse "Motivketten" che si snodano in tutto il dramma. Questo consente a Kraus di definire un quadro di riferimento semantico a partire dal quale si possano interpretare le scene precedenti e successive, orientare la percezione degli altri personaggi e chiarire con più efficacia le istanze nelle quali si evince il carattere patologico della realtà sociale che ognuno di essi rappresenta (Dorrer, "Die Funktion des Nörglers" 38). I commenti del Nörgler sull'Arciduca non mancano di citare il 'Bumsti' e il dottorato *honoris causa*, richiamano alla mente del lettore le scene II.28 e II.23 e ne informano *a posteriori* l'interpretazione. Nel terzo atto il Nörgler annovera l'Arciduca tra i guerrafondai e i criminali della storia mondiale che i posteri trascineranno davanti al tribunale del mondo. Il Nörgler mostra all'Optimist una fotografia emblematica "in ihrer vollkommenen Schamlosigkeit" che ritrae l'Arciduca, Karl I già diventato Imperatore e

il Principe ereditario tedesco Wilhelm von Preußen allegri in uniforme. Il fotografo non ha dovuto chiedere che sorrissero, perché i tre già ridevano educatamente “vor den Wunden ihrer Mannschaft”. L’immagine mostra “der Erzherzog Friedrich, harmlos, als ob er nicht bis drei Galgen zählen könnte. Karl Franz Josef, der Frontlächler, der dem Heldentod nicht gram sein kann und dem die große Zeit wie ein Walzertraum vergeht” (III.31, 336). Le alte sfere non sentono alcuna responsabilità perché giustificate da chi, come l’Optimist, obietta che neppure Franz Joseph avrebbe potuto prevedere la strage che sarebbe seguita alla dichiarazione di guerra. Certo l’Imperatore non avrà agito in piena coscienza. “Das Niederschmetternde ist, daß er nicht bei vollem Bewußtsein war. Und daß dieses Argument ein Milderungsgrund für Staatsmänner ist und für Staatsoberhäupter, die doch schon von Gesetzeswegen für ihre Handlungen nicht verantwortlich gemacht werden können” (335). Così, ogni possibile attenuante a favore di Friedrich, innocuo, che andava perdonato perché non sapeva quel che faceva, si conferma per Kraus una giustificazione insufficiente. Il Comandante supremo, come l’Imperatore, è responsabile per ciò di cui sarebbe bene ritenere responsabili le guide di un paese: la vita, la salute, la libertà, l’onore, le cose e la felicità del prossimo (338). Questa mancata presa di coscienza è il risultato della condotta irresponsabile degli austriaci, che lasciano che della guerra non debba rispondere nessuno. Già nel 1909 Kraus lamentava l’incapacità degli austriaci di far espriamere ai grandi colpevoli della storia le conseguenze del proprio operato. “Nicht daß die österreichischen Ereignisse keinen Grund haben, aber daß sie keine Konsequenz haben, ist trostlos. Es geschieht so viel, und es geschieht nichts: das ist die österreichische Geschichte”. Kraus parla per metafore: la diplomazia internazionale è un terreno dove la caduta di una foglia può causare un terremoto, ma in Austria si spacca la terra e nulla tocca il suolo. La questione è sì interessante, se ne parla, ma alla fine i colpevoli non vanno incontro a nessuna ripercussione (F 109, 293, 4). In “Nachruf” Kraus scrive che in guerra tutto è anonimo, persino “die führenden Persönlichkeiten”. I generali restano anonimi nella loro colpa, esattamente come Friedrich, il quale non aveva che da firmare gli esecutivi e leggere di sera sul giornale che al fronte non era successo niente di niente. Poteva restarsene così “unbeteiligt wie nur Gott an diesem Grauen”. Nerone sembra un missionario cristiano in confronto a Friedrich, che ha potuto attraversare anonimamente quest’epoca sanguinosa senza saper contare fino a tre e che non è riuscito

a capire da solo di dover ripetere un terzo “hoch” negli auguri di lunga vita all’Imperatore senza girare l’ultima pagina del suo discorso. Questi non è che “ein zum Greis gepäppelter Säugling, der zu Taten gekommen ist und weiß nicht wie”. Che non sapesse quello che faceva non è una giustificazione, ma un segno di incoscienza (F 1919, 501-507, 45). Le migliaia di omicidi compiuti in suo nome resteranno impuniti, osserva Kraus; l’opinione pubblica si concentrerà più facilmente sugli scandali a palazzo e si finirà per pensare che Friedrich non abbia niente a che fare con “diese Komplikation zwischen dem Sterben der Menschheit und dem öffentlichen Privatleben ihres Befehlshabers” (46). Kraus dichiara di essere in attesa del giorno in cui verrà presentato finalmente il conto a “diese nichtswürdigen Generalen, Monturdepoträubern uniformierten Schleichhändlern und befehlenden Hurentreibern” (11). Per Kraus l’agonia di essere stati comandati da figure così infime è prolungata dalla consapevolezza che questa mancanza di mancanza di inibizione e dignità segnerà a fuoco gli anni tra il 1915 e il 1918 nel libro della storia culturale austriaca. “Das alles haben wir gewußt. Es war anonym, der Täter unschuldig wie die Opfer” (47).

Già nel 1909 Karl Kraus spiegava sulla *Fackel* la sua propensione a deridere apertamente personaggi storici perché convinto che “der Name die plastische Wirkung der Satire erhöht” (F 1909, 279-280, 6). Gilbert Carr sottolinea come nei primi del Novecento la satira ai danni di personalità di rilievo della buona società austriaca venisse molto apprezzata dai lettori viennesi e come la *Fackel*, rispetto ad altre pubblicazioni, si contraddistinguesse per l’impegno profuso nel mettere sotto esame la moralità dell’oggetto polemico (169). I riferimenti all’Arciduca che venano la produzione di Kraus durante e dopo il conflitto mondiale trovano un certo rilievo già nel valore documentario che assumono nel contesto della sua ricezione culturale come personaggio storico; la polemica ai danni di Friedrich si configura altresì come un tassello fondamentale della resistenza intellettuale krausiana all’indifferenza della classe dirigente. Nella fase preliminare dei suoi attacchi *ad personam* Kraus riesce a rendere il bersaglio polemico parte integrante della propria invettiva distruggendolo verbalmente a partire dalle sue stesse parole e azioni e, in una seconda fase, ne contesta l’individualità per poi ridurlo a esempio significativo del ruolo sociale distorto che ricopre nella sfera pubblica (Rose, *Polemische Moderne* 480). Attaccare Hugo von Hofmannsthal significa attaccare tutti i letterati asserviti al *Kriegspressesquartier*, Alice

Schalek tutti i giornalisti che divulgano menzogne di Stato e l'Arciduca Friedrich tutte le alte cariche militari tedesche e austriache che dopo la fine della Grande guerra sono rimasti placidamente impuniti³³. Nella coerenza maniacale e ripetitiva degli attacchi contro l'Arciduca Kraus riscatta quelle forme di linguaggio simbolico con le quali l'oggetto polemico è irrimediabilmente identificato: i quattordici, venti 'Bumsti,' 'Das is a Pech,' i filmati dei caduti, il bastone da maresciallo, il dottorato *honoris causa*, i fogli dei discorsi diventano nella polemica krausiana sintomo della corruzione diffusa di ogni senso di solidarietà e di indulgenza verso gli altri uomini. Canetti ribadisce più volte l'orientamento al dettaglio di Kraus, che attacca a prescindere dal medium ogni piccolezza della vita pubblica e privata del mondo occidentale con energia uniforme, si tratti di omicidio o errori di stampa (Canetti, "Karl Kraus, Schule" 40). Su Kraus preme tutta la storia universale nel particolare di un'unica frase, scrive Walter Benjamin nel 1931. In lui "jeder Gedanke hat seine eigene Zelle. Aber jede Zelle kann im Nu, und scheinbar durch ein Nichts veranlaßt, zu einer Kammer, einer Gerichtskammer werden, in welcher dann die Sprache den Vorsitz hat" ("Der neue Karl Kraus" 349). La foto di tre uomini che ridono riesce a inchiodare tutta l'umanità nella sua colpa più bassa, l'essere rimasta immobile dietro i propri capi di Stato mentre si consumava davanti ai loro occhi un orrore irreversibile. Gli spartani "setzten ihre Kretins auf dem Taygetus aus, während wir sie an die Spitze des Staats und auf die verantwortlichen diplomatischen Posten stellen", ma più cretini degli statisti austriaci sono i loro cittadini, che biasimano Dio per le conseguenze della guerra piuttosto che ritenere qualcuno responsabile o accettare il fardello della propria colpevolezza (338). L'invettiva che il Nörgler rivolge ai caduti nel quinto atto (V.54) è paradossale nella misura in cui finisce per redarguire le vittime per eccellenza della Prima guerra mondiale perché si sono macchiati di ignavia, perché non hanno voluto opporsi alle imposizioni dell'Impero, perché hanno preferito la morte alla ribellione. Dietro l'irragionevolezza delle accuse Fantappiè riconosce un richiamo alla realtà rivolto ai cittadini, che dovrebbero negarsi ogni auto-rappresentazione nelle vesti di vittima. Per Kraus, l'unica salvezza dalla colpa è ammettere il proprio ruolo di carnefice, esporsi al giudizio altrui con la coscienza di essere indifendibile, così Fantappiè (18-19). Kraus non rinuncia infatti alla propria parte di responsabilità e, stando alla dichiarazione poetica del *Vorwort*, configura *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* come "ein restloses

Schuldbekentnis, dieser Menschheit anzugehören” (Vw, 6). Il Nörgler conclude la sua ultima apparizione sulla scena senza che l’Optimist si sia fatto vivo, marcando in corsivo una delle *Phrasen* più citate nella produzione krausiana, tratta dalla dichiarazione di guerra alla Serbia di Franz Joseph del 28 luglio 1914:

Dieses ist der Weltkrieg. Dies ist mein Manifest. *Ich habe alles reiflich erwogen.* Ich habe die Tragödie, die in die Szenen der zerfallenden Menschheit zerfällt, auf mich genommen, damit sie der Geist höre, der sich der Opfer erbarmt, und hätte er selbst für alle Zukunft der Verbindung mit einem Menschenohr entsagt. Er empfangen den Grundton dieser Zeit, das Echo meines blutigen Wahnsinns, durch den ich mitschuldig bin an diesen Geräuschen. Er lasse es als Erlösung gelten! (V.54, 564)



- 1 Il presente contributo è nato nell'ambito di un soggiorno di ricerca come Ernst-Mach Stipendiatin condotto presso il Brenner-Archiv dell'Università di Innsbruck (2021-2022) e completa lo studio condotto sulla parodia krausiana della *Kaiserhymne* in Campobasso 2023, di cui riprende alcune tesi di fondo.
- 2 Allo scoppio del conflitto la sede viene trasferita dalla Galizia perché troppo lontana dal fronte. La città di Teschen dispone di grandi caserme e buoni collegamenti; presenta poi il vantaggio di ospitare una delle residenze dell'Arciduca, un piccolo palazzo progettato da Josef Kornhäusel, il più rinomato architetto del periodo Biedermeier a Vienna. Grazie al suo significato architettonico l'edificio è lo sfondo ideale per le occasioni ufficiali. La sede verrà trasferita nel 1916 a Baden, nell'odierna Bassa Austria, dopo la fine del mandato di Friedrich.
- 3 D'ora in avanti si citerà dalla *Buchausgabe* dei *Letzte Tage der Menschheit* indicando la scena di riferimento seguita dall'atto in numeri romani o Vw per *Vorwort*, Vs per *Vorspiel* e E per *Epilog*, numero della scena in numeri arabi. Si cita dalla *Fackel* con F, seguita da anno di pubblicazione, numero e pagina.
- 4 Tra i fondatori dell'industria cinematografica austriaca, assume durante il conflitto assume la gestione della *Filmexpositur* per il *k.u.k. Kriegspressequartiers*. Sulla sua figura si veda Gatscher-Riedl.
- 5 Si veda Scheichl, "Quellen von Satiren".
- 6 Sulla storia editoriale, i contenuti, le forme e la ricezione della rivista e della tragedia, si vedano Stieg, "Die Fackel" e Sousa Ribeiro.
- 7 Si veda a titolo esemplare il caso del giornalista Felix Salten nella ricostruzione di Timms, "Archetypal Patterns", specialmente 96-100.
- 8 Si veda anche Kraus, *Weltgericht*, 132, 135.
- 9 Su Canetti interprete di Kraus si veda Stieg, "La loi ardente".
- 10 Si veda concisamente Herz 2015.
- 11 Sull'inadeguatezza del concetto di citazione per descrivere il processo creativo krausiano si vedano Hertz e Fantappiè 107-121, che suggerisce il ricorso alla nozione di plagio.
- 12 Si riporta che la prima esclamazione sia stata la reazione all'annuncio della morte dell'Imperatrice Sissi nel 1898. La seconda è estratta dalla dichiarazione di guerra. "An Meine Völker!" esce sulla Wiener Zeitung, Nr. 175 del 29

- luglio 1914, ma la dichiarazione di guerra viene ufficializzata il giorno prima dalla villa dell'Imperatore a Bad Ischl. Per la precisione, il passo recita: "Ich habe alles geprüft und erwogen. Mit ruhigem Gewissen betrete Ich den Weg, den die Pflicht Mir weist." Su "Ich habe alles reiflich erwogen" in Kraus si vedano Krolop, "Der Korrektor ist der Dichter" e Pestalozzi.
- 13 Sul dibattito circa la sovrapposibilità tra Kraus e il Nörgler si veda Elshout.
 - 14 Friedrich contava su una tradizione di familiare nell'esercito asburgico che ha come capostipite Karl, primo duca Teschen, distintosi nelle guerre napoleoniche, che godeva di grande fama postuma come vincitore della battaglia di Aspern-Essling. Anche suo figlio Karl Ferdinand, padre di Friedrich, e Eugen, il secondo genito, godono di stima tra le alte sfere dell'esercito.
 - 15 Franz Joseph non è nelle condizioni di assumersi l'incarico, con grande sgomento del primo ministro il conte Stürgkh, che disapprova l'assegnazione della carica all'Arciduca. Rauchensteiner 152-153
 - 16 Le fonti riportano come il carattere mite dell'Arciduca riuscisse spesso a bilanciare l'impulsività di Hötendorf; si veda Rauchensteiner 152.
 - 17 Nel 1915 Herberstein fa richiesta di un comando al fronte perché ormai insopportabile al lusso monotono del seguito di Friedrich. Era inoltre scontento dell'Arciduca Friedrich in tanti modi, soprattutto per la facilità con la quale si accontentava di un ruolo di pura facciata e si esponeva continuamente al ridicolo per la propria inadeguatezza, Rauchensteiner 152.
 - 18 Si veda Behringer.
 - 19 Si veda Dorrer, *Neider überall zwingen*.
 - 20 Per una panoramica aggiornata sulla questione della lingua in Kraus si veda Kohn.
 - 21 La scena, insieme a tutte le apparizioni del Nörgler, viene cassata nella *Bühnenfassung* (1928), una versione estremamente condensata della *Buchfassung* pensata per una messa in scena in due serate.
 - 22 Kraus fa uso di un espediente caro alla tradizione comica, il nome parlante, che qui spinge il lettore a diffidare dei personaggi perché se ne prendano le distanze e se ne mettano in prospettiva le azioni. Qui Beinsteller, da *beinstellen*, rimanda l'immagine dello sgambetto, mentre Fallota richiama il termine austro-bavarese *Fallot*, il mascalzone. I due lamentano la difficoltà di reperire foto a effetto di morti e feriti da rivendere alle riviste. Il carattere paradossale del passaggio è dato dalla menzione di due periodici ai quali i due vorrebbero inviare le immagini di un cranio spaccato da una mina esplosa, l'*Interessantes Blatt* (1882-1945), settimanale illustrato viennese per famiglie, e la *Muskete* (1905-1941), settimanale umoristico letto diffusamente dagli ufficiali.
 - 23 Stieg, "Die Fackel".

- 24 L'ironia ai danni di Friedrich offre a Kraus l'occasione per attaccare quei "Professoren der Philosophie, die dem Weltuntergang mit Ehrendoktoraten schmeicheln, [sind] von allen Karnevalstypen, auf die der Mond dieser Mordnacht grinst, die weitaus lächerlichsten und verächtlichsten" (F, 1916, 426-430, 15). Nel 1918, sempre senza citare direttamente Friedrich, scrive nella *Fackel* che peggiori dei cronisti di guerra che rimpinzano i lettori affamati di sensazionalismi con falsificazioni cruento sono quegli "entmannte Männern der Wissenschaft, die dort, wo sie nur schießen hören, gleich mit einem Ehrendoktorat zur Stelle sind, und noch eine Begründung hiefür bereit haben" (F 1916, 426-430, 37).
- 25 Su Kraus lettore di Goethe si veda Stieg, "Goethe als Maßstab der Ästhetik", di Offenbach si veda Timms, "Karl Kraus's Adaptations of Offenbach".
- 26 Per una discussione teorica aggiornata sull'adattamento letterario si veda Sanders.
- 27 Cohen identifica il tonfo con lo scoppio della guerra (40).
- 28 Kraus tornerà a rimaneggiare il testo goethiano nel suo saggio più corposo, *Die dritte Walpurgisnacht*, composta nel 1933 ma pubblicata postuma nel 1952. Nella sua feroce disamina del Nazionalsocialismo Kraus istaura un dialogo diretto con il *Faust, Teil II*. Si veda Stieg, "*Faust II in der Dritten Walpurgisnacht*". Su Kraus oppositore del Nazionalsocialismo si veda Linden.
- 29 Il canone letterario krausiano è estremamente circoscritto se paragonato a quello dei contemporanei. Kraus riverisce Shakespeare e Goethe e osteggia sia autori come Schiller e Heine sia contemporanei già sostanzialmente canonizzati come Hofmannsthal o Schnitzler. Kraus si impegna a stimolare la riscoperta di Offenbach in Austria e ne porta in scena tra il febbraio 1926 e l'aprile 1936 centoventi rappresentazioni. Offenbach finisce presto per superare Shakespeare nel repertorio del "Theater der Dichtung" krausiano, il corpus di testi di Goethe, Nestroy, Gogol, Hauptmann, Wedekind e Raimund che Kraus alterna ai propri articoli, glosse, liriche, saggi e scene tratte da *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit* nelle letture pubbliche. Sull'espressione "Theater der Dichtung" si veda Fischer 34. Sulle letture pubbliche di Kraus si vedano Le Rider e Meyer-Kalkus.
- 30 Sulla satira krausiana si veda l'ancora valido Krolp, "Sprachsatire als Zeitsatire".
- 31 Si segnala la lettura comparativa di Timms tra la scrittura krausiana e i ritratti satirici di Alexander Pope, che opera sul personaggio storico un intervento simile a quello della parodia di Kraus, Timms, "Archetypal Pattern", specialmente 96-98.
- 32 Per Weigl e Pfoser Kraus dimostra la sua lungimiranza anche nella scelta degli aspetti che tratta nella sua crociata contro la guerra e che solo oggi la

storiografia tenta di mettere a fuoco, come i crimini di guerra austriaci contro i ruteni e i serbi, la macchina di propaganda imperiale, la strumentalizzazione della scuola e il trattamento dei prigionieri di guerra. Si vedano i riferimenti bibliografici, 355 e 356.

- 33 Sul rapporto con Hofmannsthal e Schalek si vedano rispettivamente Scheichl, “Hugo von Hofmannsthal” e Klaus.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Behringer, Wolfgang. *Im Zeichen des Merkur. Reichspost und Kommunikationsrevolution in der Frühen Neuzeit*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003.
- Benjamin, Walter. "Karl Kraus." *Gesammelte Schriften*. Vol. 2.1. Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1977. 334-367.
- "Bericht der Polizeidirektion Wien vom 13. November 1918 über die Stimmung der Wiener." *Österreich im Jahre 1918. Berichte und Dokumente*. München: Oldenbourg, 1968. 155.
- Calasso, Roberto. "La guerra perpetua." Kraus, Karl. *Gli ultimi giorni dell'umanità*. Milano: Adelphi, 1980. 755-779.
- Campobasso, Maria Giovanna. "Post Festum: Karl Kraus und die österreichische Kaiserhymne." *Hymnen Österreichs. Interpretationen – Kommentare – Didaktisierungen*. A cura di Johann Georg Lughofer. Wien: Praesens 2022. 63-76.
- Canetti, Elias. "Karl Kraus, Schule des Widerstands." *Das Gewissen der Worte*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1981. 42-53.
- . "Der neue Karl Kraus." *Das Gewissen der Worte*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1981. 247-271.
- Cohen, Robert. "Schöne Gschichte diese Weltgeschichte: Zum Nachruf von Karl Kraus." *The Germanic Review: Literature, Culture, Theory* 62, 1967. 37-43.
- Decloedt, Leopold R. G. *Imago Imperatoris: Franz Joseph I. in der österreichischen Belletristik der Zwischenkriegszeit*. Wien: Böhlau, 1995.
- Deiters, Franz-Josef. "Gegossen in den Schmelztiegeln der Groß-Industrie, gehärtet und geschweißt in der Esse des Krieges' – Erwin Piscator oder Die Geburt der Theateravantgarde in den Gräben des Ersten Weltkriegs." *Der Erste Weltkrieg in der Dramatik – deutsche und australische Perspektiven*. A cura di Christian Klein e Franz-Josef Deiters. Stuttgart: Metzler, 2018. 101-118.
- Dorrer, Andreas. "Die Funktion des Nörglers innerhalb der Motivketten in Karl Kraus' *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*." *Limbus. Australisches Jahrbuch für germanistische Literatur und Kulturwissenschaft* 13, 2020. 33-48.
- . "*Neider überall zwingen uns zu gerechter Verteidigung*". *Legitimation and De-Legitimation of World War I in German Dramatic Literature*. Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2021.

- Edelman, Murray. *Politik als Ritual. Die symbolische Funktion staatlicher Institutionen und politischen Handelns*. Frankfurt a.M.: Campus, 2005.
- Elshout, Helena. "Der Nörgler in *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*: Karl Kraus' Alter Ego als Erzählfigur." *Medien der Autorschaft*. A cura di Urs Meyer, Reto Sorg e Lucas Marco Gisi. Paderborn: Fink, 2019. 87-96.
- Fantappiè, Irene. *L'autore esposto. Scrittura e scritture in Karl Kraus*. Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 2016.
- Fischer, Jens Malte. *Karl Kraus. Studien zum "Theater der Dichtung" und Kulturkonservatismus*. Kronberg im Taunus: Scriptor, 1973.
- Gáspár, Artur. *Unsere Dynastie im Felde: 1914-1915*. Wien: Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1915.
- Gatscher-Riedl, Gregor. "Hollywood an der Donau. Zum 120. Geburtstag des böhmisch-österreichischen Filmpioniers und Bonvivants Alexander Kolowrat-Krakowský (1886–1927)". *Wiener Geschichtsblätter* 61, 2006. 46–60.
- Hawig, Peter. *Dokumentarstück - Operette - Welttheater. Die letzten Tage Der Menschheit von Karl Kraus in der literarischen Tradition*. Essen: Die blaue Eule, 1984.
- Hertz, Gal. "Karl Kraus' Citationality - Between War Experience and Poetic Language." *Tel Aviver Jahrbuch für Deutsche Geschichte* 43, 2015. 145-164.
- Klaus, Elisabeth. "Rhetorics of war: Karl Kraus versus Alice Schalek." *Feministische Studien* 26, 2008. 65-82.
- Kohn, Caroline. "Karl Kraus und die Sprache." *Karl Kraus*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1966.
- Kraus, Karl (ed.). *Die Fackel. Fotomechanischer Nachdruck sämtlicher Ausgaben*. 12 vol. München, 1968-1976.
- . *Weltgericht*. A cura di Heinrich Fischer. Frankfurt a.M./Hamburg: Fischer.
- . *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Vol. 1. Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1978.
- Krolop, Kurt. *Sprachsatire als Zeitsatire bei Karl Kraus*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1987.
- . "Der Korrektor ist der Dichter. Karl Kraus und die kaiserliche 'Manifestzeile'." *Germanistica Pragensia* 14, 1997. 35-50.
- Le Rider, Jaques. "Vorlesungen." *Karl Kraus-Handbuch*. A cura di Katharina Prager e Simon Ganahl. Heidelberg: Metzler, 2022. 149-162.
- Lensing, Leo A. "Kinodramatisch': Cinema in Karl Kraus' *Die Fackel* and *Die letzten Tage der Menschheit*". *The German Quarterly* 55, 1982. 480-498.
- Linden, Ari. "Wo Ungesetz gesetzlich überwaltet': Karl Kraus's Reading of National Socialism." *Oxford German Studies* 46. 75–91.
- Meyer-Kalkus, Reinhart. "Karl Kraus, der Vortragskünstler." *Geschichte der literarischen Vortragskunst*. Berlin: Metzler, 2020. 367-391.
- Pestalozzi, Karl. "Ich habe alles reiflich erwogen' Wirklichkeit und Ideal in Karl Kraus' 'Die letzten Tage der Menschheit.'" *Hofmannsthal Jahrbuch zur Europäischen Moderne* 25, 2017. 213-236.

