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TOPICS: REALITY AND REPRESENTATION

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EDITORIAL

Reality and Representation

The Problem

Mihaela GLIGOR

The Romanian Academy, Cluj-Napoca

Reality is different, for each and every one of us. Different is the manner in which we understand reality and also our personal representation of it. For some people reality is represented, simply, in everyday's life, but for others the representation of reality is transformed into art or literature. Thinking somehow beyond Derrida's own words, all of us can say "there is nothing outside *reality*". But also true is the fact that we live in the same world, and still we see different realities. Reality can be understood in a way that links it to world views or parts of them. Reality represents the totality of all things, structures (actual and conceptual), events (past and present) and phenomena, whether observable or not.

Reality is not (only) a philosophical term. Certain ideas from physics, sociology, literary or art criticism, and other fields shape various theories of reality, but following philosophy we can attach importance to this term and we can also deconstruct it. One such belief is that there simply and literally *is* no reality beyond the perceptions or beliefs we each have about reality itself. More than that, owing to representation, people know and understand the world and reality through the act of naming it. Signs are manipulated in

order to make sense of the world. Thus, representation of reality has been associated with aesthetics (art) and semiotics (signs).

By this special issue dedicated to Reality and Representation, *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* tries to present different approaches of the same reality, philosophically speaking. The present issue brings together articles signed by reputed professors and researchers from Romania, United States, India and United Kingdom and covers different panels, from logic, cognitive science and semantics; recent history and its meaning or art interpretations to specific case analysis (Jewish Sapiential Literature or Indian Museums and their relevance for the representation of reality).

The issue opens with *Gärdenfors' Conceptual Spaces and Affective Representations* by Dana Sugu and Amita Chatterjee, from Jadavpur University, Calcutta, an article in which they try to examine an emotion episode from its elicitation to the differentiation into affective processes.

It continues with *Real World Semantics*, a very important article by Professor Ionel Narița, from University of Timișoara. The article speaks about the “possible world” as a contradictory term, because, as we all know, “there is only one world, the *real* one”. In this case, as the author says, “it follows that the possible world semantics must be replaced with *real world semantics*”.

The third article of this issue is written by Gregory Jones-Katz, from University of Wisconsin, and it is entitled *Rethinking Deconstruction in America*. It is a very well documented analysis of the centrality of the concept of history in Jacques Derrida's and Paul de Man's works and it also speaks about how reception of deconstruction was shaped in the United States.

Petronia Petrar, from Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, proposes us an analysis *Towards a Typology of Spatial Representations*. The paper is concerned with “a tentative categorisation of the various modes of representing space that have shaped and continue to shape modern identity”. Both symbolic and allegorical space are described and so it is the allegory of nostalgia, in order to show that “one major difference between symbolic and allegorical spaces seems therefore to lie in their relationship with ‘nature’ ”.

Somehow allegoric, the next article reminds us of the recent lived history, i.e. Romania under Ceaușescu's regime and the pro-natalist policy between 1966 and 1989. The article *Ceaușescu was my father! Letters about the Children of the Decree at the end of the '60s* is written by Corina Doboș, from University College London, and exemplifies with quotes from certain letters about the children named after "the father of the nation". She explains why parents decided to do so and, more, what is the contemporary legacy of that Decree.

About *Sexist and Non-Sexist Language* writes Diana-Viorela Burlacu, from Babeș-Bolyai University, and she focuses on some lexical aspects of the English language claimed to be sexist. The article is very well written and despite the fact the author gives so many examples of linguistic differentiation between men and women, the article is not a feminist one, but an impersonal analysis of contemporary language.

About art and its muse writes Traian Penciu, from University of Arts, Târgu Mureș, in his article *Carmen, Nietzsche's Muse. Elements of Nietzsche's thinking in Bizet's Carmen*. As the title suggests, the article is a philosophical explanation of Bizet's opera. It presents a metaphoric illustration of Nietzsche's philosophical thinking about this opera.