- Rauchensteiner, Manfred. *The First World War and the end of The Habsburg Monarchy*. Wien: Böhlau, 2014.
- Rose, Dirk. "Polemische Transgression. Karl Kraus zwischen Schrift und Aktion." *Studia theodisca* 21, 2014. 5–30.
- . *Polemische Moderne. Stationen einer literarischen Kommunikationsform vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart*. Göttingen: Wallstein, 2020.
- Rumpler, Helmut. *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918*. Band XI.1. *Der Kampf um die Neuordnung Mitteleuropas. Vom Balkankonflikt zum Weltkrieg*. Wien: Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2014.
- Sanders, Julie. *Adaptation and appropriation*. London/ New York: Routledge, 2016.
- Sauermann, Eberhard. *Literarische Kriegsfürsorge: österreichische Dichter und Publizisten im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Wien: Böhlau, 2000.
- Sigurd Paul Scheichl. "Der Stilbruch als Stilmittel bei Karl Kraus." *Karl Kraus in neuer Sicht. Londoner Kraus-Symposium*. A cura di Sigurd Paul Scheichl e Edward Timms. München: Text + kritik, 1986. 128-142.
- . "Hugo von Hofmannsthal in Karl Kraus' 'Demolirte Literatur.'" *Cultura tedesca* 12, 1999. 211–223.
- . "Quellen von Satiren. Am Beispiel von Karl Kraus." *Quelle - Text - Edition: Ergebnisse der österreichisch-deutschen Fachtagung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft für germanistische Edition in Graz vom 28.2.-3.3.1996*. A cura di Anton Schwob, Erwin Streitfeld e Karin Kranich-Hofbauer. Berlin/ New York: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1997. 277-290.
- Sousa Ribeiro, António. "Die letzten Tage der Menschheit und weitere Dramen." *Karl Kraus-Handbuch*. A cura di Katharina Prager e Simon Ganahl. Heidelberg: Metzler, 2022. 163-183.
- Stieg, Gerald. "Goethe als Maßstab der Ästhetik und Polemik von Karl Kraus." *Karl Kraus – Ästhetik und Kritik*. A cura di Stefan Kaszyński e Sigurd Paul Scheichl. München: Text + Kritik, 1989. 71-81.
- . "Faust II in der Dritten Walpurgisnacht von Karl Kraus." *Écritures et langages satiriques en Autriche (1914-1938)*. A cura di Jeanne Benay e Gilbert Ravy. Bern: Peter Lang, 1999. 419-436.
- . "La loi ardente". Elias Canetti auditeur et lecteur de Karl Kraus (avec l'édition d'une lettre inédite de Georges Canetti à Karl Kraus)." *Agone* 35-36, 2006. 41-56.
- . "Die Fackel." *Karl Kraus-Handbuch*. A cura di Katharina Prager e Simon Ganahl. Heidelberg: Metzler, 2022. 103-122.
- Timms, Edward. "Archetypal Patterns in the Satire of Karl Kraus." *Karl Kraus in neuer Sicht. Londoner Kraus-Symposium*, a cura di Sigurd Paul Scheichl e Edward Timms. München: text + kritik, 1986. 92-108.

- . “Karl Kraus’s Adaptations of Offenbach: The Quest for the Other Sphere.” *Austrian Studies* 13, 2005. 91-108.
- Weigl, Andreas e Pfoser, Alfred. “Weltkrieg”. *Karl Kraus-Handbuch*. A cura di Katharina Prager e Simon Ganahl. Heidelberg: Metzler, 2022. 353-367.

„Gute Taten, das bedeutet Ruin!“ – Zur
Moralkritik in Bertolt Brechts Theaterstück
Der gute Mensch von Sezuan

Siegrun Wildner

University of Northern Iowa, USA

Auch nach Jahrzehnten seit der Uraufführung 1943 in Zürich hat Brechts Drama *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* an Aktualität – ganz im Sinne Brechts programmatischer Forderungen (*Schriften zum Theater* 141)¹ – nichts eingebüßt. Bei den Vorankündigungen zeitgenössischer Aufführungen des Theaterstückes zumindest im deutschsprachigen Raum fällt auf, dass der Gegenwartsbezug in Form von Fragestellungen zu moralischem Wert und Nutzen menschlicher Güte in der heutigen Industriegesellschaft im Vordergrund steht. So wird zum Beispiel gefragt: „Ist Güte in dieser Welt naiv und nicht lebensfähig?“ (Theater Konstanz); „Wofür lohnt es sich zu kämpfen in einer Welt, in der ‘Gutmensch’ ein Schimpfwort ist? Was ist verwerflich und naiv an der Idee, ‚gut zu sein und doch zu leben‘?“ (Theater Bremen); „Muss der Anspruch ‚gut zu sein und doch zu leben‘ in dieser Welt scheitern?“ (Theater Heidelberg); „Welche unserer Werte sind wir bereit, über Bord zu werfen, wenn es darum geht, den materiellen Wohlstand zu sichern?“ (Theater Bern); und „Wo gibt es denn noch einen guten Menschen?“ (Volkstheater Wien)².

Diese zugespitzten zeitbezogenen Fragen in den Theaterprogrammen treffen den Kernpunkt des Brechtschen Theaterstücks: die kritische Auseinandersetzung mit dem „Gutsein“ in einer auf wirtschaftlichen Profit ausgerichteten Gesellschaft. Genauer betrachtet, stellt Brecht das Gutsein als moralische Kategorie auf den Prüfstand und entlarvt sie aus sozio-ökonomischer und ethischer Perspektive als Paradoxon, wie die Aussage

der Hauptfigur des Sezuan-Stückes, der Prostituierten Shen Te, in ihrer Doppelrolle als Shui Ta in der letzten Szene des Dramas pointiert veranschaulicht, wenn sie erkennen muss: „Gute Taten, das bedeutet Ruin!“ (129)³. Shen Te schafft es trotz aller Bemühungen nicht, „gut zu sein und doch zu leben“ (130), das heißt, stets wohlthätig zu sein, ohne von anderen ausgebeutet und in den finanziellen Ruin getrieben zu werden. Shen Te / Shui Ta findet sich am Ende des Stückes in einer menschenunwürdigen Zwangslage, gefangen im Widerspiel von tradierten Moralvorstellungen und sozio-ökonomischen Kräften. Im Epilog teilt Brecht dem Publikum seines Schauspiels durch einen „Mitspieler“ mit, dass im Stück keine befriedigende Lösung für Shen Tes Dilemma gefunden werden konnte, und dass sich die Zuschauer doch selbst eine Lösung und für das Stück einen „guten“ Schluss suchen sollten.

Brechts Aufforderung an das Theaterpublikum gilt gewissermaßen als Brückenschlag von der Theaterwirklichkeit zum realpolitischen Zeitgeschehen der Zuschauer, das ähnliche Fragestellungen zur Ethik aufwirft. Die anfangs erwähnten Neuinszenierungen des Sezuan-Stückes im 21. Jahrhundert reagieren auf eine Gegenwart, in der sich moralische Ansprüche für das Wohlbefinden bzw. Überleben von Mensch und Natur, ökonomische und ökologische Folgen eines globalisierten Turbokapitalismus, und politische Konstellationen scheinbar unversöhnlich gegenüberstehen. Ein Wirtschaftssystem, in dem Wettbewerbsdenken, Gewinnstreben, Profitmaximierung, und egoistisches Konsumverhalten als oberstes Credo gelten, beschwichtigt ethische Bedenken mit schalen Rechtfertigungsformeln oder schiebt sie einfach beiseite. Das „Gute“ als verbindlich moralischer Wert und gesellschaftlicher Kompass wird geschickt durch „Verdeckungsstrategien“ (Gabriel) wie Halbwahrheiten, Propaganda, Ideologie und *Fake News* in Frage gestellt oder relativiert⁴, denn höhere ethische Ansprüche an das eigene Handeln könnten im ökonomischen Wettbewerb jederzeit zum Nachteil werden. Kann denn Kapitalismus überhaupt „moralisch“ sein oder werden?

Realpolitische und ökonomische Zeitbezüge gäbe es somit genug für das zeitgenössische Theaterpublikum, sich auch heute noch mit Brechts verdichteten Fragestellungen zur Moral in seinem Sezuan-Stück zu beschäftigen. Begriffe wie „gut“, „Gutsein“, und „Güte“ durchziehen in verschiedensten Wort- und Bedeutungskonstellationen das Sezuan-Stück. Doch was genau versteht Brecht unter „gut sein“ und wie setzt der Autor sich damit literarisch auseinander? Und warum überträgt er den Zuschauern

die Verantwortung, „gut sein“ begrifflich abzustecken, und exemplarisch für sich einen Ausweg aus ihrer paradoxen ethischen Notlage zu finden, wie es Shen Te im Stück versucht?

Sicherlich lässt sich das Sezuan-Stück in Hinblick auf die Verwendung der moralischen Kategorie „gut“, wie schon vielfach in der Forschung nachgewiesen, als Brecht'sche Parodie bürgerlicher Moralvorstellungen innerhalb seiner Kapitalismuskritik deuten⁵. Diese Lesart greift jedoch zu kurz, wenn man – wie diese Studie – von der These ausgeht, dass Brecht in diesem Theaterstück seine Moralskepsis und Moralkritik zum Ausdruck bringt, indem er systematisch „das Gutsein“ in all seinen konnotativen Facetten in verschiedene Handlungszusammenhänge bringt und auf seine Wertigkeit und Gültigkeit hin erprobt. Vorliegende Arbeit macht einige repräsentative Schnittstellen moralischer Handlungspraktiken und die daraus resultierenden sozioökonomischen Konsequenzen für die Figuren im Sezuan-Stück sichtbar und untersucht anhand von Textanalysen, wie Brecht das „Gutsein“ in normativen Ethiktraditionen auf den Prüfstand stellt und sie im Diskursgefüge destabilisiert oder gar als Illusion entlarvt. Diese Destabilisierungs- und Entwertungsstrategien lassen sich im Stück vor allem in jenen normativen Ethikbereichen orten und als Moralkritik deuten, wo sich etablierte moralische Maßstäbe auf die Handlungsorientierung literarischer Figuren auswirken: in den Bereichen von 1) deontologischer Ethik, 2) Mohismus, 3) eudämonistischer, und 4) utilitaristischer Denkweisen.

Moralkritik wird in diesem Kontext als Teil einer normativen Ethik verstanden, die sich sowohl mit „Fragen des normativ Richtigen (Gesollten)“ als auch mit „Fragen des evaluativ Guten“ (Düwell 2) auseinandersetzt. Diese breite Definition ermöglicht es, „Sollens- und Strebensethik“ (2) gleichermaßen zu umfassen und zu fragen, welche Handlungsweisen der Figuren im Theaterstück moralisch vorgeschrieben, erlaubt, erstrebenswert, oder verboten sind, und mit welchen gesellschaftlichen Konsequenzen, sofern sie für den Einzelnen überhaupt absehbar sind, verbunden werden (2).

Bevor Brechts Moralskepsis bzw. Moralkritik anhand repräsentativen Textbeispiele näher untersucht wird, soll ein kurzer Überblick über Struktur und Inhalt des Sezuan-Stückes sowie über Forschungspositionen zur Gut-Böse Dichotomie in der Hauptfigur Shen Te / Shui Ta den nötigen Kontext dafür liefern. Das Schauspiel *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* setzt sich zusammen aus zehn Szenen, unterbrochen von sieben Zwischenspielen und fünf Liedern, die der Theorie des epischen Dramas folgend die Handlung

kommentieren. Eingerahmt wird das Ganze von einem Vorspiel und einem von Brecht später hinzugefügten Epilog. Die offene Dramaturgie fordert die Zuschauer des Schauspiels auf, als eine Art „Mitspieler“ an der Diskussion bei der Lösungssuche des Grundkonfliktes teilzunehmen (Knopf, *Brecht* 40).

Schauplatz des Stückes ist die chinesische Region Sezuan, könnte aber auch, laut Brecht, irgendein anderer Ort sein, der von Armut und Elend geprägt ist. Die Menschen beklagen sich bei den Göttern, dass es ihnen bei diesen miserablen wirtschaftlichen Verhältnissen nicht mehr möglich sei, gut zu sein. Daraufhin erscheinen drei der höchsten Götter in der Hauptstadt von Sezuan als Abgesandte, deren Mission es ist, einen Menschen zu finden, der trotz dieser unmenschlichen Zustände moralisch handelt und sich dadurch als guter Mensch auszeichnet. Würden die Götter diesen Menschen ausfindig machen, dann wäre damit der Beweis geliefert, dass es den Menschen doch noch möglich sei, Gutes zu tun und gleichzeitig ein „menschenwürdiges Dasein“ auf Erden zu führen. Die Welt erweise sich damit als in Ordnung und bedürfe, ganz nach Wunsch der Götter, keiner Veränderung.

Die Prostituierte Shen Te, auch als „Engel der Vorstädte“ (70) in der Hautstadt Sezuans bekannt, könnte dieser gesuchte, vorbehaltlos gute Mensch sein. Die drei Götter belohnen die gütige Shen Te mit einem Geldgeschenk, damit sie weiterhin und in verstärktem Ausmaß Gutes tun könne. Shen Te kauft sich von dem unerwarteten Geldsegen einen kleinen Tabakladen. Sehr bald muss sie jedoch feststellen, dass ihre Freundlichkeit und Hilfsbereitschaft von den Leuten um sie herum – Arbeitslose, Obdachlose, Arme – gnadenlos ausgenutzt wird. Sogar ihre große Liebe, ihr zukünftiger Ehemann, der Flieger Sun, beutet sie schamlos aus. Als Shen Te, von Sun schwanger und von ihm verlassen, auch noch der finanzielle Ruin droht, rettet sie ihr „Vetter“ [zuerst als fiktive Figur, dann als reale Figur im Stück]. Der Vetter Shui Ta, eine Art *alter ego* Shen Tes, agiert als skrupelloser Geschäftsmann und bringt den Tabakladen wieder auf profitablen Kurs. Die Parabel endet in einem Gerichtsprozess gegen Shui Ta, der beschuldigt wird, Shen Te „beiseite geschafft zu haben, um sich ihres Geschäfts zu bemächtigen“ (125). Die Anklage wird aufgehoben als Shen Te ihre Maskerade als Shui Ta enthüllt. Reumütig bekennt sie ihr moralisches Scheitern am „Gutsein“, doch die Götter, die „Erleuchteten“, wie sie satirisch überspitzt auch genannt werden, wollen dieses Eingeständnis nicht akzeptieren. Sie halten daran fest, dass sie in

Shen Te einen guten Menschen gefunden hätten, und dass damit ihre irdische Mission erfüllt sei. Shen Tes finaler Hilferuf wird von den Göttern ignoriert und sie verschwinden wohlwollend winkend auf einer rosa Wolke schwebend im Himmel. Soweit zum Kern des Stückes, das – wie man anhand der Abdankungsszene der ramponierten Götter als *deus ex machina* Inszenierung sieht – trotz seiner ernsthaften Thematik auch durchaus komische Situationen beinhaltet⁶.

In seinen Einträgen vom Juni 1940 in sein *Arbeitsjournal* berichtet Brecht von den konzeptionellen Schwierigkeiten, die ihm das Schreiben des Stückes bereitete: „im großen und ganzen fertig mit dem GUTEN MENSCHEN VON SEZUAN. der stoff bot große schwierigkeiten, und mehrere versuche, ihn zu meistern, seit ich ihn vor etwa 10 jahren angriff, schlugen fehl. vor allem mußte dem schematischen ausgewichen werden“ (Knopf, *Brechts „Guter Mensch von Sezuan“* 14). Weiter heißt es in den Aufzeichnungen: „es machte mir mehr mühe als je ein anderes stück vorher, ich trenne mich ganz besonders schwer von der arbeit, es ist ein stück, das ganz fertig sein müßte, und das ist es nicht“ (15). Erst ein halbes Jahr später, im Januar 1941, nachdem Brecht „Das Lied vom Rauch“ mithilfe von Steffin beendet und zwei neue Lieder („Das Lied vom achten Elefanten“ und „Das Terzett der entschwindenden Götter auf der Wolke“) hinzugefügt hatte, hält der Autor sein Werk für beendet. Am 4. Februar 1943 wird das Stück von Leonhard Steckel inszeniert im Zürcher Schauspielhaus uraufgeführt (14-15).

Um welche spezifischen Herausforderungen es sich bei der Konzeption des Stückes handelte, ist den Arbeitsnotizen nicht zu entnehmen. Brecht verweist lediglich auf seine Bemühungen dem „schematischen“ auszuweichen, was sich durchaus auf die Konstruktion der Doppelhälften Shen Te / Shui Ta beziehen könnte, die er, wie im Weiteren noch näher besprochen wird, nicht als gegensätzliche Moralkategorien „gut-böse“ konzipieren wollte.

Die Doppelfigur Shen Te / Shui Ta

In der Forschungsliteratur zeichnen sich drei dominante für diese Arbeit relevante Interpretationsvarianten zu der Doppelrolle Shen Te / Shui Ta im Spannungsfeld der moralischen Kategorien gut/böse ab, die hier exemplarisch an drei Einzelbeiträgen kurz vorgestellt werden.

Walter Sokel sieht das Wider- und Zusammenspiel der Doppelfigur Shen Te und Shui Ta als dialektischen Prozess, der die Figuren jedoch nicht zur persönlichen Weiterentwicklung bringt, sondern in Ideologie und Idealismus verhärten lässt (128). Für ihn manifestiert sich Shen Tes Güte als spontaner Ausdruck ihrer altruistischen Natur, nicht als moralisches Gebot. Als Gegenpol konzipiert muss sich Shui Ta jener Gut-Natur verweigern, um in der wettbewerbsorientierten Welt bestehen zu können: *“The natural instinct of man to be good, kind, generous, loving, free and easy is constantly thwarted by circumstances, by the harshness of survival in a competitive world”* (129). Laut Sokel bewegt sich das reziproke Widerspiel von Shen Tes *“charitable self”* und Shui Tas *“calculating self”* (129) dialektisch dahingehend, dass das rationale Kalkül Shui Tas von Shen Tes idealisierter Welt ohne Ausbeutung, Wettbewerb, und Kapitalismus überschattet wird. Shen Te, die sich für die Taten von Shui Ta schämt und sie daher negiert, schließt sich auf solche Art der Ideologie der Götter an und kann aus deren von Selbsttäuschung verblendeten Sicht einen moralischen Sieg verbuchen: *„In these gods Brecht satirizes the fraudulence and self-deception of idealism divorced from action. The gods acquit Shen Te of the crimes of Shui Ta and proclaim her moral victory. Their verdict is that Shen Te, despite her split, is truly good”* (130). Shen Te durchschaut freilich am Ende des Stückes, dass die Aussagen der Götter ihr lediglich idealisierte Trugbilder vorgaukeln und ihre innere Zerrissenheit als existentielles Problem nicht wahrnehmen wollen. Die göttliche Aufforderung zum Abschied „sei gut“, so Sokel, bleibt folglich inhaltsleer und Shen Te blickt den davonschwebenden Göttern allein gelassen und hilflos nach (130).

Gert Ueding hingegen fasst Shen Te und Shui Ta von vornherein als statische Komponenten auf, die zu antagonistischen „Moralmasken der menschlichen Existenz unter den Bedingungen Sezuans“ (186) erstarrt sind: „Das Böse hat keine andere Funktion, als das Gute zu widerlegen. Der realistische, skrupellose, seine Empfindungen beherrschende Geschäftsmann Shui Ta bleibt die abstrakte Antithese zur gutmütigen, idealistischen, weichen Shen Te“ (185). Das Stück entspräche somit einer „undialektischen und bloß ideologiekritischen Auffassung von Gut und Böse in der Verkörperung der Masken Shen Te und Shui Ta“ (187).

An anderer Stelle spekuliert Ueding, ob Shen Te vielleicht nur den „Anschein von Güte und Menschlichkeit als Bemäntelung des unmenschlichen Geschäfts“ gäbe und nicht den Gegensatz zu Shui Ta bilden würde, sondern eine „Verkörperung jenes bürgerlichen Dranges, der sich in

Wohltätigkeitsbasaren, Armenspenden und karikativer Freizeitgestaltung äußert, die propagandistische Kehrseite kapitalistischer Wirtschaft, nicht etwa ihr Widerpart“ (182). Letztendlich verwirft Ueding die zwar nachvollziehbare, aber für ihn in Hinblick auf Shen Tes Naivität vielleicht doch nicht haltbare Argumentation und kommt zum zwingenden Schluss, dass „[d]er Gute, . . . sich die Maske des Bösen überziehen [muß], wenn er überleben will.“ Für Ueding lässt das Stück alle Fragen offen und beleuchtet lediglich „illusionslos und skeptisch die menschlichen Bedingungen für die Möglichkeit einer revolutionären Veränderung der Welt“ (189). Die Wertschätzung für das Stück läge jedoch gerade „in seiner ganzen unversöhnlichen Vielspältigkeit, in seiner ästhetischen und intellektuellen Brüchigkeit und als kunstvolle Kombination des Heterogenen“ (193).

Eine dritte Deutungsvariante der Doppelfigur bietet Jan Knopf an. Shen Te leide zwar unter den ausbeuterischen Geschäftspraktiken Shui Tas, erkenne aber, dass sie ohne seine Interventionen finanziell nicht überlebensfähig wäre. Folglich müsse sie, wenigstens zeitweise, in die Rolle des profitgierigen „fiktiven“ Shui Tas schlüpfen, um nicht bankrottzugehen. Knopf lehnt die Interpretation der Doppelrolle als „Spaltung“ ab. Er sieht das Oszillieren von Shen Te / Shui Ta als eine Art soziales Rollenspiel, das auf der Bühne auf zwei Ebenen abläuft: „Shen Te gehört als ‚Person‘ zur gespielten ‚Realitätsebene‘ des Stücks, die schon unreal und fiktiv genug ist, Shui Ta hingegen ist ihr gegenüber eine Erfindung, eine Fiktion, die nur so lange zur ‚Realitätsebene‘ zu gehören scheint, solange die mitspielenden Figuren sie als ‚real‘ akzeptieren; ‚real‘ ist sie selbst jedoch nie“ (Knopf, *Brecht-Handbuch* 429).

Resümierend lassen sich die drei Interpretationsansätze der Doppelfigur als Moralkategorien folgendermaßen auf den Punkt bringen: 1. die Figurhälften mit ihren Attributen „gut-böse“ im reziproken Widerspiel eines dialektischen Prozesses in der materiellen Welt, wobei „das Gute“ (personifiziert als Shen Te) als idealisiertes Trugbild entlarvt wird (Sokel); 2. die Doppelfigur als Verkörperung erstarrter Masken einer ideologiekritischen, undialektischen Dichotomie von Gut-Böse (Ueding); 3. die Konzeption der Moralkategorien „gut-böse“ als ständiges Oszillieren der Figurenhälften zwischen Realität und Fiktion (Knopf).

Sokels und Uedings Interpretationen positionieren Brechts Moralkritik eng abgesteckt als bürgerliche Moralkritik und als Teil von Ideologiekritik. Knopfs Beobachtungen vom Oszillieren der Figurenhälften zwischen Realität und Fiktion lassen sich auf der Ebene einer breitgefä-

cherten Moralkritik fortführen, nämlich als fluider Bewegungsvorgang zwischen der „guten“ Shen Te als Realfigur und dem „bösen“ Shui Ta als Fiktionsfigur. Denn auch hier alternieren in Brechts Stück die situationsbedingt entstandenen „Hälften“ (130) Shen Te / Shui Ta zwischen zwei Positionen, ohne länger auf eine bestimmte Position fixierbar zu sein. Dieser pendelartige Bewegungsvorgang verhindert in Folge eine klare Grenzziehung zwischen „eindeutig gut“ und „eindeutig böse“, das Gegensatzpaar „gut-böse“ wird zeitweise im Stück aufgehoben. Ein Blick auf Brechts Arbeitsnotizen vom 20. 6. 1939 zur Figurenkonstellation Shen Te / Shui Ta scheint diese Deutungsweise zu bestärken, denn der Autor beabsichtigte keine Komplementärfiguren oder Figuren als Gegenpole, sondern ein „Ineinanderübergehen der beiden Figuren“ (Jeske 157). Die Zuschauer des Stückes sind von Anfang an in diese Doppelrollen-Konzeption eingeweiht, dürfen sich allerdings während des Spielverlaufs temporär der Illusion hingeben, dass Shen Te und Shui Ta als zwei widerstreitende Hälften das moralische Gegensatzpaar „gut“ und „böse“ verkörpern: Shen Te, die Gütige, Hilfsbereite, und Shui Ta, der Ausbeuter, der Skrupellose. Erst in der zehnten und letzten Szene werden die Zuschauer des Sezuan-Stückes wieder daran erinnert, dass Shen Te, wie sie erklärt, nicht nur der „gute Mensch“ sei, „von dem alle nur Gutes berichtet haben“, sondern auch als Shui Ta der „böse“, „von dem alle hier diese Untaten berichtet haben“ (132). Shui Tas Aussage, „Ich war ihr einziger Freund!“ (130), mag die Zuschauer in Hinblick auf Shen Tes Doppelrolle kurzfristig irritieren, doch Brechts Arbeitsnotizen machen auch hier erkennbar, dass er Shen Te als komplexeres Subjekt, als dialogisches Ich, in einer bestimmten historischen, ideologischen, und sozioökonomischen Zwangslage konzipieren wollte, das seine ethische Position in sich aushandeln bzw. mit sich selbst verhandeln muss: „Des Menschen einziger Freund: Er selbst. Die Doppelrolle“ (Knopf, *Brechts „Guter Mensch von Sezuan“* 102).

Am Ende des Stückes zeigt Shen Te als agierendes Subjekt Eigeninitiative, um ihre missliche Situation zumindest etwas zu verbessern. Sie handelt mit den Göttern am Ende des Stückes aus, dass sie einmal im Monat in die Rolle des Shui Ta schlüpfen darf. Aus normativ ethischer Sicht ist das ein fauler Kompromiss für beide Seiten des Deals: Indem sie sich auf eine Verhandlung einlassen, korrumpieren die Götter ihre eigenen idealisierten moralischen Maßstäbe. Shen Te hingegen kompromittiert das vorgegebene „Sollstreben“, „nur gut zu sein“ und unterläuft dadurch, zumindest zeitweise, die absoluten Moralkategorien „gut-bö-

se.“ Moralisches Handeln wird als verhandelbar präsentiert, und absolute ethische Normen erweisen sich als untauglich, weil sie der Mensch auch bei größtem Bemühen nicht erfüllen kann, denn „Gute Taten, das bedeutet Ruin!“

Durch das ganze Sezuan-Stück hindurch liefert Brecht, gleich einem dramaturgischen Ausschlussverfahren den Nachweis, dass das Repositorium an ethisch-moralischen Denkstrategien zu keinem Ausweg aus der Grundproblematik des Stückes führt. Wenn auch keine Lösungen angeboten werden, ist es dennoch aufschlussreich, wie sich etablierte ethisch normierte Maßstäbe auf die Handlungsorientierung der Figuren auswirken. Welche Illusionen, Ideale und Moralvorstellungen hinterfragt, evaluiert und devaluiert Brecht in Zusammenhang mit dem Gutsein? Welche Handlungsweisen der Figuren sind moralisch vorgeschrieben, erlaubt, erstrebenswert oder verboten, und mit welchen Konsequenzen sind sie verbunden?

Ausgehend von diesen Fragestellungen lassen sich weitere Rückschlüsse auf Brechts Experimentieren mit verschiedenen Moralkonzeptionen und auf seine Moralkritik in dem Sezuan-Stück ziehen, und zwar insbesondere in den Bereichen von Tugendlehre als Teil deontologischer Ethik verstanden, Mohismus, eudämonistischer und utilitaristischer Denkweisen.

Deontologie

Deontologische Ethikmodelle unterliegen breitgefächerten Definitionsansätzen, wobei sich viele der Ansätze überschneiden, indem sie deontologische Ethiktheorien als Gegensatz zu teleologischen Ethiktheorien begrifflich abgrenzen und/oder sie in die Tradition der Kantschen Pflichtethik stellen. Darüber hinaus herrscht eine Interpretationsvielfalt, die Gerald Gaus in seinen Studien analytisch beleuchtet und zu ordnen bemüht ist. Er benennt zehn vorherrschende Charakteristiken deontologischer Ethiken, die in einschlägiger Fachliteratur verwendet werden (189-190). Zwei dieser Merkmalkategorien sind für vorliegende Arbeit richtungweisend: Deontologie ist a) „eine Moraltheorie, die absolute Gebote oder Verbote enthält,“ und b) „eine ethische Theorie, die moralischen Regeln einen zentralen Platz zuweist.“ Diese beiden markanten Charakteristiken, Absolutheit und Zentralität der moralischen Gebote, Verbote, und Regeln

im Rahmen regelorientierter Deontologie (nach Gaus „*rule-based deontology*“ 182) fokussieren auf den moralischen Handlungsakt und weniger (oder gar nicht) auf die Konsequenzen einer moralischen Handlung.

Folgendes Beispiel soll verdeutlichen, wie Brecht im Sezuan-Stück die Schwächen des deontologischen Ethikmodells sichtbar macht, indem er sie anhand der Figur Shen Te als praxisuntauglich entlarvt. Bereits im Vorspiel des Stückes wird klar, dass die drei Götter innerhalb einer absoluten Regel- und Gebotsethik agieren und deren Einhaltung auch von den Menschen einfordern. Sie beziehen sich auf einen „Beschluss“, eine Art Verordnung höherer Instanz, der sie beauftragt, „genügend gute Menschen“ zu finden, „die ein menschwürdiges Dasein leben können“(12). Bestätigt wird der Auftrag in leicht veränderter Form durch den ersten Gott, der das Attribut „gut“ als moralische Kategorie mit „Geboten“ und der Einhaltung von Geboten in Verbindung bringt: „Wir müssen jetzt endlich Leute namhaft machen, die in der Lage sind unsere Gebote zu halten“ (12).

Was sind das für Gebote, auf die sich die Götter beziehen? Wie dem Text zu entnehmen ist, stellen sie Teil eines höheren „Beschlusses“ dar, den es zu befolgen gilt. Gefordert wird selbstloses moralisches Handeln nach höchsten Ansprüchen zumindest um seiner selbst willen. Die Auffassung der Götter spiegelt eine Art Gebots- und Regelethik wider, die eine deontologische Denkrichtung sichtbar macht. Die moralische Richtigkeit einer Handlung wird danach bemessen, ob sie den vorgegeben verpflichtenden Regeln gemäß ausgeführt werden kann. Die potenziellen Folgen dieser Handlung werden, wie in der deontologischen Ethik meist üblich, nicht reflektiert⁷.

Bis zum Schluss des Stückes halten die Götter „verbissen“ an diesem Konzept fest, obwohl sie mit ihrer Mission gescheitert sind. Die Götter müssen aufgrund ihrer schlechten Erfahrungen auf Erden einsehen, dass sich die Welt nach wie vor in einem erbärmlichen Zustand befindet. Einer der Götter klagt:

Unsere ganze Suche ist gescheitert. Wenige Gute fanden wir, und wenn wir welche fanden, lebten sie nicht menschenwürdig. . . . Was für eine Welt haben wir vorgefunden, Elend, Niedrigkeit und Abfall überall! . . . Gute Vorsätze bringen sie [die Menschen] an den Rand des Abgrunds, gute Taten stürzen sie hinab. (122)

Die Götter spekulieren, wer wohl schuld sei an dieser Misere, sind aber nicht wirklich an einer konstruktiven Antwort interessiert, wie sich am Ende

des Stückes herausstellt. So heißt es: „Sollen wir eingestehen, daß unsere Gebote tödlich sind? Sollen wir verzichten auf unsere Gebote? *Verbissen*. Niemals! Soll die Welt geändert werden? Wie? Von wem? Nein, es ist alles in Ordnung“ (132). Daraufhin verschwinden sie auf ihrer rosa Wolke.

Shen Te bemüht sich anfänglich, den moralischen Gebotsanforderungen der Götter gerecht zu werden. Sie beteuert den Göttern gegenüber gleich zweimal hintereinander, dass sie beabsichtige gut zu sein, und dass es ihr „Freude“ bereiten würde, die Gebote der Götter zu befolgen. Gleichzeitig erkennt sie aber, dass ihr das Gutsein keine finanzielle Lebensgrundlage bieten würde. Die von Selbstzweifeln geplagte Shen Te beklagt sich bei den Göttern, wie dieses für sie scheinbar unerreichbare Gutsein nach diesen von höherer autoritärer Instanz vorgegebenen Regeln in der Praxis der sozioökonomischen Realität aussieht. Sie formuliert ihr Dilemma, und somit das Grundproblem des Stückes, als Fragestellungen an die Götter:

Halt, Erleuchtete, ich bin gar nicht sicher, daß ich gut bin. Ich möchte es wohl sein, nur, wie soll ich meine Miete bezahlen?“ So will ich es euch denn gestehen: ich verkaufe mich, um leben zu können, aber selbst damit kann ich mich nicht durchbringen, da es so viele gibt, die dies tun müssen. Ich bin zu allem bereit, aber wer ist das nicht? Freilich würde ich glücklich sein, die Gebote halten zu können der Kindesliebe und der Wahrhaftigkeit. Nicht begehren meines Nächsten Haus, wäre mir eine Freude, und einem Mann anhängen in Treue, wäre mir angenehm. Auch ich möchte aus keinem meinen Nutzen ziehen und den Hilflosen nicht berauben. Aber wie soll ich dies alles? Selbst wenn ich einige Gebote nicht halte, kann ich kaum durchkommen. (17)

Entgegen den Auslegungen der deontologischen Ethik, sorgt sich Shen Te sehr wohl um die Folgen ihrer Handlungen, wenn auch hier nur als rhetorische Fragen formuliert. Sie ist motiviert, Gebote einzuhalten und deshalb Gutes zu tun, obwohl sie weiß oder zumindest erahnt, dass sie gerade aufgrund ihrer konsequent moralisch „guten“ Handlungen im eigenen finanziellen Ruin endet. Brecht lässt Shen Te als agierendes Subjekt in die Handlung eingreifen, um die Götter (und auch die Zuschauer) auf die paradoxe Situation der „Gutmenschen“ aufmerksam zu machen. Shen Tes Klage kann nicht nur als Anstoß zu einem Dialog mit den Göttern gewertet werden, sondern gleichzeitig als Anstoß zur Kritik einer regelorientierten Moraltheorie, die absolute Gebote enthält, deren Maßstäbe für den Einzelnen trotz bester Absichten und Bemühungen unerreichbar und damit wirkungslos und „moralisch wertlos“ sind.

Mohismus

Brecht legt sich in seinem Stück nicht fest, welche „moralischen Tugenden“ oder „moralische Maßstäbe“ genau gemeint sind. Shen Tes Vorsätze ähneln einigen Geboten des Alten Testaments, wie sie im Zweiten Buch Moses zu finden sind, wie zum Beispiel Nächstenliebe, Wahrhaftigkeit und Treue. Solche Gebote lassen sich aber auch mit Einschränkungen in den Lehren des chinesischen Philosophen Mê Ti (auch Mo Di oder Me Ti genannt)⁸, dem Begründer des Mohismus, finden. Brecht hat sich nachweislich zur Entstehungszeit *Des guten Menschen von Sezuan* intensiv mit dessen Lehren beschäftigt⁹. Am ergiebigsten für die Thematik dieser Arbeit sind zum einen Mê Tis Auslegungen einer pazifistischen Sozialethik, die utilitaristisch auf das Wohlergehen des Volkes ausgerichtet ist. Tugenden, wie zum Beispiel die Nächstenliebe, sollen eingehalten werden, aber nicht um ihrer selbst willen, sondern zum Nutzen aller. Zum anderen lehnt Mê Ti in seiner Sittenlehre, die er als Teil einer Staatslehre betrachtet, das Konzept von einem unabwendbaren „Schicksal“ ab und sucht die Ursachen für die gesellschaftlichen Missstände, wie Armut und Krieg, bei den Herrschenden (Forke 51)¹⁰. Diese zwei Denkrichtungen, der Blick auf die Konsequenzen der sittlichen Handlungen, d. h. auf den gesellschaftlichen Nutzen, sowie der Glaube an die Veränderbarkeit der Gesellschaft, finden sich auch in Brechts intellektuellen Auseinandersetzungen mit dieser chinesischen Philosophie in dem posthum veröffentlichten *Me-ti. Buch der Wendungen*, wobei er beide Komponenten überprüft, ob sie für eine sozioökonomische Umsetzung tauglich sind. Folgender Textauszug aus dem Abschnitt „Verurteilung der Ethiken“ verdeutlicht Brechts Kritik an den alten „Tugenden“, das heißt Moralvorstellungen, wie sie jahrhundertlang als starre Kategorien von den Lehrenden fernab der sozioökonomischen Realität propagiert und von dem „Arbeitervolk“ blind befolgt wurden. „Gutsein“ im Kontext des Sezuan-Stückes ließe sich ohne weiteres in die Aufzählung von Tugenden am Ende dieses Auszuges einreihen oder eventuell dem Begriff „Opferbereitschaft“ unterordnen:

Die alten Sittenlehrer bestehen darauf, daß nur die Tugenden zählen sollen, die um ihrer selbst willen betätigt werden. Kameh¹¹ warnt die Arbeiter vor solchen Tugenden und rät ihnen, nur Tugenden zu betätigen, die ihnen Nutzen bringen. Bei gewissen Übelständen erhebt sich der Ruf nach gewissen Tugenden. Werden die Tugenden nicht an die Besiegung der Übelstände geknüpft und bleiben sie allzu lange übrig, nachdem die Übelstände beseitigt sind, so werden sie oft die Quellen

neuer Übelstände. Das hat man bei der Tapferkeit, Ausdauer, Wahrheitsliebe und Opferbereitschaft oft erlebt. (65)

Die Werturteile „gut“ und „schlecht“ werden hier umgewertet und mit den Attributen „nützlich“ und „nutzlos“ ausgestattet. Jede Tugend, die nicht nutzbringend gegen gesellschaftliche Missstände und zum Wohle aller eingesetzt werden kann, ist nutzlos.

An anderer Stelle im *Buch der Wendungen* bleibt es nicht bei einer Umwertung der Moralkategorie „gut“, sondern wird radikal in Frage gestellt. Me-ti zitiert das Gedicht des Dichters Kin mit dem Titel „Verhör des Guten“, in dem die Tugenden „eines guten Mannes“ von einer unbekanntem Gerichtsbarkeit in der ersten Hälfte zwar anerkannt, aber gleichzeitig nach ihrem Nutzen und ihrer Herkunft hinterfragt werden. Dem Mann werden Tugenden wie „nicht käuflich, ehrlich, tapfer, weise, gut“ zugeschrieben, dennoch wird er als „Feind“ zum Tode verurteilt. In der zweiten Hälfte konfrontiert Brecht die Leser durch den bedeutungsrelativierenden Einsatz des Moralbegriffs „gut“ mit einer paradoxen Situation:

So höre: Wir wissen
Du bist unser Feind. Deshalb wollen wir dich
Jetzt an die Wand stellen. Aber in Anbetracht deiner Verdienste
Und guten Eigenschaften
An eine gute Wand und dich erschießen mit
Guten Kugeln guter Gewehre und dich begraben mit
Einer guten Schaufel in guter Erde. (50)

Brecht macht in diesem zynischen Gedicht über den „guten Mann“ klar, dass „gut“ keine absolute normative Wertekategorie darstellen kann, weder zum Wohle aller („in Anbetracht deiner Verdienste“) wie im Mohismus gefordert, noch zum Eigenwohl (in Anbetracht deiner „guten Eigenschaften“). Wie im Sezuan-Stück reduziert Brecht „gut“ als Moralkategorie zu einer verbalen Floskel und enttarnt damit etablierte Moralvorstellungen als „untauglich“, denn sie erweisen sich je nach Situation (historisch, politisch, ökonomisch, etc.) und Nutzbringung veränderbar¹². Diese Wertrelativierung des ethischen Begriffs „gut“ und die damit einhergehende Aushöhlung bzw. Destabilisierung ethischer Modelle in Brechts frühen Aufzeichnungen im *Buch der Wendungen* wiederholen sich und bestärken die Auffassung von Brechts breitgefächerter Moralkritik, die im Sezuan-Stück deutlich zum Ausdruck kommt¹³.

Utilitarismus

Der an dieser Stelle selektive, an bestimmte Umstände gebundene Nutzen der Tugenden (als Sozialethik wie im Mohismus oder um ihrer selbst willen als gebotsorientierte Deontologie) wird im Sezuan-Stück sozioökonomisch radikal zu Ende gedacht. So etwa muss der Wasserverkäufer Wang erkennen, dass der Nützlichste in der profitorientierten Gesellschaft von anderen am meisten ausgebeutet wird. Sein Fazit: „Gutsein“ im Sinne von „Nützlichsein“ lohnt sich nicht.

Folglich wird auch die Hoffnung von Suns Mutter zerstört, dass sich ihr Sohn durch die Anstellung in der Tabakfabrik von einem „verkommenen“ zu einem „nützlichen“ Menschen entwickelt (104). Brechts Verwendung des Begriffs „nützlich“ wird in diesem Kontext nicht näher erläutert und kann nur spekulativ betrachtet werden. Vielleicht spielt der Autor hier auf eine normative Ethiktheorie des Utilitarismus wie etwa jene des Philosophen und Ökonomen John Stuart Mill an, die sich an den Konsequenzen, das heißt auch „Nutzen“, einer spezifischen Handlung orientiert. In seinem bekannten Essay *Utilitarianism* (1861) fordert Mill, dass diejenige Handlung moralisch vorzuziehen sei, die unter allen Handlungsalternativen den größten Gesamtnutzen und gleichermaßen das größte Glück für alle Beteiligten mit sich bringt (31-32)¹⁴. In diesem Zusammenhang weist Otfried Höffe in der Einleitung zu seiner Sammlung mit Texten zur utilitaristischen Ethik darauf hin, dass nicht der Nutzen für beliebige Ziele, Werte oder Zwecke entscheidend ist, sondern der Nutzen für das, was an sich „gut“ ist. Was „gut“ ist könne philosophisch ethisch allerdings beliebig definiert werden. Bei Mill zum Beispiel gelte „[a]ls höchster Wert . . . die Erfüllung menschlicher Bedürfnisse und Interessen: das menschliche Glück; Ziel ist die maximale Bedürfnis- und Interessenbefriedigung beziehungsweise minimale Frustration“ (10-11). Alle Formen des Utilitarismus haben aber gemein, dass sie nicht die moralische Handlung an sich bewerten, sondern die Folgen der Handlungen. Demnach wird Utilitarismus oftmals als eine konsequentialistische Ethik betrachtet.

In Brechts Stück zielen Suns Handlungen jedoch nicht auf den größtmöglichen gesellschaftlichen „Nutzen“, definiert als „Glück“, sondern nur auf „Eigennutz“ ab. Suns Taten belegen, dass er vom Anfang bis zum Ende des Stückes egozentrisch, profit- und machtgerig bleibt. Der Nutzen des Individuums steht vor dem Nutzen für die Allgemeinheit. Auch den anderen Figuren in Brechts Stück (allen voran Shen Te in ihrer Doppelrolle)

gelingt es nicht, in Mills utilitaristischem Sinne „nützlich“ respektive „gut“ zu sein. Bedingt durch das profitorientierte, ausbeuterische System münden ihre Handlungen zwangsläufig auch hier wieder im unversöhnlichen Widerstreit von sozioökonomischen und ethischen Werten.

Eudämonismus

Gegenstand der eudämonischen Ethik ist nicht nur das „richtige“ Handeln und die moralischen Werte, die durch „richtiges“ Handeln verwirklicht werden. Es geht auch um den Wert der Motive, die dem richtigen Handeln zugrunde liegen. Shen Te ist nicht nur aus Gründen der Pflichterfüllung „gut“, d.h. durch die Befolgung der vorgegebenen sittlichen Gebote. Ihre Motivierung zum Gutsein erhält einen weiteren Anreiz durch ihr Streben nach Glück. Glücklichein verstanden als Konsequenz eines selbstlosen moralischen Handelns, einer Art Eudämonismus, also das Streben nach Glückseligkeit als höchstes Gut. Was der geeignete Weg zur Erlangung des „Glücklicheins“ sein soll und auch was „Glücklichein“ bedeutet, wird seit der griechischen Antike unterschiedlich definiert.

Für Shen Te ist „Glücklichein“ verbunden mit guten Taten, die ein persönliches emotionales Wohlbefinden bewirken. Das Gute hat demnach eine Art Gratifikationswert für Shen Te, wenn sie von dem belohnenden Wohlgefühl als Resultat des Gutseins schwärmt: „Ach welche Verführung, zu schenken! Wie angenehm ist es doch, freundlich zu sein! Ein gutes Wort entschlüpft wie ein wohliger Seufzer“ (95). An anderer Stelle heißt es: „[D]ie Götter haben auch gewollt, daß ich zu mir gut bin. Keinen verderben zu lassen, auch nicht sich selber. Jeden mit Glück erfüllen, auch sich, das ist gut“ (76). Gleichzeitig wundert sich Shen Te, warum manche Menschen (wie zum Beispiel die Figur der Witwe Shin) böse sind, und fragt sich, ob es nicht „anstrengend“ sei, die „Mitmenschen zu treten“ (95).

Im Laufe des Stückes gibt Shen Te ihr Bestes, um gut zu sein, scheitert aber daran, dass die moralischen Anforderungen der Götter zu hochgesteckt sind. Das „Gute“ in diesem Kontext präsentiert sich als sittlicher Wert, der auf dem ersten Blick absolut und unumstößlich erscheint. Bei näherer Betrachtung zeigt sich jedoch, dass die Wertigkeit von „Gutsein“ sehr wohl zum Verhandlungsgegenstand gemacht werden kann. So versucht der Wasserverkäufer Wang bei den Göttern für seine Freundin Shen Te, „[e]ine kleine Herabminderung der Vorschriften“

(102) zu erwirken. Er fleht sie an: „Erleuchtete. Eine kleine Erleichterung des Ballens der Vorschriften, Gütige, in Anbetracht der schlechten Zeiten“ (102). Die Götter bleiben hart, aber nicht aufgrund hoher moralischer Ansprüche. Da für sie eine Herabminderung der moralischen Werte lediglich „mehr Arbeit“ (103) wäre, halten sie beharrlich an ihren Geboten und Maßstäben sowie an ihrem scheinheiligen Optimismus fest. Shen Te bleibt ihr Vorzeigemenschen, ihr auserwähltes Vorbild der menschlichen Güte, wodurch sie ihr auch indirekt die Last aufbürden, Retterin der traditionellen moralischen Tugenden zu sein, wie das Zwischenspiel „Wangs Nachtlager“ in dem Stück verdeutlicht.

Im Traum sieht der Wasserverkäufer Wang Shen Te am Flussufer, „an der Stelle, wo die Selbstmörder gefunden werden. Sie schwankte merkwürdig daher und hielt den Nacken gebeugt, als schleppe sie an etwas Weichem, aber Schwerem, das sie hinunterdrückte in den Schlamm.“ Sie erklärt Wang, dass sie „den Ballen der Vorschriften ans andere Ufer“ schleppen müsse, „daß er nicht naß würde, da sonst die Schriftzeichen verwischen“ (102). Das Ironische daran ist, dass Wang keinen Ballen auf ihren Schultern sieht. Was bedeutet diese Szene? Man könnte sie so deuten, dass die traditionellen ethischen Werte, „die großen Tugenden“, wie es im Stück heißt, nur eine Illusion sind, oder zumindest kein Gewicht mehr haben und mit dem Leben in der gegenwärtigen sozialen Realität unvereinbar sind. Doch Menschen wie Shen Te halten noch eisern daran fest, wollen sich die Illusion vom Wert oder Nutzen der sittlichen Tugenden bewahren, obwohl die sozioökonomischen Verhältnisse sie daran hindern, nach diesen moralischen Werten zu handeln und zu leben. Shen Te muss also zwangsläufig an ihrer Aufgabe als Retterin der großen Tugenden scheitern. Die großen Tugenden selbst gelten als gescheitert¹⁵.

Akzeptiert man diese Interpretationsvariante von der Nichtigkeitserklärung der großen Tugenden, könnte man weiter spekulieren, dass Brechts Stück den Zeitgeist der frühen Moderne reflektiert, da es die traditionellen ethischen Lehren in Anlehnung an Nietzsches Gedanken zur Moral für hinfällig erklärt. Nietzsche mokiert sich in seiner Schrift *Jenseits von Gut und Böse* (1886) über die „Lockweisen alter metaphysischer Vogelfänger“ (122) und damit über jene Philosophen, die unter anderem eudämonistische Lehren der Ethik vertraten: „Ob Hedonismus, ob Pessimismus, ob Utilitarismus, ob Eudämonismus: alle diese Denkweisen, . . . sind Vordergrund-Denkweisen und Naivitäten, auf welche ein jeder, der sich *gestaltender* Kräfte und eines Künstler-Gewissens bewußt ist, nicht ohne Spott, auch nicht ohne Mitleid herabblicken wird“ (122). Gehört

„das Gute“ auch zu Nietzsches „Lügenputz“ wie „Liebe zur Wahrheit, Redlichkeit, Aufopferung für Erkenntnis“ (122)? Geht Brecht in seiner Kritik der Moral in dem Theaterstück so weit wie Nietzsche in seiner Kritik der Moral, die vor allem die Grenzen der herrschenden Werte sprengen will? Indirekt ja, so ließe sich argumentieren, denn Brecht koppelt das Gutsein in seinem Stück an die wirtschaftliche Realität und plädiert für eine Veränderung der widrigen Verhältnisse, damit in Folge Gutsein wieder möglich sei. Brecht verurteilt auf diese Art eine von sozioökonomischen Verhältnissen entfremdete Moralvorstellung. Die göttlichen Gebote, die „großen Tugenden“ erweisen sich als unrealistisch und die Götter selbst als weltfremd.

„Wie kann ich gut sein, wenn alles so teuer ist“, fragt Shen Te die Götter und lenkt deren Blick nicht nur auf ihre finanziellen Schwierigkeiten, sondern auf die Verbindung von Moralität und wirtschaftlichen Bedingungen. Die Götter übergehen nonchalant Shen Tes Frage und entziehen sich so der Verantwortung, ihr bei der Problemlösung behilflich zu sein. In dem „Lied von der Wehrlosigkeit der Götter und Guten“ fragt sich Shen Te, warum denn die Götter nicht in das Weltgeschehen eingreifen, um den Guten zu helfen. Sie müssten sich doch für die Guten einsetzen und deren gesellschaftlichen Zustände ändern, wenn nötig auch mittels eines gewaltsamen revolutionären Umbruchs:

Warum sagen die Götter nicht laut in den obern Regionen
Daß sie den Guten nun einmal die gute Welt schulden?
Warum stehen sie den Guten nicht bei mit Tanks und Kanonen
Und befehlen: Gebt Feuer! Und dulden kein Dulden? (61)

Shen Tes verbitterte Anklage, eine Art von Theodizee, bleibt allerdings unbeantwortet im Raum stehen. Die Götter intervenieren nicht, sondern ergreifen fluchtartig das Weite. Die „Guten“ bleiben machtlos und wehrlos sich selbst überlassen. Sie scheitern an den Zwängen zerstörerischer Mechanismen in einer profitorientierten Welt und müssten eigentlich erkennen: Der Glaube an das Gute erweist sich als reine Illusion.

In seinem Gedicht mit dem Titel „Was nützt die Güte“ aus dem Jahre 1935 geht Brecht sogar noch einen Schritt weiter. Dort wird der gesellschaftliche Idealzustand herbeigesehnt, der den Begriff „gut“ an sich und den Ruf nach moralischen Kategorien schlichtweg überflüssig machen würde, wie ein Auszug aus dem Gedicht illustriert:

Was nützt die Güte
Wenn die Gütigen sogleich erschlagen werden, oder es werden erschlagen
Die, zu denen sie gütig sind?