The last two articles contain analyses of two different realities of our world, two different worlds in themselves: Jewish literature and Buddhist Indian tradition. The first one is seen through its literature: *From Wisdom Inhabiting Bodies to Words Inhabiting Reality. Representations of Corporeality in Jewish Sapiential Literature* and the guide to this new world is Raluca Boboc, from Bucharest University. The second one offers us an introduction into the history of Buddhism in India, through *Communication of Representations*, the article written by Sarunya Prasopchinghana, from University of Calcutta and Burapha University, Thailand.

This issue is completed by a couple of reviews written by Wendy Doniger from Chicago University and Mihaela Gligor.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank to all contributors to this issue for accepting our invitation. Many of them publish now for the first time in Romania, which make us very proud and grateful.

* * *

The *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* is a biannual scholarly journal devoted to the study of Humanities, the nature and origin of humanistic ideas. The *International Journal on Humanistic Ideology* encourages interdisciplinary approaches engaging the following domains: philosophy, philosophy of religions, political philosophy, political science, history, history of religions, history of ideas, history of science, anthropology, sociology, educational science and communications theory. One of its primary aims is the integration of the results of the several disciplines of the Humanities so that its articles will have a synthetic character in order to acquaint the reader with the progress being made in the general area of Humanistic Studies.

THE TOPICS: REALITY AND REPRESENTATION

Gärdenfors' Conceptual Spaces and Affective Representations

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Abstract:

Based on Gärdenfors' (2000) conceptual spaces model we try to examine an emotion episode from its elicitation to the differentiation into affective processes. An *affective-conceptual spaces model* is proposed as a framework for representing affective information on the conceptual level.

Keywords: surprise, affective-conceptual spaces model, affective concepts, affective representation.

It is usually accepted that an emotional episode is wider than the emotion itself. According to Moors (2010), in an emotional episode there are several components such as cognitive, feeling, motivational, somatic, and motor. Such an episode would have to answer several problems, such as emotion elicitation, intensity and differentiation. Among the components involved in an emotional episode we (Sugu & Chatterjee, 2010) recently proposed the following order: somatic, motivational, cognitive, feeling and

motor. In our premises, the emotion of surprise connects the emotional arousal with the cognitive appraisal. Thus, we presume that physiological arousal (intensity/activation) is the basis of qualitative distinctions (valence) among various emotional experiences. In this respect the arousal, responsible for the initiation and the intensity of emotional experiences, would initiate appraisals, responsible for the qualitative (valence) distinction between different emotional states. Thus we proposed that an emotionally charged stimulus/event that interrupts a passive habitual perceptual experience, being produced whenever the sensory representation of the ongoing process is changed, alters habituation into dishabituation, eliciting the experience of surprise, which would be appraised as different affective states, according to the valence, positive or negative, attributed to the stimulus. By passive habitual perceptual experience we mean an experience when the organism is sufficiently regular in its behaviour, a state which requires minimal “energy”.

The emotion of surprise is seen to transform the passive habitual perceptual experience into an affective experience by relating the event/stimulus to the perceiver, who would further evaluate its relevance to oneself. Surprise here stands for pure arousal (activation). Motivational drives of approach or withdrawal are amplified by the relevance of the stimulus for the organism’s well being. According to the relevance and significance the stimulus bears to the organism, the appraisal processes initiate the affective experience.

Ortony and Partridge (1987) proposed that surprise, a very important element in attentional processes and learning, could be the effect of expectation failure but it is as well the result of events that could never be expected. As the stimulus is presented the organism checks its episodic and semantic memory. Ortony and Partridge distinguish between *practically deducible propositions* and *practically non-deducible propositions*. The former set refers to propositions that are explicitly represented in memory or could be easily deduced, actively or passively, in a particular context, without complex inferences.

There would thus be three instances of surprising situations: (i) active expectation failure, as in inconsistency between input and an active

prediction or expectancy, (ii) passive expectation failure, as in a conflict between the input and the organism's knowledge or belief, passive expectations or assumptions; (iii) unanticipated incongruities, as in a conflict or inconsistency between the input and what the organism considered to usually happen. This is the case where the organism does not have any expectation.