Anstatt nur gütig zu sein, bemüht euch
Einen Zustand zu schaffen, der die Güte ermöglicht, und besser:
Sie überflüssig macht! (Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke* 553)

Der Appell in dem Gedicht ist klar: Es gilt, jene gesellschaftlichen Machtstrukturen, die das moralische Verhalten des Einzelnen korrumpieren, zu verändern. Weniger klar ist, wie der Zustand, der „Güte ermöglicht“ aussehen und wie er herbeigeführt werden soll. Das heißt, das Grunddilemma bleibt bestehen und dessen Lösungssuche wird, wie am Ende des Sezuan-Stücks, auf den Leser bzw. das Publikum des Stückes übertragen. Man denke an Brechts insistierende Formulierung der beiden Schlusszeilen des Epilogs: „Verehrtes Publikum, los, such dir selbst den Schluß! / Es muß ein guter da sein, muß, muß, muß!“ (135).

Die Moralkritik wird im Epilog nicht weitergeführt, sondern Moral wird lediglich als überlieferte Illusion mit Wahrheitsanspruch bedauert: „Vorschwebte uns: die goldene Legende“ (134)¹⁶, heißt es, in Anspielung auf die gescheiterte Suche nach der bestmöglichen Lösung, die das Gutsein mit menschenwürdigem Dasein in sozioökonomisch, politisch/ideologisch, und ethisch in Einklang bringen kann. Man könnte aber auch Brechts Epilog als Ausdruck „eingreifenden Denkens“ verstehen, das über die Funktion Kontemplation und Erkenntnis hinausgeht. Marc Silbermann weist darauf hin, dass dieser Begriff wiederholt in Brechts Werken auftaucht, und dass besonders Brechts politische Werke, die während der Exilzeit (1933-1948) und die Zeit nach seiner Rückkehr nach Ostdeutschland (1949-1956) entstanden waren, von Brechts Konzept des „eingreifenden Denkens,“ nach dem man die Welt verändern müsse, geprägt sind (15). Silbermann lenkt in seiner Diskussion den Blick auf Brechts Utopismus, denn dies sei „doch der Ort, an dem die Fähigkeit, sich fundamentale Veränderungen vorzustellen, ihre Lücken, systembedingte Beschränkungen und Unzulänglichkeiten offenbart“ (16)¹⁷. Ob der Epilog des Sezuan-Stücks tatsächlich ein Ort der Utopie ist, wenn auch Brechts „problematischster“ Ort, wie Silbermann einschränkend bemerkt, müsste separat und unter Einbezug anderer Kontexte untersucht werden. Im Rahmen dieser Arbeit kann der Epilog jedoch durchaus als Ort für „eingreifendes Denken“, das heißt, als Aufruf an die Vorstellungskraft des Publikums gelten: sich etwas vorstellen, was noch

nicht ist. Das könnten sein: gesellschaftliche, wirtschaftliche und ideologische Veränderungen, Modifizierung oder Erneuerungen von Einstellungen und Verhaltensdispositionen, aber auch ethische Neuorientierungen jenseits tradierter hohler Moralkategorien.

Diese Arbeit eröffnet nicht nur eine neue Deutungsvariante für den Epilog im Sezuan-Stück, sie erweitert auch die Betrachtungsweisen der Brechtschen Moralkritik in diesem Werk: 1) Brechts Moralkritik zielt auf normative Ethikmodelle und ihre unterschiedlichen Auslegungen der Moralkategorie „gut“ in Bereichen der Deontologie, Mohismus, Eudämonismus, und Utilitarismus, ab. 2) Mittels literarische Destabilisierungs- und Entwertungsstrategien wird „moralisch gutes Handeln“ auf individueller und gesellschaftlicher Ebene im Stück sichtbar gemacht, hinterfragt, abgewertet und entwertet. Eindeutige Zuschreibungen und Zuordnungen von „gut“ und „böse“ erweisen sich als nicht länger haltbar, sie können relativiert oder negiert werden. Der Zerfall der überlieferten Moralkonzeptionen und ihre Entlarvung als naive Illusion zeigen sich besonders dann, wenn die kapitalistischen sozio-ökonomischen Lebensrealitäten der literarischen Figuren mit der Moralkategorie „gut“ in Verbindung treten. 3) In Anlehnung an Nietzsche Gedankenkonstrukte von der Umkehrung der moralischen Werte stellt Brecht die Werte „gut“ und „böse“ in Frage oder hebt sie ganz auf, wie etwa im „Lied vom St. Nimmerleinstag“: Die Illusion von einer „idealen“ Gesellschaft, in der „der Arme zum König wird“, „wo Verdienst und Verdienen noch Werte sind“, und „wo der Mensch nur gut ist“ (86), wird in diesem Lied zerstört. Die von Sun besungenen und erhofften gesellschaftlichen Veränderungen treten erst am „St. Nimmerleinstag“, – also nie – ein. Auch der Hoffnung auf eine marxistisch revolutionäre Umwälzung der Gesellschaft wird damit ein Riegel vorgeschoben. 4) Jede im Stück vorgeführte moralisch gute Handlung und auch jede Absicht, gut zu handeln, wirken sich negativ auf die sozioökonomische und auch psychologische Situation des handelnden Subjekts aus. Shen Te, die Hauptfigur, ist am stärksten davon betroffen und fühlt sich allein gelassen im Sog einer wirtschaftlichen und moralischen Verelendung. 5) Brechts Moralkritik eröffnet neue Interpretationsvarianten für die Figur Shen Te. Sie wird nicht als ideologisch erstarrte Figur präsentiert, sondern als ein im Ansatz modernes Subjekt (mit Wünschen, Sorgen, Bedürfnissen und Forderungen), das die Konsequenzen seines Handelns nicht abschätzen kann. Shen Te stürzt dadurch in moralische Krisen und Konflikte, die sie als dialogisches Subjekt (in ihrer scheinbaren Doppelrolle

als ineinanderfließendes Gegensatzpaar Shen Te / Shui Ta konzipiert) mit sich selbst, wenn auch psychologisch nur oberflächlich, auszuhandeln versucht. Zudem tritt sie als agierendes Subjekt auf, das seine existentiell bedrohte Lage erkennt und verbessern will, indem es die Absolutheit und Zentralität moralischer Gebote hinterfragt und deren Wertigkeit zum Teil erfolgreich neu verhandelt.

Brecht führt durch seine konsequente Moralkritik die normative ethische Logik des Gutseins auf literarischer Ebene ad absurdum. Darüber können auch nicht der „offene“ Schluss als Epilog und der parabolische Charakter des Sezuan-Stückes hinwegtäuschen. So bleibt auch dem heutigen Theaterpublikum nichts anders übrig, als weiterhin – ganz im Brechtschen Sinne – selbst über den unversöhnlichen Widerspruch zwischen sittlichen und ökonomischen Werten zu grübeln, und ob es möglich ist, „gut zu sein und doch zu leben,“ und „wofür es sich zu kämpfen lohnt in einer Welt, in der „Gutmensch“ ein Schimpfwort ist, und welche Werte die Menschen bereit sind über Bord zu werfen, wenn es darum geht, den materiellen Wohlstand zu sichern, und ob „gut sein“ in einer marktorientierten Gesellschaft wirklich zwingend scheitern muss. Aktuelle Inszenierungen von Brechts Theaterstück *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* werden die Zuschauer auch in Zukunft mit wirkungsvollen Abbildern ihrer eigenen paradoxen, sozioökonomischen Lebensrealitäten zum Nachdenken über ethische Neuorientierungen herausfordern.



- 1 In seinen theoretischen Reflexionen über die gesellschaftliche Rolle des zeitgenössischen Theaters fordert Bertolt Brecht das Engagement des Theaters in der Wirklichkeit, denn nur so könnten und dürften wirkungsvolle Abbilder der Realität hergestellt werden. Brechts Plädoyer für den nachhaltigen Gegenwartsbezug des Theaters ist Teil seiner programmatischen Schrift „Kleines Organon für das Theater“ (1948).
- 2 Auszüge aus den Online-Theaterspielplänen, die Brechts Stück „Der gute Mensch von Sezuan“ ankündigen: Theater Konstanz (2017); Theater Bremen (2017); Theater Heidelberg (2018/19); Theater Bern (2016); Volkstheater Wien (2020). Letzter Zugriff am 3. 9. 2022.
- 3 Alle Zitate aus Brechts Stück *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* entstammen der Suhrkamp Ausgabe (2003), die sich wiederum auf Brecht, Bertolt. *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. 6 (1989) bezieht.
- 4 Gegenwartsphilosoph Markus Gabriel vermerkt in seinem Interview im Jahr 2020 über Moral heute, dass Brecht sich getäuscht habe mit dem Satz, „Erst kommt das Fressen und dann die Moral“, und dass Brecht in Hinblick auf seine marxistische Denkweise „ein fundamental falsches Menschenbild“ habe. Der Marxismus sei laut Gabriel „genauso ein Ausbeutungssystem [. . .] wie der extreme, entfesselte Kapitalismus zum Beispiel US-amerikanischer Prägung.“ Gabriel setzt auf das Praktizieren moralischer Einsicht im Alltag und auf die tiefe Verankerung von Ethikunterricht im Bildungswesen, damit alle „Zugriff haben auf ethisch reflektiertes Nachdenken über die Grundlagen unseres Handelns.“ Wie die neuere Brechtforschung und auch vorliegende Arbeit zeigen, gehen Brechts tiefgreifende Auseinandersetzungen mit Moral weit über Reduktionen auf marxistische Denkweisen hinaus. Das Sezuan-Stück veranschaulicht besonders deutlich, wie Brecht zum Nachdenken über individuelle moralische Entscheidungen in komplexen soziopolitischen und ökonomischen Zusammenhängen auffordert.
- 5 Beispielsweise Sokel, Ueding, Kirchmeier. In seinem Aufsatz über die Relevanz von Brecht im 21. Jahrhundert räumt Jan Knopf mit den „Irrwegen“ (Knopf) auf, die seiner Meinung nach die Brechtinterpretation über Jahrzehnte nachhaltig beeinflusst haben, unter anderem auch, die einseitig marxistischen Lesarten.
- 6 Giese befasst sich in seinem Aufsatz vorwiegend mit den komischen Elementen in Brechts Sezuan-Stück.

- 7 ›Deontologische‹ Theorien normativer Ethik werden im *Handbuch Ethik* demnach in der Regel ›teleologischen‹ Theorien und/oder ›konsequentialistischen‹ Theorien gegenübergestellt.
- 8 In dieser Arbeit wird in Anlehnung an Alfred Forkes Übersetzung, Mè Ti als Bezeichnung für den chinesischen Philosophen verwendet, und „Me-ti“ für Brechts philosophisch-literarische Figur in *Me-ti. Buch der Wendungen*.
- 9 Brecht, *Me-ti. Buch der Wendungen*, Anmerkungen, keine Seitenangabe. Hanns Eisler verweist auf Brechts Beeinflussung durch die chinesische Philosophie in den Jahren 1929-30. Als Arbeitsgrundlage diente wahrscheinlich wie damals üblich die Übersetzung des Werkes von Mo Di aus dem Jahr 1922 von Alfred Forke. Brecht hatte unter dem Stichwort Me-ti seit 1934 Texte gesammelt für sein „Büchlein mit Verhaltenslehren.“ In seinem Arbeitsbuch ist der Titel „Buch der Wendungen“ zum ersten Mal 1939 erwähnt.
- 10 In Forkes Übersetzung heißt es: „Die Sittenlehre ist für Mè Ti ein Teil der Staatslehre. Er gründet sie nicht auf ein unwandelbares Sittengesetz, einen kategorischen Imperativ, sondern utilitarisch auf Nützlichkeits- und Zweckmäßigkeitserwägungen und fragt daher stets nach den Wirkungen der sittlichen Vorschriften auf die menschliche Gesellschaft und das Staatsleben.“
- 11 Nach Brechts eigenen Angaben ist „Kameh“ in diesem Buch der Codename für Karl Marx.
- 12 Wessendorf argumentiert ähnlich, legt aber den Schwerpunkt auf Brechts materialistische Ethik: „*Moral values, for Brecht, emerge in specific social formations under specific historical and economic conditions and reflect the attitudes as well as interests that are necessary to sustain those specific formations and conditions. Like social formations, moral values are subject to historical change*“ (134).
- 13 Einen kritischen Gesamtüberblick über die Beschäftigung Brechts mit chinesischer und japanischer Philosophie und Literatur (u.a. Themen und Formen des Theaters sowie Schauspielkunst) bietet Anthony Tatlows umfassende Studie *The Mask of Evil*.
- 14 Mills detaillierte Ausführungen zu dieser These finden sich in Kapitel II „What Utilitarianism is.“
- 15 Ähnlich interpretiert Zheng Jie diese Situation im Sezuan-Stück, formuliert aber Brechts Moralkritik als Frage nach einem tragfähigen Fundament für die moralischen Maßstäbe (124).
- 16 Brecht spielt hier wahrscheinlich auf die mittelalterliche Legendensammlung *legenda aurea* des Dominikaners Jacobus de Voragine an.
- 17 Silbermann argumentiert in Anlehnung an Friedrich Dieckmanns Aufsatz „Brechts Utopia. Exkurs über das Saturnische.“ In: *Dieckmann, Friedrich. Hilfsmittel wider die alternde Zeit*, 1990, 135-177.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Brecht, Bertolt. *Schriften zum Theater*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1957.
- . *Gesammelte Werke. Gedichte*, Bd. 9, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1968.
- . *Me-ti: Buch der Wendungen. Fragment (Prosa)*, Bd. 5, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.
- . *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Mit einem Kommentar von Wolfgang Jeske*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003.
- Brecht-Handbuch. Stücke*. Hrsg. v. Jan Knopf, Bd. 1, Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2001.
- Briefe an Bertolt Brecht im Exil (1933-1949)*. Hrsg. v. Hermann Haarmann und Christoph Hesse. Boston: De Gruyter, 2014.
- Düwell, Marcus, et. al. „Einleitung.“ In *Handbuch Ethik*. Stuttgart und Weimar: J. B. Metzler, 2006. 1-23.
- Forke, Alfred. *Mê Ti, des Sozialethikers und seiner Schüler philosophische Werke*. Berlin: Kommissionsverlag der Vereinigung wissenschaftlicher Verleger, 1922. Online. U of Wisconsin: <<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89017655606&view=1up&seq=7>>. Letzter Zugriff am 22. Nov. 2022.
- „Philosoph Markus Gabriel über Moral heute – ‚Das Böse nimmt spürbar zu‘.“ Interview mit Markus Gabriel von Liane von Billerbeck. 4. 8. 2020. *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*: <<https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/philosoph-markus-gabriel-ueber-moral-heute-das-boese-nimmt-100.html>>. Letzter Zugriff am 19. 11. 2022.
- Gaus, Gerald F. “What is Deontology? Part Two: Reasons to Act.” *Journal of Value Inquiry* 35.2 (2001): 179-193.
- Giese, Peter Christian. “‘Der gute Mensch von Sezuan.’ Aspekte einer Brechtschen Komödie.“ *Bertolt Brecht: Der gute Mensch von Sezuan*. Hrsg. v. Jan Knopf. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982. 221-34.
- Handbuch Ethik*. Hrsg. v. Marcus Düwell, Christoph Hübenthal, Micha H. Werner, Stuttgart und Weimar, J.B. Metzler, 2006.
- Hecht, Werner. Hrsg. *Materialien zu Brechts ‘Der gute Mensch von Sezuan’*. Suhrkamp, 1968.
- Höffe, Otfried. Hrsg. *Einführung in die utilitaristische Ethik. Klassische und zeitgenössische Texte*. Tübingen: A. Francke, 2008.
- Jeske, Wolfgang. *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Bertolt Brecht. Text und Kommentar*. Stuttgart: Suhrkamp, 2003. 153-214.

- Kirchmeier, Christian. „‘. . . All Questions Remain Open’: On the Epilogue of The Good Person of Szechwan and Bertolt Brecht’s Poetics of Interpretation.” *The Brecht Yearbook* 44. Ed. Markus Wessendorf (2019): 84-100.
- Knopf, Jan. Hrsg. *Brechts „Guter Mensch von Sezuan“*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982.
- . *Bertolt Brecht: Der gute Mensch von Sezuan. Grundlagen und Gedanken zum Verständnis des Dramas*. Frankfurt am Main: Diesterweg, 1982.
- . „Brecht im 21. Jahrhundert.“ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 23-24 (2006): 6-12.
- McCullough, Christopher. „The Good Person of Szechwan.” *The Cambridge Companion to Brecht*. Hrsg. v. Peter Thomson und Glendyr Sacks, 2nd ed., Cambridge UP, 2007. 118-131.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. ProQuest E-book. The Floating Press, 2009.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft*. München: Goldmann, 1983.
- Silberman, Marc. „Die Tradition des politischen Theaters in Deutschland.“ *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 23-24 (2006): 13-22.
- Sokel, Walter H. „Brecht’s Split Characters and His Sense of the Tragic.” *Brecht. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Hrsg. v. Peter Demetz. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1982. 127-37.
- Tatlow, Anthony. *The Mask of Evil: Brecht’s Response to the Poetry, Theatre and Thought of China and Japan. A Comparative and Critical Evaluation*. European University Papers, Series XVIII, Vol. 12. Bern, Frankfurt und Las Vegas: Peter Lang, 1977.
- Ueding, Gert. „Der gute Mensch von Sezuan.“ *Brechts Dramen. Neue Interpretationen*. Hrsg. v. Walter Hinderer, Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984. 178-93.
- Wessendorf, Markus. „Brecht’s Materialist Ethics between Confucianism and Mohism.“ *Philosophy East & West* 66.1 (2016): 122-145.
- Zheng, Jie. „Brechts Guter Mensch und die traditionelle humanistische chinesische Philosophie: Annäherung an ein ethisches Subjekt.“ *Brecht Jahrbuch* 36 (2011): 115-133.

Dystopias of Family Planning in the Novels *Corpus Delicti* (2009) by Juli Zeh and *Das weiße Schloss* (2018) by Christian Dittloff

Waltraud Maierhofer

University of Iowa, Iowa City (USA)

Introduction

Dystopian literature has often explored reproduction as a means of control exercised by societies over their subjects and mainly over women and their reproductive choices. Prominent examples of international science fiction include *Brave New World* (1932) by Aldous Huxley and *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and sequel *The Testaments* (2019) by the Canadian Margaret Atwood.¹ My contribution examines two recent German dystopian novels. Both take a careful, even warning stance with regard to possibilities offered by recent discoveries and developments in reproductive medicine and genetics. While Juli Zeh already has a reputation for addressing highly topical questions in her fiction, a new model of motherhood may be a surprising choice for the first work of a male author like Christian Dittloff (born 1983). Juli Zeh in *Corpus Delicti* imagines a society that strictly controls who may reproduce by matching couples based on genetic compatibility, thus ensuring optimal health of the next generation. In Christian Dittloff's *Das weiße Schloss*, couples select the ideal birth and surrogate mother in order to optimize their own life experiences and careers as well as the prospects of their child. The article examines how both novels feature extrapolations of issues seen in today's societies in Germany and other high-income countries, namely the consequences of hormonal contraceptives on mate selection, attempts to control the genetics of one's child, and pregnancy by surrogate carrier in cases of infertility or for other reasons.²

Juli Zeh (born 1974)³ is a celebrated, politically engaged writer in Germany with growing international reputation. She holds a doctorate in international law and is a former judge. Her novel, *Corpus Delicti: Ein Prozess* (2009; *The Method*, 2012) provokes highly topical questions with a captivating story written in a style that is skillful and yet very accessible. The novel takes place in a futuristic society that is run by “THE METHOD” (always capitalized). Hygiene and avoidance of health risks are the most important values of (German) society at the time, around the middle of the 21st century. The government requires its citizens to submit medical data and sleep records in addition to exercise schedules on a regular basis (*M* 44). Since health is the dominant concern of society, the government has strict restrictions on which types of couples can have children. Two people who have non-complementary immune systems are not allowed to enter a sexual relationship and have children in order to avoid potentially unhealthy children. If two people of non-complementary immune systems did fall in love, the act would be regarded as a capital crime and be “punished in the same way as people who spread disease” (*M* 99-100).⁴ They are not allowed to live and procreate. The main plot of *Corpus Delicti* focuses on Mia Holl, a young biologist, and her descent into madness as she mourns her brother Moritz’s suicide and fights “The Method” legally and philosophically. Moritz is accused of raping and murdering a woman he met for a blind date, evading the state-run partnership agency, but he insists that he found her dead at the scene. Upon inspection of the body, authorities find semen inside the victim that matches Moritz’s DNA. Moritz pleads not guilty in court, but the genetic evidence overrules the defendant’s word by prescription of “The Method”.

Corpus Delicti has provoked a high volume of scholarship. During the years of the COVID-19 pandemic, questions such as the right to refuse vaccination for the sake of personal freedom over risk for the community have gained new relevance. Scholarship on the novel has focused on the aspects of body politics, civil rights, resistance to government control and surveillance.⁵ For my focus, it is worth investigating the scientific basis for the underlying logic of the “Central Partnership Agency” which in the novel must preapprove all sexual relationships. Couples are matched based on immunological compatibility in order to ensure healthy offspring. Zeh does not explicate the details of how, instead it is a premise and part of the all-encompassing surveillance against which Moritz and consequently Mia rebel. I argue that the idea of optimizing immunological compatibility

is not fantasy – instead, it is the logical consequence of recent scientific findings on immune-system compatibility.

The novel *Das weiße Schloss* (2018, *The White Castle*) is the debut novel by journalist Christian Dittloff (born 1983) and has received positive attention by critics. Set some time in the not-so-distant future, the novel imagines a society where love, career, and parenting are thought to be incompatible, and therefore pregnancy and child-rearing are perfected and a profession of their own. They are outsourced to an institute where surrogate mothers and their children live. The all-controlling apparatus is housed in the White Castle. Surrogate motherhood by gestational carrier is not enforced by a totalitarian regime, but the result of individual choices and of the goal of self-optimization. Happy, successful couples take part in the White Palace's prestige project, where happy surrogate mothers bear and rear the biological parents' children, all cared for, "alles sozusagen bio und Fair Trade" ("organic and Fair Trade so to speak"; Dittloff back cover). Pregnancy and motherhood are well-paying and highly respected occupations in the White Castle. And yet, so I argue, the novel paints a skeptical picture of the idea of outsourcing pregnancy and motherhood in the interest of self-optimization.

Immune-system Compatibility in Corpus Delicti

Unlike dystopian fiction that addresses control of reproduction such as the examples named above, Zeh does not expand on how the state makes sure that only planned pregnancies happen and how it arrives at an optimal number of citizens. Contraceptive prevalence is not discussed and thus appears to be a given. Let's first consider the reality of family planning and contraception at the time when Zeh wrote the novel. The most popular form of preventing pregnancies in Germany in the 2000s was hormonal contraception in its various forms. According to Jütte in his monograph on the history of contraception, 62.3% of women of child-bearing age used it around the year 2000 (200). Because the dystopian "Method" aims at optimal health and wellbeing, its health system would need to have a different means that has no negative effects on women. However, such details are not essential for the plot.

The novel opens with a fictional "foreword" allegedly from a political treatise by one of the main characters, titled "Health as the Principle of

State Legitimacy” (*M 2*). Its definition of health goes far beyond “the absence of infirmity or disease” and includes:

Health is not a statistical average, but a potentiated norm; the highest possible individual accomplishment. It is willpower in visible form, a lasting monument to the strength of our will. Health is the optimization of the individual for the optimal social good. Health is what we naturally desire for ourselves and is therefore the natural objective of society, politics, and law. If we cease to strive for health, we are not at risk for illness, we are already ill. (*M 1-2*)

The sole purpose of “The Method” is to prevent human pain and disease. Citizens have to routinely submit data regarding bodily functions, and failure to do so is considered a punishable wrongdoing. Likewise, is leaving controlled environments and venturing out into “nature,” which is considered a source of infection and disease. Additionally, making unhealthy lifestyle choices (such as smoking, drinking caffeinated or alcoholic beverages, or a lack of exercise) or intentionally harming oneself is a crime because jeopardizing the health of the individual is a selfish act against the greater good of the community. The novel thus addresses issues of surveillance for the common good versus the value of personal freedom, an issue that has taken on new relevancy in the recent years of a pandemic.

The logic behind controlling relationships based on immunological genotypes is that the less genetic similarities there are between two individuals, the healthier their offspring will be. This modus of controlling partnerships causes individual choice and love between two individuals to be overshadowed by the importance of building and maintaining a healthy population. While the “Method’s” “Central Partnership Agency” seems like an absurd and anti-democratic approach to controlling births, its underlying logic is based on scientific evidence which the author may or may not have been aware of. The high risk for birth defects and genetic disorders in children born to close blood relatives is well known. Several scientific studies in the last twenty years have found evidence that there is a genetic mechanism that does assure that individuals who are genetically similar, are less attracted to each other than to genetically dissimilar ones, to an extent that goes far beyond blood relatives. This mechanism will therefore be introduced in more detail in the next paragraphs.

The key is the Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC), a gene complex within every human’s genome, which codes for glycoproteins specific to each individual. These MHC proteins allow a person’s immune

system to distinguish self-cells from foreign cells, amount a quick immune response to infectious pathogens and are also responsible for transplant rejection (Parham 458). The genes that code for these MHC proteins are the most variable human gene regions, and each human's combination is unique. Recent research has found that when cells are renewed in the body, these MHC proteins are shed, degraded, and deposited into bodily excretions, such as saliva and sweat, where they become volatile. Vomeronasal organ receptors in the nose are activated by the chemical odorants produced by these degraded MHC proteins, allowing their detection by others (Roberts, Carter, Gosling, and Petri). In other words, degraded MHC proteins, or a marker for genetic difference, can be perceived by the sense of smell.

Several studies in the last twenty years have found evidence to suggest that MHC-related odor preferences influence mate choice in humans. One such study was done at the University of Bern, Switzerland, in 1997: women were asked to rate the pleasantness of t-shirt odors that had been worn by different men (Wedekind and Furi). The MHC allotypes for all the men and women participants in the study were then compared with the collected odor ratings. The researchers found that especially women in the fertile days of their monthly cycle (the day of ovulation and several days before) rated odors of MHC-dissimilar men as much more pleasant than those of MHC-similar men. They also found that the odors of MHC-dissimilar men more often reminded women of current or former partners than those of MHC-similar men. The major conclusion of the study was that genetic MHC-dissimilarities are detected through body odor and preferentially drive physical attraction and mate selection (Wedekind and Furi). In an international collaboration between researchers in Zoology, Animal Behavior, and Psychology published in 2008, 21 males and females were asked to rank the pleasantness of the odor of sweaty t-shirts worn by the opposite sex (Roberts, Gosling, Carter, and Petri). They found that both men and women who reported an odor reminding them of a current or former partner, had significant MHC-dissimilarities with the wearer. They also found that women participants taking birth control pills preferred the odor of MHC-similar men, unlike the preferences of those who did not (Havlicek, Winternitz, and Roberts). These findings supported the conclusions of the 1997 study that MHC genotype influences mate choice and that women of child-bearing age are more physically attracted to the odor of MHC-dissimilar individuals than similar ones. An additional conclusion that was not made in the 1997 study was the role of hormonal

contraceptives in interfering with adaptive mate selection, an idea that could have large implications for any society in which “the pill” and other forms of hormonal contraception are common forms of birth control, but also taken by many women for other benefits such as fewer or lighter periods and the accompanying symptoms. It is remarkable (if not outrageous) that this side effect of contraception is not publicized more. It might offer a (partial) explanation for the rise of infertility that many high-income societies have been encountering and that have made medically assisted reproduction an important business worldwide, expected to grow to more than \$30 Billion in 2022 at an annual growth rate of nearly 20% (“Assisted Reproductive Technology Global Market Report 2022”). According to the same report, Europe was “the largest region in the assisted reproductive technology market in 2021”, while research into low-cost non-hormonal contraceptives and increasing access to birth control in the poorest countries has been lagging.⁶ The result is continued unmet need for contraceptives in many countries with high population growth and the resulting far-reaching consequences for resources, economies, etc.

The findings of these studies imply that there is an evolutionary mechanism that prevents individuals not just from inbreeding but from reproducing with a genetically similar partner more broadly, facilitating the production of healthier offspring. The cutting-edge discovery of this evolutionary tool was also reported in popular news media, in English for example on public radio, PBS, in 2001 (“Sweaty T-Shirts and Human Mate Choice”), in German in the popular science journal *Spektrum* in 2002 (Findeklee) or the news magazine *Stern* in 2014 (Böttcher). For the purpose of this article, it is not decisive to prove that Zeh was aware of this research. The concept forms the basis of family planning (in a very broad sense) in *Corpus Delicti*. In its setting in the not-so-distant future, a dictatorship that values the health of its population above everything else, especially its freedom, does not rely on women naturally selecting a MHC-dissimilar partner via smell, which would ensure immune compatibility in potential offspring, a healthy baby. Natural attraction is replaced with genetic testing and matching of partners optimized for such compatibility and thus reproduction.

It is remarkable that Zeh’s novel does not mention a necessity to control the number of births, but rather the quality of births, although long life expectancy would put the replacement number – or any other number deemed sustainable by the government – very low. For the year 2000, the

average number of children per woman in Europe was as 1.4 children, with Germany even lower (Ulrich). Social scientists have found several reasons for this “contraception revolution” in Western Europe, giving credit to “rising costs of raising children — not just higher costs of living, but also the personal costs to parents of deferred professional advancement and individual fulfillment. [...] Young Europeans may not feel the same social pressure to get married and have children as did their parents and grandparents” (Ulrich). Together with the media prevalence of the challenges of an aging society,⁷ this contemporary German and European culture has definitely impacted why Zeh’s fictional “Method” does not emphasize control over population numbers, but instead population health.

Surrogate Motherhood in Das weiße Schloss

In Germany today, gestational surrogacy for monetary compensation is illegal. It does occur, though, especially by transnational gestational carrier in countries such as India and the Ukraine, but also in California for those who can afford the higher prices. The resulting legal issues occasionally make headlines. My analysis argues that the novel *Das weiße Schloss* experiments with a setting where the issues of exploitation and legality have been resolved, ensuring that birth mothers have full agency and receive equitable compensation. In the end, none of the partners are content with the outcome. Thus, the novel makes a strong point affirming surrogacy’s illegality and immorality. Unlike in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, in *Das weiße Schloss* surrogacy is not mandated by a totalitarian regime, and pregnancy by surrogate carrier is not an expression of subjugation to hegemonic powers but the ultimate realization of individual free choice, the logical extension of specialization and division of labor in a perfected, privileged society. I argue that Dittloff’s novel shows the shortcomings of a utopia of pregnancy and motherhood by surrogate even under the best imaginable circumstances. Pregnancy and motherhood by surrogate deprive men and women of an essential part of their humanity in the name of their “optimized”, though shallow, “self.” However, unlike non-fiction books on the topic, Dittloff uses the power of storytelling and manages to avoid any moralizing. His characters appear believable and nuanced, and yet he maintains an intriguing distance to them.⁸ He is thus likely to reach different readers.

Before examining the novel, it is essential to provide details on the current legal situation in Germany. The German Civil Code (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch*) provides that only the woman who bears the child can be regarded as its legal mother (*Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* §1591).⁹ The Embryo Protection Act rules that it is a criminal offense to perform in vitro fertilization on women to serve as gestational carrier mothers in return for compensation (*Gesetz zum Schutz von Embryonen* § 1, no. 7).¹⁰ German language use favors the euphemism *Leihmutter* (literally borrowed mother) for the birth mother. Maternal surrogacy in this sense is illegal in Germany. The Adoption Placement Act states that “the bringing together of people who will adopt or otherwise take permanent care of a child conceived via surrogacy (purchasing parents) with a woman who agrees to act as a surrogate” is prohibited, punishable by a term of imprisonment of one year or a fine (*Gesetz über die Vermittlung und Begleitung der Adoption* §§ 13b, 13c, 14). In 2019, the *Bundesgerichtshof* (BGH, Federal Court of Justice), Germany’s supreme court for civil and criminal cases, ruled that German law must be applied to a child born to a surrogate in Ukraine, namely the surrogate registered as the mother of the child, and a divergent registration in Ukraine is irrelevant. The court ruled that the biological mother (egg donor) must adopt the child in order to become its legal mother (*Bundesgerichtshof Beschluss XII ZB 530/17*).¹¹ There have also been lawsuits because of complications after assisted reproduction. A registrar broke the law if they registered a child they suspected or knew as to be born by surrogate as a biological child, and a symposium in 2012 argued for a revision of the law in order to provide legal clarity for families who attempted to “import” a child born abroad by a birth mother (Beck, Straßmann).

Because German-language fictional representations of surrogacy are rare, a very brief overview is in order, showing that Dittloff’s approach is unique. One example is the TV film *Monsoon Baby* (2014, directed by Andreas Kleinert).¹² It builds on news reports and narrates a case of a German couple seeking transnational surrogacy in India, the implications of its illegality for the German couple, and the dangers to and exploitation of women as birth mothers in India. India has since made surrogacy illegal.

Early examples of fiction narrated stories where a woman undertook pregnancy by IVF as a favor for either a relative or friend and received no monetary compensation, as is also the premise in *Die Leihmutter* (2018, *The Surrogate Mother*), the first novel by Renee Milan (dates not available), in

which a woman of low social standing is hired as pretense-fiancé to carry the child of a dying rich man and secure an heir for him. Marie Louise Fischer's (born 1922) novel with the same title, *Die Leihmutter*, was first published two decades earlier, in 1998. It also focuses on a female character who decides to serve as surrogate for another woman who cannot have biological children. One last example is by the Austrian Nora Gray (Eleanora Hildegard, nee Bittner, 1929–2011) who problematized surrogacy (though not by implantation but by swapping partners) in her 1995 self-published novel *Leihmenschen* (Humans for rent). The theme has also been addressed in young adult fiction, namely *Geboren 1999. Eine Zukunftsgeschichte* (1989, Born in 1999. A Story of the Future) by Charlotte Kerner (born 1950) which has been translated into several languages and adapted into a TV film (Wessel).¹³ Written at end of the 1980s after egg and sperm donation became publicly available and in-vitro fertilization moved from research tool to clinical treatment, it imagines that within the course of ten years, sperm and egg donations and pregnancy by gestational carrier would radically transform pregnancy and parenthood. Though also dystopian, *Geboren 1999* will be examined elsewhere because this study focuses on two recent works addressing different aspects of family planning.

In scholarship, sociological studies dominate and are too numerous to survey in detail. Literary and film scholars have examined works by British-Indian authors (Meera Syal's *The House of Hidden Mothers*, 2016), US-Indian (Amulya Malladi, *The House of Happy Mothers*, 2016, in German translation by Marina Ignatjuk, *Das Haus der glücklichen Mütter*, 2017), or Hong Kong with the film adaptation, *A Complicated Story* (2006) of the novel by Yi Shu [Isabel Nee Yeh-su], *Yige fuza gushi*, 2006).¹⁴ The novel, *Wā* (2009, *Frog*, 2015) by Mo Yan, Chinese writer and winner of the Nobel prize in literature, also highlights the controversial and illegal matter of surrogacy in China in the 2000s. Even where surrogacy is legal, the ethical issues remain unresolved. Jessica Tsui-Yan Li summarizes these issues in her analysis of the novel *A Complicated Story* by popular Hong-Kong author Yi Shu (born 1946..): "On the one hand, commercial surrogacy enables infertile women to break through the limitations of their family roles, while providing financial support for surrogate mothers to relieve their poverty. On the other hand, this practice exploits women's reproductive organs and devalues children into commodities" (290).

To readers of fiction the title "The White Castle" may allude to Kafka's dark and surreal 1926 novel *Das Schloss* (1926, *The Castle* 1930), in which

mysterious authorities govern the castle and delay access to it. The novel is often interpreted as an expression of alienation, the experience of living under an all-controlling system, and the futile pursuit of an elusive goal. In contrast, the white castle in Dittloff's setting is a well-equipped, idyllic institution in the countryside where meticulously selected and well-paid young women who want to become full-time mothers stay during pregnancy and then raise the child under the best possible conditions, "der Traum aller Biosupermarkt-Jungfamilien" ("the dream of all young families who frequent organic supermarkets", as the review in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted (Hildebrand). The biological parents have visitation rights once a month. They want to continue living and enjoying their own lives and not impact their professional productivity by parenthood. The main characters are a couple in their mid-thirties living on the edge of a city and enjoying privileged conditions. They are named Ada and Ives, reminding the reader of Adam and Eve, but they occupy reversed gender roles, a "fiktives Experiment" ("fictional experiment") with gender roles (Hildebrand). The novel takes place sometime in the near, unspecified future. Ives is a refugee from France which is said to be torn by terrorism. He is an artist, sculptor, and restorer. Ada's work consists of selecting promising future immigrants from those who apply for asylum. She sees herself as a "Gesellschaftslektorin" ("society curator or editor"), explained as someone who weaves the texture of society (Dittloff 53). Added structural elements interrupt and break up the chronological narrative. In particular, there are short scenes inserted between the chapters from the lives of scientists who either contributed to reproductive medicine and technology or who were limited in their achievements because they were female and also wives and mothers. It is largely through these vignettes from the past that the novel's supposedly perfect lives of adults with professions and professional mothers become evident – and questionable at the same time. The utopian core of a perfected system of parenthood through surrogacy, without legal limitations and issues of exploitation, shines up in the fictional report of a journalist writing about a surrogacy clinic in Ukraine in the present time, under the chapter heading "Kiew, gestern" ("Kiev, yesterday"; Dittloff 65). In the conclusion of the chapter, the journalist imagines an ideal setting for surrogacy:

Eine Klinik, die auf Nachhaltigkeit und Fairness setzt. Eine Klinik, in der ein Kind geboren wird, dessen genetischer Herkunft man vertrauen kann, in fairen

Umständen, die uns vertraut sind, denen wir vertrauen, Umstände, wie wir sie kennen. Was unsere Gesellschaft braucht, dachte Julia Bothe, ist ein unter perfekten biologischen, ökonomischen und kulturellen Bedingungen gezeugtes Kind.

A clinic that focuses on sustainability and fairness. A clinic where a child is born whose genetic origins can be trusted, in fair circumstances that are familiar to us, that we trust, circumstances as we know them. What our society needs, Julia Bothe thought, is a child conceived under perfect biological, economic and cultural conditions. (Dittloff 73)

In the white castle, this dream of the early 21st century has become reality. Only wealthy couples can afford the castle. They can fulfill for themselves two “mutually exclusive utopias” at the same time: the first is the optimized pregnancy and motherhood which has become a specialized and well-paid profession. This perfected selection process of biological parents and birth mother plus optimal living conditions for mother and child are believed to produce the creative top performers of the future in the least obtrusive way possible, “herausragende[] Individuen der Gesellschaft” (“outstanding individuals in the society”; Dittloff 58). The other is that of the best possible life which they perform and achieve like an aesthetic project, reflecting and taking to its logical extreme what critical voices are calling today’s hyper individualism and self-optimization. The German language has termed this phenomenon “Optimierungswahn” (“optimization mania”; Hildebrand).¹⁵ With the help of the castle and surrogacy, the couple can have a child without changing their lives and what they believe to be themselves. It is not clear why Ada and Ives want to have a child; there may be expectations or regulations that the elite members of the society are encouraged to reproduce, but they are not elaborated upon in the novel. Ada and Ives feel free in their decisions. In fact, their free will is constantly emphasized. If they are manipulated by government policy, they don’t feel it or reflect about it.

A minimal analysis of the novel suffices for the purpose of this study. Ada and Ives get to pick from a broad selection the birth mother they find perfect, the young actress Marie. They get to meet and befriend the young woman before the procedure. While Marie sends updates on her pregnancy, the couple continues to enjoy their life and their professions to the fullest. They believe to be able to do anything and experience life as exhilarating, as “Lebensrausch” (“intoxication with life”; Dittloff 205). Ada occasionally contrasts herself with her sister Lea, who gave

up her career for raising children. Ada feels pity for her but also comes to recognize that Lea feels “ganz” (“whole”; Dittloff 207), despite living for the needs of her children. A pond in their yard which Ada and Ives want to keep and not fence in when they plan for a child, becomes a symbol for their uncompromised life style. Things begin to change after the neighbors’ toddler drowns in the pond. The couple has to face the fact that not everything can be controlled, and come to terms with their guilt. As Marie gets close to giving birth, she is increasingly stressed by the constant expectation to be a happy vessel and future perfect mother, and she is afraid of losing her own life over providing the best possible upbringing for the child (Dittloff 279). The ending leaves the further development open but indicates that Ives returns after he had left Ada in the wake of the accident. In the past he had left another woman when she had a baby but now he wants to be a real father, not just biologically with visitation rights. Ada also has changed and now wants to “das hinbekommen”, meaning make parenthood work (Dittloff 289). Wanting to raise the child themselves and being willing to compromise, they seem to return to the traditional family model which includes trying to combine professional life, parenting, and their other interests as well as they can. Without further help by the white Castle, as perfect as it sounded.

While in principle surrogate mothers appeared to the couple as optimal solution for conflicts between parenting and professional life, the lived experience of the experiment is different. Another important thought is expressed in Dittloff’s novel by a dedicated colleague of Ada’s named Bias. Bias states clearly that the wish to have and raise children is incompatible with her attitude to her profession, her goal of working to address “die drängenden Probleme in unserer Welt” (“the urgent issues in the world”; Dittloff 265). She recognizes she needs all her resources and abilities to make the world a “guten Ort” (“a good place”; Dittloff 265). Instead of outsourcing motherhood, she decides against it. (At least for the time being, a skeptical reader may add.)

Dittloff is not an outlier in evaluating parenthood by surrogacy, as brief contrasting of his fictional representation with recent non-fiction writing in German about surrogacy reveals. With his careful return to a more traditional family model, Dittloff seems to agree with non-fiction writing of recent years which criticizes the global trend to constantly expand the possibilities and legalities of assisted reproduction. For

example, cultural historian Andreas Bernard in his book *Kinder machen* (Making children, 2014), warns of increasing pressure to have children because it is now possible even for couples previously infertile, both heterosexual and homosexual. What he terms the new “Imperative der Fruchtbarkeit” (“imperatives of fertility”) makes it even more difficult to remain childless and to defend the choice of not having (biological) children (Bernard 440).¹⁶ The Indian feminist Jasodhara Bagchi even speaks of genetic mothering as the new language of female oppression. The Austrian journalist Eva Maria Bachinger reminds readers that the body and its limited capabilities are fundamental to human existence. She argues that ignoring for example the inability to become pregnant (including in homosexual relationships) means a missed opportunity to recognize limitations of one’s body, one’s existence, and thus an opportunity for personal growth. For Bachinger the fundamental question is, do we want to become robots or homunculi without bodies? Authors like Bachinger are aware that their voice is small and powerless against the shiny promises and rapid speed of innovations in reproductive medicine. Dittloff can be added to this list of warning voices.

Concluding Thoughts

Though freedom of choice of sexual and life partners is not in the foreground of Zeh’s novel *Corpus Delicti*, its part in the opposition to state control over personal rights and elimination of freedom is evident. The success of her novel not only reflects such widespread opposition, but may contribute to public opinion. In the dystopia of *Das Weiße Schloss*, pregnancy and motherhood by surrogate deprives men and women of an essential part of their humanity in the name of their “optimized”, though shallow, “self.” The novel thus reflects the majority opinion in Germany today that considers pregnancy by surrogacy immoral and wants to uphold its illegal status.

In both works, the imperative of fertility remains unquestioned. The growing climate crisis awareness may bring a change to both the imperative of fertility and also to the obsession with individual happiness. Especially in Europe, women in increasing numbers are choosing to remain childless. For example, in 2020, UK women set up a movement called “BirthStrikeForFuture” which morphed into a group

called “Grieving Parenthood in the Climate Crisis” before apparently disappearing.¹⁷ In the language of Dittloff’s novel, it is the voice of the friend Bias that is gaining momentum. Women want to make the world a better place more than having the perfect baby while at the same time not compromising their careers.



- 1 The 2018 newspaper article by Theißl claims that feminist dystopian writing is booming due to a political backlash against feminist issues, referring mostly to translations of North American works. In order not to exceed the length limitations, I cannot survey theory and history of dystopian fiction here. Hangel surveys German writing since the early twentieth century and analyses two novels by German writers Barbara Slavig (born 1965) and Ulrike Nolte (born 1973). Some studies including Hangel treat dystopias as a subgenre of Science Fiction.
- 2 The gender aspect in comparison to other dystopian writing would also be fruitful to explore; see for example Löchel and Maltry, Holland-Cunz, et al..
- 3 Zeh is the maiden name of Julia Barbara Finck which she kept as author.
- 4 Because the translation by Sally-Ann Spencer of *Corpus Delicti* is published, original German quotes are omitted. Zeh 2012 is quoted in the text with the abbreviation *M*. All other translations are by WM.
- 5 See for example Koellner, Klocke, McCalmont and Maierhofer, Seeger, Schönfellner, Smith-Prei.
- 6 An exception is the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which has recently instituted grants for research in “Accelerating Discovery for Non-Hormonal Contraceptives” as one of the pressing “Global Grand Challenges” (“Accelerating Discovery”).
- 7 See for example, Welter; Woopen, Janhsen, Mertz, and Genske to mention just one news item and multidisciplinary scholarly publication on the subject.
- 8 For more assessment of Dittloff’s writing style, see for example Winter.
- 9 It is provided in both German and English on the webpage of the Justice Department.
- 10 Surrogate mother is in the following understood as gestational carrier.
- 11 For a report in English, see Gesley.
- 12 For an analysis, see Maierhofer.
- 13 The novel has become a popular school reading as pedagogical materials (Emmerling) show.
- 14 See Mendes and Lau; Li. The dissertation by Weaver on surrogacy in twentieth-century American literature is limited to narrations of surrogacy

in the non-biological sense of women taking on the role of mothers when the biological mothers “fail.”

- 15 Among recent publications with this title word are mostly self-help books and psychological studies, for example Werle, Suchert.
- 16 Mettle makes a similar argument (31).
- 17 The website BirthStrikeForFuture.com is no longer live. A recent article in the journal *Medical Anthropology* examines the case of BirthStrike as a tool for activism and how the campaign was encountered and discredited in the public realm (McMullen and Dow). On the book market, a more optimistic agenda has appeared, arguing that parenting “can prevent climate collapse” as in the recent title by British philosopher Rupert Read.



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- “Accelerating Discovery for Non-Hormonal Contraceptives.” *Global Grand Challenges*, 2020–2022, <<https://gcgh.grandchallenges.org/challenge/accelerating-discovery-non-hormonal-contraceptives>>.
- “Assisted Reproductive Technology Global Market Report 2022.” *Businesswire*, 8 Feb. 2022, <<https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20220208006080/en/Assisted-Reproductive-Technology-Global-Market-Report-2022-Diagnosis-Procedure-Type-End-User-and-Covering-Analysis-Forecasts-2016-2021-2021-2026F-2031F---ResearchAndMarkets.com>>.
- Bachinger, Eva Maria. *Kind auf Bestellung. Ein Plädoyer für klare Grenzen*. Vienna: Deuticke, 2015.
- Bagchi, Jasodhara. *Interrogating Motherhood*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2017.
- Beck, Andreas. “Fachtagung des BDS 2012.” *Verband der Landesbeamtinnen und Landesbeamten Mecklenburg-Vorpommern*, 11 March 2013, <<https://standesbeamte-mv.de/index.php/69-fachtagung-bds>>.
- Bernard, Andreas. *Kinder machen: Neue Reproduktionstechnologien und die Ordnung der Familie: Samenspender, Leihmütter, künstliche Befruchtung*. Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 2014.
- Böttcher, Constanze. “Wie suchen wir unseren Partner aus?” *Stern*, 24 Oct. 2014, <<https://www.stern.de/gesundheit/sexualitaet/vorlieben/partnerwahl--warum-wir-uns-in-jemanden-verlieben-3810898.html>>.
- Bundesgerichtshof. Beschluss des XII. Zivilsenats vom 20. März 2019. XII ZB 530/17, <<http://juris.bundesgerichtshof.de/cgi-bin/rechtsprechung/document.py?Gericht=bgh&Art=en&az=XII%20ZB%20530/17&nr=94770>>.
- Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch (BGB) [Civil Code], 2 Jan. 2002, Bundesministerium der Justiz, <<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bgb/>>.
- Dittloff, Christian. *Das weiße Schloss*. Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2018.
- Emmerling, Nadine. ‘Geboren 1999’ im Unterricht. *Lehrerhandreichung zum Jugendroman von Charlotte Kerner*. Weinheim: Beltz, 2008.
- Findeklee, Antje. “Der Duft des Vaters.” *Spektrum*, 22 Jan 2002, <<https://www.spektrum.de/news/der-duft-des-vaters/585980>>.
- Fischer, Marie Louise. *Die Leihmutter. Roman*. Klagenfurt: Kaiser, 1998.
- Gesetz über die Vermittlung und Begleitung der Adoption und über das Verbot der Vermittlung von Ersatzmüttern (Adoptionsvermittlungsgesetz –

- AdVermiG) [Adoption Placement Act], 2 July 1975, neugefasst 21 June 2021, Bundesministerium der Justiz, <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/advermig_1976/BJNR017620976.html>.
- Gesetz zum Schutz von Embryonen (Embryonenschutzgesetz – EschG) [Embryo Protection Act], 13 Dec. 1990, zuletzt geändert 21 Nov. 2011, Bundesministerium der Justiz, <<https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/eschg/BJNR027460990.html>>.
- Gesley, Jenney. “Germany: Federal Court of Justice Rules on Legal Motherhood of Surrogate.” Library of Congress: Law, 29 April 2019, <<https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/germany-federal-court-of-justice-rules-on-legal-motherhood-of-surrogate/>>.
- Gray, Nora. *Leihmenschen*. Wien: Nora Gray, 1995.
- Hangel, Magdalena. *Weibliche Geschlechterrollen in der Science-Fiction-Literatur deutschsprachiger Autorinnen*. M. A. Thesis, University of Vienna, Austria 2013, <<https://theses.univie.ac.at/detail/23772#>>.
- Havlíček, Jan, Jamie Winternitz, Roberts S. Craig. “Major Histocompatibility Complex-associated Odour Preferences and Human Mate Choice: Near and Far Horizons.” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society London: Biological Sciences* 375, issue 1800 (8 June 2020). doi: 10.1098/rstb.2019.0260. Epub. The Royal Society Publishing, <<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rstb.2019.0260>>.
- Hildebrand, Kathleen. “Deutsche Literatur: Verharren bei Longdrinks,” *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12 Feb. 2019, <<https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/christian-dittloff-das-weisse-schloss-rezension-1.4327074>>.
- Jütte, Robert. *Contraception: A History*. Trans. Vicky Russell. Malden: Polity Press, 2008.
- Kerner, Charlotte. *Geboren 1999. Eine Zukunftsgeschichte*. Weinheim: Beltz, 1989.
- Klocke, Sonja E. “‘Das Mittelalter ist keine Epoche: Mittelalter ist der Name der menschlichen Natur’: Aufstörung, Verstörung und Entstörung in Juli Zehs *Corpus Delicti*.” *Das ‘Prinzip Störung’ in den Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften*, ed. Carsten Gansel, Norman Ächter. Berlin: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2013, 185-201.
- Koellner, Sarah. “Data, Love, and Bodies: The Value of Privacy in Juli Zeh’s *Corpus Delicti*.” *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 52.4 (2016): 407-425.
- Li, Jessica Tsui-Yan. “Ambiguous Agency: Commercial Surrogacy in Yi Shu’s *A Complicated Story* and Its Film Adaptation.” *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature / Revue Canadienne de Littérature Comparée*, 45.2 (2018): 290-299.
- Löchel, Rolf. *Utopias Geschlechter. Gender in deutschsprachiger Science Fiction von Frauen*. Sulzbach im Taunus: Helmer, 2012.

- Maierhofer, Waltraud. "Indian Womb – German baby? International Surrogacy and Citizenship in the Film *Monsoon Baby* (2014)." *Asian Journal of German and European Studies* 4.8 (2019), n. p. DOI <<https://doi.org/10.1186/s4085-1>>; <<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40856-019-0045-1>>.
- Maltry, Karola, Barbara Holland-Cunz, et al. (eds.). *GENderZUKUNFT: Zur Transformation feministischer Visionen in der Science Fiction*. Königstein im Taunus: Helmer, 2008.
- McCalmont, Virginia, Waltraud Maierhofer. "Juli Zeh's *Corpus Delicti* (2009): Health Care, Terrorists, and the Return of the Political Message." *Monatshefte* 104.3 (2012): 375-392.
- McMullen, Heather, Katharine Dow. "Ringling the Existential Alarm: Exploring BirthStrike for Climate." *Medical Anthropology: Cross-Cultural Studies in Health and Illness*, online 15 June 2022, DOI: 10.1080/01459740.2022.2083510
- Mendes, Ana Cristina, Lisa Lau. "A Postcolonial Framing of International Commercial Gestational Surrogacy in India: Re-orientalisms and Power Differentials in Meera Syal's *The House of Hidden Mothers*." *Interventions* 21.3 (2019): 318-336.
- Mettle, Gisela. "Kinder wünschen – Mütter leihen. Geschlechtergeschichtliche Überlegungen zur Familie und ihrer Machbarkeit." *Leihmutterchaft und Familie*, ed. Edward Schramm, Michael Wermke. Berlin: Springer, 2018, 25-35.
- Milan, Renee. *Die Leihmutter. Roman*. Munich: Knauer, 2018.
- Moggach, Deborah, Dorothee Asendorf (trans.). as *Der Neunmonatsgefallen. Roman einer Leihmutterchaft*. Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1988.
- Parham, Peter. "Chapter 15: Transplantation of Tissues and Organs." *The Immune System*. 3rd ed. New York: Garland Science, 2009. 433-472.
- Read, Rupert. *Parents for a Future: How Loving Our Children Can Prevent Climate Collapse*. Norwich, UK: Boiler House Press, 2021.
- Roberts, S. Craig, L. Morris Gosling, Vaughan Carter, Marion Petrie. "MHC-correlated Odour Preferences in Humans and the Use of Oral Contraceptives." *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 275.1652 (2008): 2715-22, doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2008.0825, <<https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rspb.2008.0825>>.
- Seeber, Hans Ulrich. "The Tyranny of Health: Juli Zeh's 'Body Utopia': *Corpus Delicti: Ein Prozess* (2009)." *Utopian Studies: Journal of the Society for Utopian Studies* 31.2 (2020): 377-387.
- Schönfellner, Sabine. "Genetic Screenings, Health Standardization and Potential Illness: The Biopolitical Challenges of the Future in Juli Zeh's *Corpus Delicti* and in *Gattaca*." *Trans: Revue de Littérature Générale et Comparée* 16 (2013), <<https://doi.org/10.4000/trans.814>>, <<https://journals.openedition.org/trans/814>>.
- Smith-Prei, Carrie. "Relevant Utopian Realism: The Critical Corporeality of Juli Zeh's *Corpus Delicti*." *Seminar: A Journal of Germanic Studies* 48.1 (2012): 107-123.

- Straßmann, Burkhard. "Leihmutterschaft: Bauch zu vermieten: Elternschaft mit Leihmüttern, Ei- und Samenspendern wird kompliziert – besonders für Standesbeamte," *Die Zeit*, 22 Nov. 2012, <<https://www.zeit.de/2012/48/Leihmutterschaft-Gesetzgebung-Standesbeamte>>.
- Suchert, Vivien. *Das vermessene Ich: Von Selbstkontrolle, Optimierungswahn und digitalen Doppelgängern*. Wals: Ecowin, 2019.
- "Sweaty T-Shirts and Human Mate Choice." *PBS*. WGBH Educational Foundation and Clear Blue Sky Productions, 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/evolution/library/01/6/1_016_08.html>.
- Theißl, Brigitte. "Science-Fiction – Düstere Welten: Warum feministische Dystopien boomen." *Der Standard*, 26 August 2018, <<https://www.derstandard.de/story/2000085979687/duistere-welten-warum-feministische-dystopien-boomen>>.
- Ulrich, Ralph E. "Most European Women Use Contraceptives." Population Reference Bureau, 1 Apr. 2001, <<https://www.prb.org/resources/most-european-women-use-contraceptives/>>. Web.
- Weaver, Kimberly C. *Mothering and Surrogacy in Twentieth-century American Literature: Promise or Betrayal*. Diss. Georgia State U, 2011. ScholarWorks @ Georgia State University, <https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1080&context=english_diss.pdf>.
- Wedekind, Claus, Sandra Füre. "Body Odour Preferences in Men and Women: Do They Aim for Specific MHC Combinations or Simply Heterozygosity?" *Proceedings: Biological Sciences*. 264, nr.1387 (1997): 1471–79.
- Welter, Patrick, "Die Lasten einer alternden Bevölkerung leichter schultern." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 Sept. 2003, <<https://www.faz.net/aktuell/wirtschaft/alter-und-arbeit-7-die-lasten-einer-alternden-bevoelkerung-leichter-schultern-1120244.html>>.
- Wessel, Kai (dir.). *Geboren 1999*. Writers Charlotte Kerner, Beate Langmaack. Perf. Sebastian Rudolph. Südwestfunk, 1992. TV film.
- Werle, Klaus. *Die Perfektionierer: Warum der Optimierungswahn uns schadet*. Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2010.
- Winter, Christoph H. "Christian Dittloffs Roman *Das weiße Schloss*: Die freie Elternschaft von Morgen." *Tagesspiegel*, 12 April 2019, <<https://www.tagesspiegel.de/potsdam/potsdam-kultur/die-freie-elternschaft-von-morgen-8013799.html>>.
- Wooßen, Christiane, Anna Janhsen, Marcel Mertz, Anna Genske (eds.). *Alternde Gesellschaft im Wandel: Zur Gestaltung einer Gesellschaft des langen Lebens*. Berlin: Springer, 2020.
- Zeh, Juli. *The Method*. Trans. Sally-Ann Spencer. London: Harvill Secker, 2012.
- Zeh, Juli. *Corpus Delicti: Ein Prozess*. Frankfurt a. M.: Schöpfung, 2009.

Censura e responsabilità in *Der Überläufer* di Siegfried Lenz

Francesca Ottavio

Università della Calabria

Siegfried Lenz e la responsabilità della storia

Nato a Lyck¹ nel 1926, lo scrittore tedesco Siegfried Lenz (1926-2014) nutre sin da giovanissimo una profonda passione per la cultura e la natura. I suoi interessi si traducono presto in un'intensa attività di scrittura che lo vede tra i protagonisti del dibattito culturale tedesco a partire dalla seconda metà del XX secolo. Dal 1951, infatti, Lenz abbandona progressivamente la professione di giornalista per la testata *Die Welt* per dedicarsi alla carriera di scrittore. La decisione nasce conseguentemente ad alcune divergenze con la redazione del giornale e trova un incoraggiamento importante nel successo del suo primo romanzo, *Es waren Habichte in der Luft* (C'erano sparvieri nell'aria, 1951), uscito a puntate su *Die Welt* tra il 24 ottobre e il 25 novembre 1950 e, l'anno successivo, pubblicato in unico volume dalla casa editrice Hoffmann und Campe.

Data la ricezione favorevole del romanzo da parte del pubblico e della critica, gli editori firmano con Lenz un contratto per il nuovo romanzo a cui l'autore sta lavorando e che avrebbe dovuto portare il titolo *...da gibt's ein Wiedersehen* (...là ci rivedremo). Il testo, inizialmente approvato con alcune modifiche, viene rielaborato dallo scrittore e riproposto con il titolo *Der Überläufer* (Il disertore), ma non incontra l'approvazione dell'editor Otto Görner (1902-1955), che lamenta la difficoltà di proporre allo scenario attuale un focus troppo mirato sulle questioni legate alla doppia diserzione del protagonista, il quale passa con eccessiva facilità dalle fila naziste a

quelle sovietiche, per poi, alla fine, rinnegare anche i loro principi. Nel commento, si ammonisce lo scrittore insistendo sul danno che certe affermazioni avrebbero arrecato alla sua carriera:

Un romanzo del genere sarebbe potuto uscire nel 1946. Oggi si sa che nessuno si sogna più di sentirsi tale. [...] In questo modo lei rischia di arrecare un danno enorme a se stesso, e non potranno aiutarla nemmeno i suoi buoni rapporti con giornali e radio. I consigli che le proponiamo non vengono già perché saremmo saccenti accademici, ma perché conosciamo il nostro tempo e gli sviluppi degli eventi e sappiamo esattamente come un romanzo ben iniziato può rovinare in un fallimento letterario (Berg 253).

Lo scambio tra Lenz e Görner, a cui si aggiunge il doppio rifiuto di pubblicazione da parte della *Neue Zeitung* e della *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, si conclude con la decisione dell'autore di mantenere invariato il suo romanzo e di abbandonare gli sforzi per la sua uscita, riponendo quel testo in un cassetto.

Senza lasciarsi intimorire dal recente fallimento e con la costanza che lo caratterizzerà per tutta la vita, Lenz prosegue con numerosi altri progetti, che vedono l'uscita di romanzi e racconti – tutti per Hoffmann und Campe. Al suo fianco, sempre la moglie Liselotte, che trascrive a macchina i suoi manoscritti e lo accompagna nei suoi viaggi; sulla sua strada, diverse amicizie e collaborazioni, come quella con lo scrittore Günter Grass (1927-2015), il critico letterario Marcel Reich-Ranicki (1920-2013) e il cancelliere federale Helmut Schmidt (1918-2015). Infine, la sua fortuna di scrittore è segnata dalla pubblicazione di *Deutschstunde* (*Lezione di tedesco*) nel 1968, un successo internazionale che vede diverse riedizioni in Germania e traduzioni all'estero e che lo incorona come una delle voci più importanti nel panorama tedesco di metà Novecento.

Prima degli anni Cinquanta, però, la vita di Siegfried Lenz è segnata da spazi ed esperienze che condizioneranno i temi e le riflessioni dello scrittore adulto. In primo luogo, la sua città natale, dove vive con la nonna, abbandonato da entrambi i genitori, e dove crea un rapporto controverso con il lago, in cui da bambino aveva rischiato di annegare, e con i pesci, di cui fa un motivo ricorrente nella sua opera. In secondo luogo, l'educazione hitleriana e gli anni nella Marina militare tedesca (*Kriegsmarine*) durante la guerra segnano, per lui, la nascita e il tramonto degli ideali di una Germania che si era lasciata abbagliare da un sogno morboso e a cui si sottrae con la diserzione.²

Con la fine della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, Lenz si iscrive all'università di Amburgo, dove studia filosofia, anglistica e letteratura, per poi avviare la carriera di giornalista e di scrittore indipendente. Significativa è anche la sua partecipazione agli incontri del Gruppo 47, presso cui propone più volte letture delle sue opere, ricevendo aspre critiche, ma anche molti elogi.³

Tutte queste esperienze convogliano nelle pagine di Lenz scrittore, la cui produzione rimane legata profondamente al suo vissuto e a quello delle persone a lui vicine, in uno stile realistico che aspira a rappresentare e a far riflettere il lettore su situazioni scomode e spesso poco discusse.⁴ Per l'autore, scrivere ha la funzione di un atto di analisi e di autoanalisi, che estende anche ad altri l'invito a porsi domande su questioni ritenute fondamentali, fino alla scoperta di «un bisogno comune, passioni comuni, speranze, gioie, una minaccia che riguarda tutti» (Lenz, *Beziehungen* 203). Nell'esperienza privata si riconosce, insomma, una condizione comune in cui ciascuno può trovarsi o essersi trovato. In questo senso, la letteratura diventa vera e propria azione volta a svegliare le coscienze e a favorire un percorso di maturazione per i singoli – il che equivale a una promozione della crescita collettiva. È dato che «una critica sensata delle condizioni del proprio ambiente non è possibile senza che si tenga conto delle prospettive storiche» (Pätzold 11), l'indagine umana dello scrittore presuppone in ogni caso un rapporto stretto con i luoghi e gli eventi, riconsiderati da una prospettiva interna.

Nella scrittura come nella vita, Siegfried Lenz si rivela autore e uomo fedele alle idee, determinato a difendere la verità, anche a costo del proprio successo di scrittore.⁵ *Il disertore* rappresenta probabilmente il massimo esempio di questo principio, in quanto sfugge ai rifiuti e alla censura per conservare integro il quadro amaro di un'epoca che ha tentato di ricostruire sulle macerie della storia più recente attraverso la cancellazione dei suoi aspetti più controversi. Pubblicato postumo nel 2016, due anni dopo la morte del suo autore, il romanzo diventa un documento importante dei sentimenti del soldato tedesco, che vive gli orrori e le angosce della guerra, riconoscendo nel “nemico” una sorte comune e nella resistenza una possibile risposta al sistema castrante dei totalitarismi. Il pregio più grande dell'opera è, forse, proprio quello di aver tracciato una relazione tra passato recente e presente quando ancora la letteratura tedesca tentava di venire a patti con il silenzio imposto dal Terzo Reich e con le questioni della colpa e della denazificazione del paese, in seno alle direzioni caldegiate dalla linea statunitense, a Ovest,

e sovietica, a Est. Deciso a riflettere sul seguito della Guerra e sulle sue conseguenze in Germania, Lenz denuncia in maniera implicita l'illusorietà del *Nullpunkt*, e cioè di un punto definitivo di svolta nella storia tedesca.⁶ Sul finire della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, il protagonista Walter Proska decide, infatti, di arrendersi ai sovietici e passare al loro servizio. A questo punto, il testo avrebbe potuto concludersi con la sua messa in salvo presso i futuri vincitori e concentrarsi in maniera più approfondita sulle sensazioni del protagonista; invece, gli ultimi capitoli esplorano gli esiti della politica socialista in Germania, in una repressione che si discosta solo nella forma dalla precedente. Intrappolato in questo nuovo sistema, Proska sceglie di fuggire – e, quindi, di “disertare” di nuovo, stavolta in maniera più consapevole –, ma rimane intrappolato nel dramma della sua esperienza e nel rimorso per aver taciuto a sua sorella l'omicidio del cognato. Anche nel momento in cui trova il coraggio di liberarsi del suo segreto, a costo di gravi conseguenze, un destino crudele lo priva di quest'ultima consolazione, abbandonandolo a un passato a cui nessun soldato può sottrarsi. Nell'ambito della riflessione sui temi della colpa e della ricostruzione nella letteratura tedesca del secondo dopoguerra, la storia di Proska si configura come coraggioso atto di denuncia che, a partire da quella critica al Nazionalsocialismo che accomuna gli scritti apparsi nelle due Germanie, invita a considerare in maniera più critica la reiterazione subdola degli stessi principi nella zona orientale. In modo simile, ma animato da tutt'altro spirito, negli stessi anni Ernst von Salomon (1902-1972) pubblica il romanzo autobiografico dal titolo *Der Fragebogen* (Il questionario, 1951), dove mette in evidenza la brutalità delle misure americane nella zona d'occupazione occidentale e la loro pericolosa affinità con quelle adottate durante il regime nazista.

Il romanzo e la posizione difesa da Lenz stimolano considerazioni importanti sul concetto di responsabilità individuale e collettiva verso gli obblighi nazionali, la società attuale e quella futura. Capovolgendo il giudizio negativo che condanna la diserzione come atto vile e tradimento verso la Nazione e i compagni, la storia di Proska indaga gli eventi storici dalla prospettiva del singolo, dietro alle cui scelte si cela un atto di coraggio contro le illusioni delle politiche totalitarie. Che questa rimanga una prospettiva scomoda è confermato dalla mancata pubblicazione dell'opera per oltre sessant'anni e dagli esiti della storia del protagonista, che non può sperare in un *happy ending*. Per questa ragione, è responsabilità dei posteri soffermarsi a riflettere, là dove troppo a lungo ci si è coperti gli occhi, senza mai, come sosteneva lo stesso Lenz riferendosi agli scrittori,

«lontani dal mondo, nel “lusso dell’innocenza tagliare dalla carta argentata cose belle con le forbici”, ma piuttosto indica[ndo] gli abusi, la fame e la persecuzione, l’illegalità e la disperazione» (Maletzke cap. 9). L’uscita del romanzo, nel 2016, e del film omonimo (2020), diretto dal regista Florian Gallenberger, testimoniano il desiderio di confrontarsi con un passato che sembra potersi ripetere continuamente.

Il disertore: una reinterpretazione del senso del dovere

Come annuncia il titolo, il romanzo invita il lettore a concentrarsi sul protagonista e sul suo ruolo di disertore, benché le pagine dedicate all’abbandono della compagnia militare risultino molto ridotte rispetto alle lunghe descrizioni della guerra e delle attività che impegnano i soldati. Il volume si presenta piuttosto come un ricordo, quasi una confessione, di un giovane che, rapito dagli eventi e dagli obblighi del sistema, compie azioni che lo perseguiteranno per sempre. Questi esiti vengono anticipati già nel primo capitolo con la figura del vecchio Adomeit, soldato nella Prima Guerra Mondiale, colto nell’atto di iniettarsi delle droghe per riuscire a dimenticare gli orrori di molti anni prima.⁷

Sebbene la storia sia narrata alla terza persona da un narratore esterno, i capitoli che vanno dal secondo all’ultimo – il sedicesimo – si sviluppano come un lungo *flashback* che prende avvio dal ritorno di Proska al fronte dopo il periodo di licenza a Lyck, sua città natale (e anche di Lenz), e prosegue fino al tempo di apertura. Senza fornire molti dettagli sui precedenti tre anni in guerra, la storia ha avvio con l’attacco partigiano che provoca l’esplosione del treno su cui viaggia il protagonista, il quale, unico sopravvissuto, viene trattenuto presso una compagnia tedesca stazionata nella regione. Qui Proska riceve subito i suoi primi incarichi, che gli permettono di costruire un paragone tra la guerra al fronte, molto più dinamica, e quel lavoro per la difesa dei confini, statico ma altrettanto angosciante e crudele. Il linguaggio adottato è quello tipico della narrativa di guerra, che con le sue descrizioni crude e prive di tabù evoca gli orrori e le sensazioni del soldato che deve lottare costantemente per la propria sopravvivenza mentre vede cadere i compagni. Eppure, né le situazioni più estreme né la coscienza dell’insensatezza della guerra convincono il giovane a valutare la possibilità di abbandonare la compagnia tedesca per cercare rifugio altrove.

Sebbene tutti, in qualche modo, lamentino la loro condizione e sognino un ritorno incolumi, è il compagno soprannominato Pandilatte a compiere la prima analisi disincantata degli ideali nazionalistici e del senso del dovere, che spingono migliaia di giovani a preferire la morte alla diserzione, consapevoli delle conseguenze di una tale scelta per la società e persino per la famiglia:

“Mio padre è caduto a Varsavia. Mia madre ha paura per me, ma se sapesse che ho tagliato la corda ne morirebbe. [...] Lo chiamano senso del dovere [...] Ce l’hanno iniettato nel sangue. E con quello ci hanno squinternato, levato l’indipendenza. [...] chi è questa Germania con cui ci gonfiano le orecchie? [...] Non fraintendermi: certo che esiste un paese in cui sono nato e che amo più degli altri. Lo amo perché ne conosco ogni sasso, perché ho racchiuso questo paese nel mio cuore. Io però non mi farei accoppiare per un sasso come ha fatto mio padre. [...] Lo capisci, Walter: siamo Germania anche noi, non solo quegli altri, e sarebbe un’idiozia totale se noi che siamo la Germania ci immolassimo per la Germania, cioè per noi stessi [...]” (Lenz, *Il disertore* 73-75).

Non saranno tanto queste parole a convincere Proska a passare alla fazione nemica, quanto lo slancio puramente opportunistico a salvarsi dopo essere stato fatto prigioniero dall’Armata Rossa. Le prime missioni con la nuova uniforme evidenziano di nuovo uno sguardo immutato sulla guerra, che continua a mietere morti da ogni parte, costringendo i soldati a vivere da automi, concentrati a mirare sugli altri al solo scopo di salvare se stessi. Così, un caso crudele porta il protagonista a sparare contro suo cognato durante una missione in Masuria, per poi tacere dell’accaduto alla sorella – un’azione che rende però chiara la distruzione del proprio mondo e dell’innocenza di un passato felice per mano propria. Questo epilogo imprevisto e indesiderato, che giunge proprio negli ultimi giorni di guerra, rappresenta per Proska un punto di non ritorno. Sopraffatto dal dolore, il giovane soldato si lascia condurre per quella che gli appare come l’unica via percorribile: la collaborazione con il nuovo regime nella zona d’occupazione sovietica.

La sua nuova vita inizia con il trasferimento in una nuova casa e con l’inizio di un nuovo lavoro. A Est, la rieducazione socialista prevede una cura asfissiante dei cittadini tedeschi, costretti ad aderire a un modello severo e a confrontarsi ossessivamente con i concetti di «giustizia» e «senso di colpa» (Lenz, *Il disertore* 215). Questa volta, Proska percepisce con disagio l’angoscia generata da spazi angusti e dinamiche poco chiare,

che avvicinano il nuovo regime alla distopia di *1984* (1949) o ai labirinti kafkiani, in cui il singolo è disperso in situazioni opprimenti a cui non riesce a venire a capo. È solo in questo momento che il protagonista abbraccia con consapevolezza la diserzione, rigettando un sistema letale per l'individuo:

Proska tremava. Saltò in piedi e disse: “Entrate dentro di noi come un trapano, è vero, ma una volta che siete dentro ci avvelenate il sangue e ci mangiate dall'interno [...]”. [...] “Non ti agitare tanto. A te non ti abbiamo ancora cambiato. Vuol dire che di te ci fidiamo. E ci fidiamo nonostante tu non vada a nessun raduno e a nessun addestramento. E dire che proprio tu ne avresti un gran bisogno. Almeno capiresti perché il motore dev'essere pulito (Lenz, *Il disertore* 236-237).

A questo punto, in fuga verso l'Ovest del paese, la lettura dell'annuncio della sorella su una bacheca della stazione diventa un incentivo ad assumersi le proprie responsabilità e confessare il delitto involontario, proseguendo così il cammino di liberazione iniziato con l'abbandono delle comodità e della protezione del regime. L'occasione è colta solo diverso tempo dopo, ma la confessione di Proska non raggiunge la destinataria, che nel frattempo ha cambiato domicilio, condannando il protagonista a portare con sé il suo segreto e a consumarsi nel dolore, proprio come il vecchio Adomeit.

Il romanzo prende in considerazione l'abbandono dei due ambienti in cui il corso degli eventi pone il protagonista: prima la compagnia bellica, poi l'organizzazione socialista. Entrambi lo accolgono, in qualche modo si occupano di lui, gli offrono protezione e, in cambio, chiedono che anche lui faccia altrettanto. Questi patti vengono sottoscritti a rischio della vita e a costo della libertà ed evidenziano l'eterno conflitto tra individuo e potere, che, come evidenziato da Baßmann, equivale a uno scontro tra umano e disumano (91), ossia a una vera e propria lotta prometeica per la difesa dell'individualità contro la politica massificante, che sfrutta le energie dei cittadini per poi abbandonarli a se stessi. Gli eventi storici vengono qui analizzati dalla prospettiva del singolo, completamente solo di fronte alle difficoltà e alle decisioni, a cui risponde in maniera assolutamente soggettiva e umana, talvolta compiendo la scelta migliore, altre volte sbagliando. Al pubblico è offerto di farsi spettatore silenzioso dei pensieri e dei sentimenti del protagonista, resi attraverso le tecniche del dialogo, del discorso vissuto e del flusso di coscienza, che permettono di comprendere nel profondo le ragioni e i moti di un'anima costretta a reagire a situazioni estreme. Alla fine, il lettore dovrà tirare le somme e operare un'analisi

critica e distanziata delle vicende, sia a livello microscopico che in un'ottica socio-politica più ampia (Baßmann 54).

Nella fattispecie, Proska è diviso tra il dovere di rispettare ordini e gerarchie e la propensione verso la libertà. Se non riesce a comprendere subito questa impellenza, lo si deve alla resa realistica di una difficoltà a cogliere e giudicare in modo imparziale principi e situazioni che illudono i cittadini della loro bontà, per poi mostrarsi con il loro vero volto soltanto a distanza di tempo. Il problema del dovere è un *Leitmotiv* della letteratura di Siegfried Lenz, che declina le sue diverse manifestazioni in tutti i romanzi, fino a portarlo al centro della riflessione in quello che è considerato il suo miglior prodotto: *Lezione di tedesco*. Il romanzo segue i ricordi e le considerazioni del giovane Siggi Jepsen sul tema “le gioie del dovere”, assegnatogli dal suo insegnante nel riformatorio dove si trova all'inizio della storia. Il pensiero del protagonista si rivolge subito al padre, poliziotto al servizio del regime nazionalsocialista, e al momento in cui riceve l'ordine di impedire l'attività del pittore espressionista Max Ludwig Nansen, autore di “arte degenerata”, che si rifiuta di cedere alle minacce dell'agente. Questi due ultimi personaggi diventano l'uno il simbolo della censura e dell'oppressione nazista, oltre che della sequela cieca e ottusa della guida carismatica, e l'altro la risposta intrepida dell'arte alla disumanità dei tempi. Siggi, che all'epoca è solo un bambino, viene subito assoldato come spia dal padre, ma sceglie di schierarsi dalla parte della vittima e mettere in salvo i quadri dalla follia distruttrice dei potenti, difendendo così il diritto alla libertà di espressione, anche a costo della sua partecipazione alla vita dei “normali” per vivere da recluso in un riformatorio dove diventa cavia per gli psicologi. Pur riconoscendo le differenze sostanziali nelle due storie, Siggi e Proska hanno in comune il coraggio di rinunciare ai privilegi della loro condizione per servire un ideale più alto, che mai deve poter essere comprato a nessun prezzo, tantomeno quello della libertà altrui. I loro tristi epiloghi rispecchiano la consapevolezza dello scrittore che simili prese di posizione difficilmente possano trovare accoglienza presso i contemporanei, ma già la loro stessa ideazione e la volontà di pubblicarli fa pensare a una fiducia sostanziale che Lenz nutre verso il futuro, nella speranza di una rivalutazione degli eventi più matura e distaccata. Di fatto, nel caso de *Il disertore*, proporre una storia con al centro un uomo che abbandona i compagni sul finire della guerra e, in un secondo tempo, la buona posizione affidatagli dai suoi salvatori proprio negli anni della costituzione della Repubblica

Democrazia Tedesca (DDR) rappresenta un azzardo che l'autore è determinato a difendere.

Di diserzione si inizia a discutere nel dopoguerra, quando si passa a rivalutare i principi celati dietro l'abbandono di una fazione, non più per codardia o come atto di tradimento, bensì in quanto attestazione della libertà dell'individuo che non accetta di piegarsi alle varie forme di oppressione fisica e morale. Si tratta di un primo tentativo di aprirsi a una categoria strategicamente ridotta al silenzio, un modo per dare voce al suo trauma inascoltato e ricostruire la storia attraverso le diverse esperienze che costellano il tessuto ufficiale. Pochi autori hanno ardito discutere pubblicamente intorno a un tema tanto delicato e controverso, accettando le conseguenze sociali delle loro azioni, oltre che dei loro scritti. In modo simile a Lenz, anche Alfred Andersch (1914-1980) espone questa posizione nel racconto *Die Kirschen der Freiheit. Ein Bericht* (Le ciliegie della libertà. Un resoconto, 1952), in cui indaga «la legittimità morale e intellettuale della diserzione dall'esercito come supremo atto di autoaffermazione e somma espressione di libertà individuale» (Calzoni 255). Com'è ovvio, in una comunità appena uscita da una guerra in cui molti erano caduti e tutti avevano rischiato che ogni ora fosse la loro ultima, l'accettazione di simili concettualizzazioni non può risultare semplice. Lo esprime chiaramente il vicedirettore della *Hessischer Rundfunk*, Gottfried Michelmann, che reagisce al racconto di Andersch con una ferma condanna della diserzione, ricordando come lui stesso e molti soldati si fossero trovati in più occasioni di fronte all'opportunità di arrendersi al nemico, per poi decidere di rimanere fedeli ai compagni e alla Nazione. «Io ero lì», scrive Michelmann nel 1953, «per convinzione interiore, ed ero lì finché altri [...] erano lì perché dovevano esserci. [...] Considero la diserzione un modo semplice, ma non giusto, per ribellarsi a una condotta di guerra sbagliata, e per questo, come giudice, condannerei sempre il disertore, anche se, come giudice, non sono convinto della giustificazione della guerra» (114).

Se la Germania del dopoguerra appare disposta a lasciarsi alle spalle gli ideali nazionalsocialisti e le pretese politico-razziali, non esiste molto margine per coloro che sono passati al nemico, qualunque sia stato il motivo che li abbia spinti a farlo. Molto duro è per Proska il momento in cui si ritrova di fronte agli ex compagni al rientro dalla sconfitta, con «i volti vuoti e gli occhi assenti e incavati» (Lenz, *Il disertore* 231), il cui disprezzo verso il suo tradimento è tale da non fargli proferire parola. Dal punto di vista storico, nella Germania nazista i dati registrano un numero senza precedenti

di condanne per diserzione, punite con un rigore tale da far risultare il sistema giuridico del Terzo Reich secondo solo a quello sovietico (Fritsche 35) e solo nel 2005 i disertori e altre vittime della giustizia militare nazista sono stati completamente riabilitati, ricevendo il riconoscimento dello *status* di vittime (Fritsche 38-39). Anche a livello sociale, i disertori erano costretti a vivere da *outsider* per tutta la vita, rinnegati dalle loro stesse famiglie e apostrofati come traditori della Patria, codardi, deboli o anche «effeminati» (Fritsche 36), in quanto ritenuti carenti delle virtù virili del guerriero. Pur accennandole, Lenz non si sofferma a lungo sulle conseguenze politiche e sociali per il disertore Proska, ma è piuttosto interessato al processo interiore che conduce il giovane a maturare la sua scelta, consapevole di quel che questa comporta, per il personaggio come per il suo autore.

La denuncia dei sistemi totalitari

Per quanto Lenz affermi in più occasioni di voler lasciare al lettore il giudizio su persone e situazioni (Gregor-Dellin 8), esistono alcuni casi in cui la sua letteratura esprime in misura netta la sentenza dello scrittore. Ciò sembra riguardare soprattutto quei personaggi creati per rappresentare un'intera categoria e quindi stilizzati nei loro tratti fisici e morali, come nei discorsi e nelle azioni. Proprio come nel caso del padre di Sigg Jepsen, che nel ricordo del figlio incarna «[l']eterno esecutore. L'impeccabile esecutore» (Lenz, *Lezione* 64), che agisce per dovere e in modo meccanico, mai per volontà propria. Ne *Il disertore*, questa figura veste i panni del sottufficiale Willi Stehauf, responsabile del forte in cui staziona la compagnia di Proska. Stehauf compare da subito come il sostituto di un "fantasma", il suo predecessore alla guida del gruppo di soldati e che un giorno era sparito senza lasciare traccia. Gottlieb Hoffmann – così si chiamava il responsabile precedente – aveva denominato il forte *Waldesruh*, "quiete silvestre", ma negli anni le intemperie avevano cancellato parte dell'insegna, di cui ormai si riesce a distinguere solo «...esruh» (Lenz, *Il disertore* 48), "riposa" – quasi una macabra condanna per i suoi inquilini. Al primo responsabile, dal nome devoto e portatore di speranza (il nome Gottlieb richiama l'amore di Dio e il cognome Hoffmann l'uomo che spera), subentra un soggetto rigido e insensibile, il prototipo del seguace hitleriano, che porta impressi i principi superomistici e la disciplina militare (Willi evoca la *Wille*, "volontà", promossa dalla filosofia di Nietzsche e dal credo nazista, e Stehauf risuona

come l'imperativo "alzati!"). Stehauf rappresenta il peggior prodotto della guerra e del militarismo tedesco, che hanno ormai forgiato macchine disumane, mostri di una propaganda vuota e di un'azione letale. Tutti i suoi sottoposti lo temono e lo odiano perché riconoscono in lui un individuo cinico e crudele, anche là dove gli altri vorrebbero aggrapparsi all'ultimo barlume di umanità. Di fronte al cadavere dilaniato di un soldato colpito dai partigiani, per esempio, il responsabile della compagnia organizza in fretta la sua sepoltura e pronuncia poche parole di rito, nelle quali emerge la sua indifferenza in contrasto con il dolore e le attenzioni dei compagni:

"Camerati. La carne vuole stare con la carne e la terra con la terra. Stani, il nostro Papatka, è di terra. [...] Piangiamo la perdita di un bravo camerata. Stani era un buon amico. Che il diavolo si porti queste zanzare! Quel che volevo dire è che Stani è caduto per il suo Führer e il Grande Reich Tedesco. [...] Che altro volevo dire, ancora... Tonto e Proska, su, sistematelo qui dentro. [...] Proska si inginocchiò e distese il suo fazzoletto sul volto dilaniato. "Quello è proprietà della Wehrmacht?" Chiese Willi. "No. È di mia sorella Maria". "In tal caso è un altro paio di maniche. Addio Stani. Prima o poi ci rivediamo. [...] Bon, adesso potete coprire [...] anche questa è fatta" (Lenz, *Il disertore* 61-62).

Diverse sono, invece, le reazioni dei commilitoni, che porteranno sempre impresso il ricordo dell'amico, ma anche della disumanità del loro superiore. Sono loro i veri eroi di questa guerra, gli unici a non cedere mai del tutto alla barbarie bellica.

Nella seconda parte del romanzo, a inquietare il lettore – e questa volta anche Proska – è il colonnello sovietico, che accoglie il giovane adepto senza scomporsi, mentre continua a pulirsi le unghie delle mani con un coltellino:

Di tanto in tanto è una cosa che va fatta. [...] Sotto le unghie si deposita il nero della tradizione, e siccome aumenta alla svelta e nessuno vuole portarne il peso, di quando in quando lo si gratta via. Lo sai perché tra le scimmie non c'è progresso? Perché non hanno ancora scoperto il significato rivoluzionario dell'igiene. [...] Sembri preoccupato del fatto che io sappia quel che credi di sapere solo tu. Credimi, è l'unica possibilità di condurre una rivoluzione senza rischi. [...] Perché abbiamo rivalutato la coscienza dei singoli a vantaggio di una coscienza collettiva? Perché ci siamo dati tanto da fare per intrufolarci tra i vostri gangli? Perché abbiamo scavato nelle vostre vite come vermi di terra? Ebbene: perché abbiamo capito che la rivoluzione può riuscire solo a una condizione. E tale condizione è che sappiamo quel che voi sapete [...] (Lenz, *Il disertore* 235)

Questa scena svela al protagonista gli ingranaggi di un sistema che si regge senza apparente spargimento di sangue, ma che intrappola in meccanismi psicologici complessi e pericolosi. L'onore, l'igiene, il controllo sono concetti ormai abusati e contro cui lo scrittore mette implicitamente in guardia, affinché tutti ne siano coscienti. La fredda crudeltà dell'ufficiale nazista, prima, e del colonnello sovietico, dopo, spinge il lettore a riflettere sulle strutture concrete dei sistemi politici del presente e del passato recente, ma anche ad allargare la prospettiva sui principi generali che reggono i totalitarismi e da cui l'umanità non può mai dirsi del tutto esentata. Questa volta, Lenz delinea in maniera del tutto negativa i due personaggi, senza dare margine di interpretazione: non esistono giustificazioni per chi gestisce un sistema basato sulla violazione delle libertà e che persegue il proprio interesse a scapito delle masse. Responsabilità di ogni singolo è riconoscere e opporsi a simili principi per difendere il bene dell'umanità.

Siegfried Lenz e Walter Proška: rinuncia individuale e responsabilità collettiva

Dietro il triste destino di Proška si nasconde il grande coraggio di un uomo disposto a rinunciare a ogni felicità per compiere la scelta che ritiene più giusta. L'ex soldato ed ex impiegato sovietico sceglie di non accontentarsi degli onori della storia e di una società che, di volta in volta, si illude di essere dalla parte giusta. Non lo fa perché, in fondo, avverte chiaro il richiamo ad assumersi responsabilità umane che trascendano il limite delle ideologie per estendersi all'intero genere, senza distinzioni di sorta. Nel romanzo, Lenz lascia l'articolazione di questi principi a Pandilatte, che, dopo aver denunciato le deviazioni del sistema, declama:

Guarda, Walter: noi nel mondo dobbiamo orientarci verso il bene. Suona banale, lo so. Ma siccome il male si mostra sotto varie spoglie, è necessario riconsiderare i propositi infetti, individuare i punti guasti e suturare i buchi nei risultati dei ragionamenti. E ciò richiede una capacità analitica mostruosamente grande e una sincerità radicale nei propri confronti. Bisogna avere la forza di dare un calcio a una cosa a cui si è corso dietro per vent'anni quando si arriva a riconoscere che questa non è solo sbagliata, ma anche cattiva, subdola, pericolosa e assassina. [...] Gli uomini che la pensano come noi devono stringersi insieme ovunque. La comunità degli assennati è piccola (Lenz, *Il disertore* 76-77).

Questo passaggio rappresenta un invito appassionato alla «comunità degli assennati», affinché essa non reprima ancora quel che conosce e che gli altri – la maggioranza – non riescono a distinguere. L'azione da intraprendere è un dovere verso la propria abilità di discernimento, di cui il mondo, un giorno, forse sarà grato. Eppure, lo stesso Pandilatte, che non ha dubbi nel condannare il sistema nazista, appare cieco di fronte alla spregevolezza dell'organizzazione dei sovietici. Sarà Proska, a quel punto, a incarnare il messaggio e proseguire l'azione messianica, là dove l'amico è ormai caduto vittima della propaganda.

Proponendo un ultimo parallelismo tra i romanzi, si vuole qui notare come la riflessione sul passato quale atto di maturazione, se non di riconciliazione con le proprie azioni, sia un aspetto molto caro a Lenz, che impegna il protagonista della *Lezione di tedesco* in un lungo tema su «Le gioie del dovere» (Lenz, *Lezione* 11) e Walter Proska con la lettera-confessione alla sorella Maria. Lo fa non per condannare i suoi personaggi a perire sotto il peso della colpa, ma semmai per permettere loro di rielaborare il passato in un'esperienza comune, per quanto dolorosa, a tutta una generazione. In un'intervista, lo scrittore afferma, infatti:

Credo che non solo si facciano esperienze, ma si venga anche permeati dalle esperienze, cioè costretti dalle esperienze a esaminare i propri bisogni, a esaminare le proprie preoccupazioni, i propri progetti rispetto a ciò che resta da fare ogni volta. [...] e per quel che mi riguarda, mi sento un po' legato a questa esperienza generazionale, perché per me non si ferma, di sicuro mi occuperà ancora per qualche tempo con ciò che in essa è incompiuto (Gregor-Dellin 1).

Da queste parole si evince l'esigenza, per la società post-bellica, di riconsiderare quel che è stato, affinché se ne ricavi l'insegnamento necessario per costruire un presente più consapevole e un futuro libero dalle zavorre del passato. Il mancato confronto con la storia recente, in cui molti tedeschi preferiscono rifugiarsi negli anni del secondo dopoguerra, non sembra essere per Lenz una soluzione accettabile, dato che non permetterebbe un affrancamento reale per il singolo, né produrrebbe alcun utile per la comunità. Condividere il ricordo, anche se doloroso, implica un'apertura al confronto che coincide con l'assunzione della più alta forma di responsabilità, verso se stessi e verso la propria generazione, ma anche per i posteri, che potranno riflettere senza dover ripetere gli stessi errori. Storie come quella de *Il disertore* hanno, dunque, lo scopo di interrogarsi su quanto accaduto e sulle ragioni che hanno spinto interi gruppi di persone

a operare il male in modo attivo contro gli altri, pur riconoscendo la loro comune condizione di innocenti (Gregor-Dellin 2). Ciò serve all'autore, che compie la sua indagine più approfondita nel corso dell'attività di scrittura, come al lettore, che può scoprire aspetti di sé, della società e della storia attraverso le parole di qualcun altro. La letteratura assume, pertanto, una funzione didattica fondamentale nell'ambito dell'evoluzione umana.

Ancora, uno dei grandi meriti di Siegfried Lenz è stato quello di saper difendere la sua opera da rimaneggiamenti che ne avrebbero mutato il nucleo, incassando un rifiuto comprensibile, ma non accettabile: se per quegli anni *Il disertore* rappresentava un testo superfluo e con un tema troppo spinoso per gli equilibri politici, questo non sarebbe dovuto necessariamente valere per sempre. D'altronde, lui stesso lo dichiara al suo intervistatore, quando difende la responsabilità di ogni autore verso il proprio testo e non «nei confronti di istituzioni immaginarie, né di posizioni di coscienza reboanti, né di un riflesso male interpretato che dalla società ritorna allo scrittore, ma esclusivamente verso il suo testo. E se [lo scrittore] agisce in modo sufficientemente responsabile nei confronti del suo testo senza essere nella posizione di escludere tutti i malintesi per sempre, allora penso che stia facendo abbastanza» (Gregor-Dellin 7).

Contro le censure più o meno oppressive dei tempi, Lenz si impone un atto di coraggio che, nel caso in esame, esula da azioni eclatanti, quasi come una resistenza silenziosa ai diversi sistemi che si avvicendano nella storia politica dei popoli. Prendendo in prestito le parole del pittore Max Ludwig Nansen, vittima della disapprovazione nazista in *Lezione di tedesco*, non esiste censura che potrà mai esaurire la potenza dell'arte e dei suoi messaggi:

Quei folli, come se non sapessero che è impossibile. Vietare di dipingere! Con i loro mezzi forse possono fare molto, possono impedire un'infinità di cose, può darsi, ma questa no: è impossibile che uno smetta di dipingere. Altri, molto prima di loro, ci hanno già provato. Non hanno che da leggere e informarsi: non c'è mai stato un modo per difendersi dai quadri indesiderati. Non è servito né mettere al bando né accecare. Ci hanno fatto tagliare le mani, ma noi abbiamo dipinto con la bocca. Che stupidi, come se non sapessero che esistono quadri invisibili (Lenz, *Lezione* 37).

In qualche modo, *Il disertore* aspira a diventare uno di quei «quadri invisibili» a cui fa accenno Nansen, e rimane riposto pazientemente in un cassetto, in attesa che qualcun altro, in tempi più propizi, si accorga della sua storia e avverta la responsabilità di trasmetterne il messaggio.



- 1 La città di Elk (in tedesco Lyck) è il centro più esteso della Masuria. La regione, un tempo territorio della Prussia, dal 1945 è passato alla Polonia e ha attribuito il nome attuale alla città che diede i natali a Siegfried Lenz.
- 2 Sul finire della Seconda Guerra Mondiale, i soldati della *Kriegsmarine* nelle acque della Danimarca vengono chiamati al fronte. Con una guerra ormai persa, molti soldati rispondono all'ordine suicida con la fuga, alcuni unendosi alla resistenza danese – tra loro, anche Lenz. Lo scrittore viene poi catturato e fatto prigioniero di guerra dalle truppe britanniche, presso cui è impiegato come interprete fino alla sua liberazione (Maletzke cap. 2).
- 3 Il Gruppo 47 (*Gruppe 47*) è stato un circolo culturale nato a Monaco nel 1947, a cui aderirono molti giovani scrittori tedeschi. Loro scopo era la rinascita intellettuale della Germania dopo la difficile parentesi nazista, in un'ottica di formazione democratica che tendeva a sinistra. Sebbene non esistesse una vera e propria linea programmatica, l'orientamento degli autori propendeva per una scrittura impegnata, attenta alle questioni più attuali e alla storia recente, con cui il Paese doveva necessariamente fare i conti. Gli incontri semestrali prevedevano la lettura di manoscritti ancora inediti, poi commentati dagli altri partecipanti. Organo del gruppo fu la rivista *Der Ruf* (La chiamata), gestita da Alfred Andersch e Hans Werner Richter e nata su iniziativa degli Stati Uniti per promuovere nei campi del Rhode Island la rieducazione dei prigionieri di guerra tedeschi. Rientrati in Germania, i redattori ne conservarono il nome, mantenendo l'originaria impostazione democratica e anti-nazista, per poi cadere sotto la censura statunitense nel 1967. Lo stesso anno segnò anche il dissolvimento del Gruppo, che si riunì per l'ultima volta a Princeton, negli Stati Uniti. Siegfried Lenz ha partecipato alle sue riunioni, con qualche intervallo, dal 1952 al 1967. Per approfondimenti sul gruppo e sulla rivista, si rimanda a Somenzari.
- 4 Come sottolinea Baßmann, il realismo di Lenz è da intendersi non come rappresentazione oggettiva di fatti e persone, ma piuttosto nell'impegno a mostrare «il mondo esterno in modo tale che il lettore possa trovare punti di riferimento e abbia la possibilità di riconoscersi in situazioni simili» (90).
- 5 Mittner enuncia tra i meriti di Lenz una «rara sicurezza morale, linearità coerente del tema narrativo, abile collegamento dei personaggi e delle

idee che da idee dell'autore diventano idee dei personaggi [...]], fino a riconoscerlo, se non come grande autore, «fra gli scrittori di oggi forse il solo sempre serio e veramente serio: sa ciò che vuol dire e come lo deve dire e sa restare rigorosamente entro i limiti di ciò che vuole dire. Perciò non delude mai il lettore neppure nelle opere meno riuscite» (1763).

- 6 Peter Brenner ha sottolineato i rapporti della letteratura nelle due Germanie con il cosiddetto *Nullpunkt* (“punto zero”), o *Stunde Null* (“ora zero”), rilevando come questo concetto abbia guidato la zona occidentale verso una rottura programmatica con le strutture e l’ideologia nazionalsocialiste, là dove nell’area orientale il nuovo inizio poteva concepirsi solo in virtù di una solida coscienza critica del passato (33). In entrambi i casi, però, la nuova epoca e la sua letteratura si configurano come fase matura di un processo che, più che derivare da uno stadio precedente, riflette su di esso da una prospettiva distaccata e privilegiata. Pur conservando questo vantaggio, Lenz sembra invece voler affermare la sostanziale inconsistenza di questo nuovo inizio, che muta solo nella forma i principi che avevano retto la società tedesca fino al 1945.
- 7 Il personaggio del vecchio Adomeit compare soltanto nel primo capitolo, ma introduce il lettore a riflessioni fondamentali, che avrà modo di sviluppare nel corso della narrazione. Due, in particolare, sono i nuclei più importanti: il primo riguarda la guerra come evento essenzialmente identico a se stesso, ossia come ripetizione costante degli errori e degli orrori lungo la storia, che vede innocenti combattere e uccidere altri innocenti senza un vero scopo; il secondo nucleo mira a focalizzare l’attenzione sul ricordo, definito, in maniera provocatoria, come inutile, in quanto la storia non riesce a trarne insegnamento. Adomeit si chiede, infatti: «“[...] A che giova ricordare cose simili? Lo faccia chi può trarne qualche insegnamento. Chi non può, dovrebbe preoccuparsi di quel che l’affligge oggi; è più importante”. Adomeit tacque e guardò la siringa. [...] Aveva l’impressione di aver detto più di quanto desiderasse; era irritato» (Lenz, *Il disertore* 12).



Opere citate, Œuvres citées,
Zitierte Literatur, Works Cited



- Baßmann, Winfried. *Siegfried Lenz: Sein Werk als Beispiel für Weg und Standort der Literatur in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*. Bonn: Bouvier, 1978.
- Berg, Günter. *Origini dell'opera*, in Lenz, Siegfried. *Il disertore*, trad. it. di Riccardo Cravero, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2017.
- Böttiger, Helmut. *Die Gruppe 47. Als die deutsche Literatur Geschichte schrieb*. Stuttgart: DVA, 2012.
- Brenner, Peter J. "Nachkriegsliteratur". *Deutsche Literatur zwischen 1945 und 1995*. A cura di Horst A. Glaser, Bern - Stuttgart - Wien: Haupt, 1997, pp. 33-57.
- Calzoni, Raul. *La letteratura tedesca del secondo dopoguerra. L'età delle macerie e della ricostruzione (1945-1961)*. Roma: Carocci, 2018.
- Fritsche, Maria. "Proving One's Manliness: Masculine Self-perceptions of Austrian Deserters in the Second World War". *Gender & History*, vol. 24, n.1, aprile 2012, pp. 35-55.
- Gregor-Dellin, Martin. "Gespräch mit Siegfried Lenz", *TEXT + KRITIK, Zeitschrift für Literatur*, n. 52: Siegfried Lenz, München, 1982, pp. 1-8.
- Lenz, Siegfried. *Il disertore*, trad. it. di Riccardo Cravero, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2017.
- Lenz, Siegfried. *Lezione di tedesco*, trad. it. di Luisa Coeta, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2015.
- Lenz, Siegfried. *Beziehungen: Ansichten und Bekenntnisse zur Literatur*. München: dtv, 1972.
- Maletzke, Erich. *Siegfried Lenz: Eine biographische Annäherung*. Springe: zu Klampen, 2014, versione kindle.
- Michelmann, Gottfried. "Lettera ad Alfred Andersch del 4 aprile 1953", Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, cit. in Böttiger, Helmut. *Die Gruppe 47: Als die deutsche Literatur Geschichte schrieb*, München: DVA, 2012.
- Mittner, Ladislao. *Storia della letteratura tedesca. Dal Realismo alla Sperimentazione (1890-1970)*. v. 2, Torino: Einaudi, 1971.
- Pätzold, Hartmut. "Zeitgeschichte und Zeitkritik im Werk von Siegfried Lenz". *TEXT + KRITIK, Zeitschrift für Literatur*, n. 52: Siegfried Lenz, München, 1982, pp. 9-15.
- Somenzari, Francesca. *Da «Der Ruf» al Gruppo 47. La politica americana di denazificazione e gli intellettuali tedeschi del dopoguerra*. Torino: SEB27, 2017.

Note sugli autori
Notices sur les collaborateurs
Notes on Contributors
Die Autoren

Béatrice Laurent, is Professor of Victorian studies at the Université Bordeaux-Montaigne. A Pre-Raphaelite scholar, Béatrice has published several articles on Victorian art, edited a volume of essays on William Morris (*News from Nowhere*, ed. Du Temps, 2004) and authored *La Peinture anglaise* (ed. Du Temps, 2006). Her broader fields of interest are the zones of conceptual overlap between art, science and literature in Victorian culture. This interdisciplinary approach was implemented in her edited volume, *Sleeping Beauties in Victorian Britain: Cultural, Literary and Artistic Explorations of a Myth* (Peter Lang, 2015), and in her monograph *Women and Water in the Victorian Imagination* (Peter Lang, 2021).

Giuliana Iannaccaro, is Professor of English Literature and Anglophone Literatures at the Università degli Studi di Milano. She has published extensively in the field of early modern English studies: on gender rhetoric, political and religious controversial literature, the writings of the religious radicals of the English Revolution, censorship, and Elizabeth I's foreign correspondence. Another field of interest concerns South African literature in English, with a particular focus on the relationship between South African narrative and history. She is currently investigating the connection between religious missions and late 19th- / early 20th-century South African literature. She has published on J. M. Coetzee, Zakes Mda, André Brink, Mtutuzeli Matshoba, Sindiwe Magona, Zoë Wicomb, and Herbert Dhlomo.

Pierpaolo Martino, is Associate Professor of English Literature at the University of Bari, Italy. His fields of enquiry include Wilde Studies, Cultural Studies and Word and Music Studies. He has published on Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf, Colin MacInnes, Alan Sillitoe, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Kamau Brathwaite, Michael Ondaatje, Paul Auster, Hari Kunzru, Hanif Kureishi, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Salman Rushdie, Nick Cave, Morrissey and Radiohead. He is the author of five monographs: *Virginia Woolf: la musica del faro* (2003), *Down in Albion: studi sulla cultura pop inglese* (2007), *Mark the Music. The Language of Music in English Literature from Shakespeare to Salman Rushdie* (2012), *La Filosofia di David Bowie. Wilde, Kemp e la musica come teatro* (2016), *Leggere Ziggy. David Bowie e la letteratura inglese da George Orwell a Hanif Kureishi* (2022) and editor of *Exodus: studi sulla letteratura anglo-caraiibica* (2009), *Words and Music. Studi sui rapporti tra letteratura e musica in ambito anglofono* (2015) and *Wilde World. Una tavola rotonda su Oscar Wilde* (2022) with Laura Giovannelli.

Éva Pataki, is an assistant professor at the North American Department, Institute of English and American Studies, University of Debrecen, Hungary. She defended her doctoral dissertation, *Space, Movement and Identity in Contemporary British Asian Fiction*, at the University of Debrecen in 2015. Her main area of research is postcolonial literature and a comprehensive study of identity, with a specific focus on contemporary literature and film of the South Asian diaspora. She published three book chapters (in *The Routledge Companion to Pakistani Anglophone Writing*, 2018; *Space, Gender and the Gaze in Literature and Art*, 2017; and *Cultural Imprints in the Age of Globalization: Writing Region and Nation*, 2012, respectively) as well as essays and reviews about British Asian fiction in *Filológiai Közlöny*, *The AnaChronisT*, and *HJEAS*, among others.

Alessandra Petrina, (M.A., The Warburg Institute, Ph.D., University of Venice) is Professor of English Literature at the Università di Padova, Italy. Her research focuses primarily on late-medieval and early modern intellectual history, and on Anglo-Italian cultural relations. She has published, among others, *The Kingis Quair* (1997), *Cultural Politics in Fifteenth-century England. The Case of Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester*

(2004), and *Machiavelli in the British Isles. Two Early Modern Translations of the Prince* (2009). Her latest book is *Petrarch's Triumph in the British Isles* (MHRA Tudor and Stuart Translation Series, 2020), which won in 2022 the annual Prize of the Italian Association of English Studies.

Renata Gambino, Associate professor of German Literature at the University of Catania, she is Director of the Interdisciplinary Research center NEW-HUMS - Neurocognitive and Humanities Studies and co-founder of the digital platform <www.neurohumanitiestudies.eu>; she is responsible for the Catania unit of the Erasmus+ project ENID-TEACH devoted to innovation in digital pedagogy at university level. She is Co-editor of the book series *Wunderkammer* published by Mimesis (Milan). She was MC member in the international COST project E-READ inquiring into reading processes and her main areas of research include the *Goethezeit*, the German fairy tale tradition, travel literature, literary anthropology, visual culture and cognitive poetics, reading response processes.

Erik Schilling, teaches German and Comparative Literature, currently at the University of Bern. He studied classics and modern literature at the universities of Munich, Pavia, Salamanca, and Stanford and received his PhD with a thesis on Umberto Eco and Eco's reception in Germany. He was a postdoctoral scholar at Oxford, where he finished his second book ('habilitation'), analyzing hymnic poetry. He is a member of the Young Academy of the Leopoldina, the German National Academy of Sciences. In 2020, he was awarded the Heinz Maier Leibnitz prize of the German Research Foundation (DFG).

Maurizio Pirro, is Full Professor of German Literature at the University of Milan. He has worked on 18th century literature, Klassische Moderne and contemporary literature in books, essays, translations, and critical editions.

Giulia Frare, è docente a contratto di Letteratura Tedesca presso l'Università degli Studi di Trieste. Si è occupata della ricezione della letteratura del Barocco nella prima metà del Novecento tedesco, nonché di

autori come Franz Kafka, Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht e Alfred Döblin. Tra il 2021 e il 2022 ha lavorato a un progetto di ricerca che approfondisce il legame tra la Trieste absburgica e gli scrittori Ricarda Huch, Hermann Bahr e Rainer Maria Rilke.

Maria Giovanna Campobasso, is a research fellow in German Literature at the University of Bologna and a teaching assistant in German Culture at the University of Milan. Between 2021 and 2022 she was as an Ernst-Mach Post-Doctoral fellow at Brenner-Archiv, Innsbruck University, where she worked on Karl Kraus's self-rewriting practices. She holds a Ph.D. in German Literature from the Universities of Palermo and Düsseldorf, where she graduated in 2021 with a dissertation on Friedrich Hebbel. In 2017 and 2021 she was awarded a CMEPIUS research grant for research projects in German literature to be carried out at the University of Ljubljana. She studied in Bari, Udine, Leipzig, Potsdam, and Melbourne. Her research interests include dramatic theory, the intertwining of war and literature and newspaper culture in the German-speaking world.

Siegrun Wildner, is Professor at the Department of Languages and Literatures at the University of Northern Iowa, USA. Her main areas of research, publications, and teaching are Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Intercultural Studies, and Twentieth Century European Literature. Selected publications: "Language of Witness: Survivor Testimony and Narrative Representation of the Mauthausen Experience," *The Many Languages of Comparative Literature: Discourses on Nations and Identities Vol. 3* (De Gruyter 2021); "Von Grenzen und Grenzgängern in der deutschsprachigen Südtiroler Literatur" (*Oxford German Studies* 2019); "Hybrid Testimony and Moral Indictment: A Survivor's Poetic Response to the Mauthausen Nazi Concentration Camp Experience," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* (Oxford UP 2015); (*Worte. Zeitgenössische Literatur aus und über Südtirol* (Innsbruck Studienverlag 2005).

Waltraud Maierhofer, is a professor of German and in the Global Health Studies Program at the University of Iowa. Her research and teaching examine representations of unplanned pregnancy, reproductive rights, and

disability rights in German and global cultures. She has been a recipient of several Alexander von Humboldt awards. Between 2015 and 2018, she co-edited the journal *Feminist German Studies* (formerly *Women in German Yearbook*). With Beth Widmaier Capo, she co-edited *Reproductive Rights Issues in Popular Media: International Perspectives* (McFarland Publishing, 2017).

Francesca Ottavio, obtained a PhD in 2019. She is currently an adjunct professor of German literature at the University of Calabria. Her studies focus on the literary production of colonial Germany, investigated starting from the works of Frieda von Bülow. In 2021 she published the monograph *Frieda von Bülow. Dal romanzo coloniale alla scrittura femminile*. She is also author of the essays on Else Lasker-Schüler and on Expressionism, published in the volume: F. La Manna - F. Ottavio (eds.), «*Der Sturm*» (1910-1932). *Rivista di letteratura, arte e musica dell'Espressionismo tedesco* (Guida 2018).

Abstracts

Béatrice Laurent, *How the Victorians Saw Things*

In the space of three eventful generations, the Victorians witnessed and contributed to profound transformations affecting industry, culture, art and science. Such upheavals required a permanent adaptation of the gaze to understand a changing world. This modified gaze was generated by new points of view, which displaced the observer from his traditional, physical or mental, distant and frontal position. The hegemony of the front-view linear perspective started to crumble in the nineteenth century. Things did not necessarily have to be seen at eye level, from a distance. Objects could now be seen from above, or in close-up, or from inside. These new perspectives affected as much as they were the result of, changing relations between the human subject and the outside world.

Giuliana Iannaccaro, *Missionaries, Literature, and Censorship in South Africa. Early Twentieth-Century Cultural Dynamics*

Since the late 1990s, after the demise of apartheid, literary criticism concerning South African textual production has mainly focused on contemporary issues, with the question of apartheid censorship at the forefront. Black and white writers under the National Party underwent pre- and post-publication censorship from 1954 (with the first Commission of Inquiry against “Undesirable Publications”) to the Publications and Entertainments Acts of 1963 and 1974. Less attention has been paid to the

pre-apartheid period, even if the first decades of the twentieth century are essential to grasp the meaning and the relevance of what happened in the near future.

The aim of this article is to shed some light on the missionary societies' publishing activities in the South African early twentieth-century context. I investigate the ambivalent relationship between black writers and the various European missions present on the territory. Like the Scottish Lovedale Mission Station, some educational institutions held the means of literary production (the printing presses) and acted as pre-publication censors, approving or refusing the manuscripts submitted for their acceptance. Yet, and somehow paradoxically, even missionaries could feel they were being controlled by a censorious governmental system when, for instance, their publications were stigmatised for taking too openly the side of the 'natives' – to the point of being confiscated for alleged subversive activities.

Just because early twentieth-century South African cultural dynamics are many-sided and challenging, a brief investigation into some exemplary cases is meant to raise issues and promote further research.

Pierpaolo Martino, *Philip Larkin and jazz: from journalism to poetry*

Philip Larkin wrote about jazz at times in contradictory terms but with a passion and devotion which probably have no equals in Post-War Britain, and which convey the sense of richness and the very excitement and pleasure the writer associated with this music, as it is witnessed by his writings included in *All What Jazz* – the collected edition of the reviews originally published in *The Telegraph*, where he was jazz critic from 1961 to 1968. In the present paper, we will read Larkin's poetic achievements and in particular two of his jazz-related poems – “For Sidney Bechet” (*The Whitsun Wedding*, 1964) and “Reasons for Attendance” (*The Less Deceived*, 1955) – showing how, in their *dialogical* complexity and polyphony, they present features that allow us to rethink and rearticulate the poet's relationship with jazz, exceeding conventional readings which consider Larkin exclusively interested in (and influenced by) traditional jazz, to investigate similarities between his literary style and modern jazz, and more specifically with the cool jazz of Miles Davis' late Fifties masterpiece *Kind of Blue*.

Éva Pataki, “*The Final Continent*”: Geographies of Emotions and Emotional Geographies in Jhumpa Lahiri’s Short Fiction

According to Davidson et al. (2007) emotional geography has “a common concern with the spatiality and temporality of emotions, with the way they coalesce around and within certain places.” A study of literary representations of the spatiality of emotions may be especially suitable for unraveling the complex emotional relations between people and environments, and may lead to a better understanding of geographies of emotions and emotional geographies, the ways feelings generate and mediate our behaviors in and attitudes to places and spaces through embodied and lived experience, and emotional associations. The paper maps the location and formation of emotions in people, places, and atmospheres, investigating the interconnections between individuals’ sense of place, remembering through place, and affective relationships in a selection of Jhumpa Lahiri’s short stories. My analysis primarily focuses on the development of emotional attachment and a concomitant sense of belonging and self in the characters, as well as of their evolving affective relationships with people and (remembered) places, and argues that the two processes intertwine, are mutually constructive and constantly changing, since emotions are fundamentally “relational flows, fluxes or currents, in-between people and places” (Davidson et al, 2007).

Alessandra Petrina, *Horcrux or Hallow? Magical projections of the psyche in the Harry Potter series*

As Harry Potter and his friends grow, so do the intended readers, who supposedly mirror the protagonist’s age and expectations: no longer children eager for amusing, occasionally even gratuitous, bits of magic, the intended readers of the second half of the series are adolescents who set their own experience in the context of a wider perspective, absorbing everyday reality through the news and the media. Rowling’s consciousness of the shift is underlined by a greater stress on events set in the non-magical world in the opening pages of the volumes following *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. The radical change of tone imposed by this structure cannot but bear deep implications for a number of factors in the narrative, from the development of the characters to the relation between events far apart in time; and since one of the most important factors in the novels is magic, it is interesting to explore what happens to it in this pattern of change that

entails the abandonment of illusions. Rowling's departure within a well-established genre from the imaginary into the real, first observed in her decision to set her novels in contemporary England though focussing on a fantastical setting, makes her handling of magic an extremely delicate matter. The Harry Potter saga, for all its insistence on enchanted castles and scarlet steam engines, is in fact a study in *Bildungsroman*, and the characters' psychology maintains primary importance in spite of the richness of details in the settings. It is only once Rowling makes magic part of the characters that it becomes structurally, not just superficially, satisfying. In the second part of the series magic becomes at last part of the story, while hitherto it had been used as an element of entertaining but almost superfluous decoration. The present paper studies this evolution, identifying in the dichotomy between horcruxes and hallows, highlighted in the final volume, an articulate metaphor of the ways in which good and evil are reflected in the individual psyche.

Renata Gambino, *Das Feenland Dschinnistan: Ursprung und Fortleben eines literarischen Motivs*

Fairy tales belong to complex mythological and utopian worlds that settle in collective memory and cross fertilize literary works in different times. This is the case of the imaginary land of *Jinnistan* [Dschinnistan], introduced in the German literary debate during the last three decades of the XVIII century by Johann Gottfried Herder and then populated with characters and stories by the fantasy of Christoph Martin Wieland. The history of that Orient-related mythological landscape, will be interpreted as a "Denkbild", and will be followed throughout the intertextual references present in the work of later authors Novalis and Karl May. Since images, and especially "images of thought", are rooted in a complex biocultural network, such an investigation requires a broad outlook on those intertextual references in order to interpret the relevance of their traces within a literary anthropological frame.

To this end, we will analyse the creation of the complex mythological world of Jinnistan referring to the framework of cultural studies and to the paradigm of cultural memory, understood as collective, identity shaping and embedded, to finally reflect on the anthropological value of this recurrent image of thought as a mean of resistance in times of crisis and of increased existential fear.

Erik Schilling, *La pluralità politica come tentativo di mediazione ne La montagna magica di Thomas Mann*

Abstract: The historical context plays a decisive role for Thomas Mann's "The Magic Mountain". The novel is set in the years before World War I; the beginning of the war marks the end of the story. At the same time, Thomas Mann integrates essential political debates of the Weimar Republic into the pre-war debates, as represented by the characters Naphta and Settembrini in particular. This concerns above all the question of the best form of state – monarchy or republic – on which Thomas Mann himself had taken a stand in various publications.

In his "Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man", which appeared shortly before the end of the war in 1918, Thomas Mann had positioned himself in favor of the monarchy. As an antagonist, Mann used the so-called 'Zivilisationsliterat' [civilization's literary man], a cosmopolitan and democratic character, as embodied in many respects by Settembrini in "The Magic Mountain". At the same time, however, Mann's position cannot simply be identified with that of Settembrini's opponent Naphta; for Mann had distanced himself from his earlier position in his 1922 speech "On the German Republic" in which he called for the republic at least to be recognized as the actually existing form of state.

Against the background of Thomas Mann's political positionings, "The Magic Mountain" can be understood as a continuation of the debate by other – namely literary – means. In the political statements of his essays and speeches during World War I and the early Weimar Republic, Mann does not succeed in developing a coherent political position. In "The Magic Mountain", by contrast, i.e., in the fictional work, the deficit of a clear-cut political position can be turned into an advantage: into an ambivalence that precisely does not take sides, but allows different voices to speak and contradict each other, without unifying or synthesizing them. "The Magic Mountain" can therefore be seen as Thomas Mann's literary closing point of the political debates of the war and early postwar years – as an attempt of mediation between the different political positions by presenting a political plurality.

Maurizio Pirro, *Paul Ernst's Erdachte Gespräche. On the twilight of a popular genre*

Paul Ernst published his *Erdachte Gespräche* in 1921. This first edition collects 44 texts, mostly short. In 1931 Ernst publishes the dialogues again

in the sixth book of his *Gesammelte Werke*, which gathers his theoretical writings. Since Ernst writes each piece randomly over time and only publishes them later on, any attempt to recognize an unambiguous intention behind the texts is problematic, as that would imply the existence of an organic thought behind the entire body of work. However, Ernst's intention to attribute a parareligious value to the form by reconstructing it through the exercise of the plastic skills of an exceptional group of personalities is clear. This aspiration is an element of continuity between Ernst's later work, such as the *Erdachte Gespräche*, and the neoclassical cult of ancient tragedy that he cultivated in the turn of the century.

Giulia Frare, *I soggiorni duinesi di Rainer Maria Rilke: per una topografia della memoria tra storia e immaginazione*

Between 1910 and 1914 Rainer Maria Rilke spent several months in the Duino Castle as guest of Marie von Thurn und Taxis. His sojourns in the ancient fortress overlooking the Gulf of Trieste inspired not only the poetry masterpiece which owes its name to that place, the *Duino Elegies*, but also other literary projects, such as *The Life of the Virgin Mary*, some translations of Italian texts and a series of single poems. The Duino experience proved significant for the Prague author from a personal point of view as well: this period was characterized by relevant encounters, fruitful intellectual exchanges, evocative memories and inspiring landscapes, but also by silence, concealment and solitude. Examining both Rilke's and Marie von Thurn und Taxis' papers as well as documents of local history, the present article aims at outlining Rilke's relationship to Duino by tracing the places and identifying the people that marked, in different ways, the poet's experience on the Adriatic coast of the Habsburg Empire. Real sites which are nowadays only partly recognizable (like the Duino Castle itself and the path on the cliffs along the sea), people present there at Rilke's time and people belonging to the memory of his host's family history come to recreate a sort of virtual socio-geographical map including biographical and topographical data, personal memories and artistically transfigured experiences. These elements will prove to be closely connected with the author's literary production and his poetical considerations of those years and will therefore contribute to the interpretation of a crucial artistic phase in Rilke's oeuvre.

**Maria Giovanna Campobasso, “Erzherzog Friedrich rief Bumsti!”:
Karl Kraus e la tragedia della responsabilità**

This study aims to reconstruct the literary rendering of Friedrich von Österreich-Toskana, Archduke of Teschen, in Karl Kraus’ writing dated between 1900 and 1930. The Archduke, Supreme Commander of the Austro-Hungarian army, is one of the many historical figures that Kraus transforms into tragicomic characters for *Die Letzten Tage der Menschheit*. Every mention of the Archduke in the drama and in the *Fackel* paints the portrait of a simpleminded man, who is, above all, guilty of lacking any interest in the human cost of his decisions as Supreme Commander: in both works, Kraus obsessively refers to an anecdote dating back to the beginning of the war, when the Archduke reacted to a war film showing a mortar in action with an infantile “Bumsti!”. Kraus frames the Archduke’s detachment from this spectacle of death as a symptom of the corrupted sense of solidarity among men brought on by the war. Speaking of the Archduke allows Kraus to express his dissent against the choices made by the Habsburgs during World War I and publicly ask for accountability when it comes to those in power at the time of the conflict.

**Siegrun Wildner, „Gute Taten, das bedeutet Ruin!“ – Zur Moralkritik in
Bertolt Brechts Theaterstück Der gute Mensch von Sezuan**

In his parable play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* [*The Good Person of Szechwan*] Bertolt Brecht raises the question whether good deeds and unselfish generosity can be unconditionally appreciated in the market-oriented society in which the protagonist Shen Te lives. Her altruistic acts of charity are shamelessly exploited by others and push her toward financial ruin. Shen Te’s dilemma: Goodness seems incompatible with economic survival in a capitalist society. While studies of the socio-economic forces and the exploitation of the individual in Brecht’s drama from Marxist and other perspectives are readily available, the author’s complex dramaturgical debunking of “goodness” as a viable moral principle in a modern industrial society still warrants closer examination. This study aims to offer clarification on Brecht’s literary treatment of “goodness” within the context of philosophical thought. Specifically, it analyzes how Brecht probes the value and implications of “goodness” and social applicability in a variety of normative ethical contexts, such as deontological, eudemonistic, utilitarian, and Mohist thought. Brecht’s critical explorations, textual destabilizations, and exposure of different forms of

moral hollowness also reveal his own intellectual struggle to find an acceptable solution to the ongoing dilemma that he puts forward in his still timely play.

Waltraud Maierhofer, *Dystopias of Family Planning in the Novels Corpus Delicti (2009) by Juli Zeh and Das weiße Schloss (2018) by Christian Dittloff*

My contribution examines two recent German dystopian novels, *Corpus Delicti* (2009) by Juli Zeh and *Das weiße Schloss* (2018) by Christian Dittloff. I show how both take a careful, even warning stance with regard to possibilities offered by recent discoveries and developments in reproductive medicine and genetics. Zeh imagines a society that strictly controls who may reproduce by matching couples based on genetic compatibility, thus ensuring optimal health of the next generation. In Dittloff's novel, couples select the ideal birth and surrogate mother in order to optimize their own life experiences and careers as well as the prospects of their child. The article argues that both novels feature extrapolations of issues seen in today's societies in Germany and other high-income countries, namely consequences of hormonal contraceptives on mate selection, attempts to control the genetics of one's child, and pregnancy by gestational carrier.

Francesca Ottavio, “*Censura e responsabilità in Der Überläufer di Siegfried Lenz*”

Der Überläufer (*The Turncoat*, 2016) waited for sixty-five years before being published, two years after the death of its author, Siegfried Lenz. The novel had been submitted to the Hoffmann und Campe publishing house as early as 1951, but its content was considered unsuitable for post-war Germany, which was attempting to rise again from the ruins of more recent history by erasing its most controversial aspects. Particularly problematic were the issues related to the double desertion of the protagonist, who betrays his German comrades at the end of World War II and then refuses to yield to the oppressive system of Soviet rule in the GDR. As a member of the Group 47, which fell under American censorship in 1967, Lenz shared the Frankfurt School's admonition to reflect on history and individual and community responsibilities in the reconstruction of a freer and more democratic Germany, refusing to give in to the publisher's demands and preferring, on the contrary, to forego publication.

Rivista iscritta al n. 880 Reg. Stampa Periodica
dal Tribunale di Trieste in data 1 agosto 1994
ISSN: 1123-2684
E-ISSN: 2283-6438

Prospero è una pubblicazione annuale dell'Università degli Studi di Trieste. **Abbonamenti:** Euro 25,00. Per abbonamenti e richiesta arretrati rivolgersi a EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, Via Edoardo Weiss 21 34128 Trieste – Italia, tel: +390405586183 fax: +390405586133 email: eut@units.it. I **manoscritti**, di lunghezza non superiore alle 10.000 parole, vanno inviati in duplice copia (accompagnati da un file con estensione .doc o .rtf) al comitato di redazione al seguente indirizzo: *Prospero*, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università di Trieste, Androna Campo Marzio 10, 34123 Trieste. Si raccomanda di attenersi allo stile MLA per citazioni, note e bibliografia. A richiesta si invia una versione abbreviata delle regole MLA. Per ulteriori chiarimenti è possibile rivolgersi a Roberta Gefter (gelter@units.it). *Prospero* pubblica saggi sulle letterature di lingua inglese e tedesca. I manoscritti possono essere redatti in italiano, inglese e tedesco.

Prospero is an annual publication of the University of Trieste. **Subscription:** Euro 25,00. Apply to EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, Via Edoardo Weiss 21 34128 Trieste – Italia, tel: +390405586183 fax: +390405586133 email: eut@units.it. Submissions: **manuscripts**, which must not exceed 10000 words in length, should be submitted in duplicate (accompanied by a file .doc or .rtf) to the editors at the following address: *Prospero*, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università di Trieste, Androna Campo Marzio 10, 34123 Trieste. Authors should comply with the MLA style sheet, a shortened version of which may be obtained from the editor on request. Further information may be requested to Roberta Gefter (gelter@units.it). *Prospero* publishes essays on English, anglophone and German literatures. Contributions may be in Italian, English and German.

Prospero ist eine jährlich erscheinende Zeitschrift der Universität Triest. **Abonnementspreise** pro heft: 25,00 euro. Bestellung und Zahlung lautend auf EUT Edizioni Università di Trieste, Via Edoardo Weiss 21 34128 Trieste – Italia, tel: +390405586183 fax: +390405586133 email: eut@units.it. **Manuskripte**, die nicht mehr als 10000 Wörter umfassen und in zweifacher Kopie (mit beigelegtem file .doc oder .rtf) ausgeführt werden sollen, sind an den wissenschaftlichen Beirat mit der folgenden Adresse zu richten: *Prospero*, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici, Università di Trieste, Androna Campo Marzio 10, 34123 Trieste. Zitierungen, Anmerkungen und Bibliographie sollen den MLA-Richtlinien entsprechen, zu denen auf Anfrage ein kurzes Merkblatt verfügbar ist. Für weitere Fragen wenden Sie sich an folgende E-MAIL Adressen: Roberta Gefter (gelter@units.it). *Prospero* veröffentlicht Essays über englische und deutsche Literatur. Die Manuskripte können auf italienisch, englisch oder deutsch verfaßt werden.