In passive habitual perceptual state a novel stimulus induces the emotion of surprise if (i) the stimulus is practically non-deducible, i.e. it cannot conflict with an expectation or if (ii) there is a stimulus conflicts with a typical proposition. The first case, according to Ortony and Partridge, corresponds to a very surprising situation as might be in seeing a person take off and fly with no apparent mechanical aids. In the second case they suggest a situation of finding a restaurant where one does not sit down to eat or having a rock fly through one's window.

Affective-Conceptual Spaces Model

In trying to understand how emotional information and its representation is modeled we used Gärdenfors' geometrical model of representation based on conceptual spaces. Gärdenfors introduced the conceptual spaces model for representing information at the conceptual level which can explain several aspects in cognitive science as well as in biological systems. The model is based on using geometrical structures that hold similarity relations modeled in a neural way. The conceptual space is built up from geometrical representations based on a number of quality dimensions. The epistemological role of the conceptual spaces is to serve as a tool in sorting out various relations between perceptions. The primary function of the quality dimensions is to represent various "qualities" of the object, such as temperature, weight, brightness, pitch, height, width and depth. Stimuli are judged as being similar or different on the basis of quality dimensions. The dimensions assign properties to stimuli and specify the relations among them. These dimensions are the building blocks of representations on the conceptual level.

At the phenomenal or psychological level quality dimensions of the interpretation concern the cognitive structures such as perception, memory,

etc. of different organisms, including humans. The goal is to explain natural cognitive processes by psychophysical measurements that determine the structure of how perceptions are represented.

An affective-conceptual space could be identified as a collection of one or more quality dimensions which are correlated in various ways, as the fearfulness and the threat dimensions co-vary in the space of fear.

There are quality dimensions that seem to be innate or developed very early in life. From the evolutionary point of view, the sensory dimensions are hardwired; we do not have to learn to hear or see or taste, etc although learning would help in differentiating the content of what we hear, see, taste. Sensory domains are extremely important for basic activities like finding food, avoiding danger, orienting in the environment. Quine (1969) notes that innate quality dimensions are needed to make learning possible. Without the prior spacing of quality, habits could not be acquired and all stimuli would be equally alike and different.

Some quality dimensions of human conceptual spaces are not directly generated from sensory inputs. They are based on shared knowledge, culture of a community and Freyd (1983) argued that culture and the interaction between people generates constraints on conceptual spaces. Furthermore, some quality dimensions are introduced by science. When the discoveries in science bring a change in the quality dimensions a shift of conceptual spaces is created.

Gärdenfors' model of conceptual spaces introduced three levels of representations: the subconceptual, the conceptual or intermediate, and the symbolic. Bringing this model to affective states, the subconceptual level is adopted when describing the dynamic properties of the physical processes driving the organism. At the conceptual level the conceptual difference is made between different affective states. The symbolic level would deal with the "naming" of the various affects the organism experiences.

At the subconceptual level of description the organism's emotional processing is explained at the sensory level. According to our proposal the physiological arousal (intensity/activation) initiates the emotion of surprise. The sensory system perceives an affectively charged stimulus/event that

interrupts a passive perceptual experience and arouses the experience of surprise.

At the conceptual level, the organism creates or recognizes previous concepts and “label” the stimulus depicted at the subconceptual level by the sensory system. The conceptual space is created by the quality dimensions. In affective studies there are three emotion dimensions proposed: arousal/activation, valence and dominance. These emotion dimensions estimate the data received from the subconceptual level. At the symbolic level we are able to express and communicate the meaning “labeled” in the conceptual level.

As Gärdenfors points out, the conceptual and the symbolic levels are bidirectional – the conceptual level functions as a semantic domain for the symbols, and the symbolic level generates expectations that control the focus of attention at the conceptual level. In our opinion the focus of attention would rather be connected with the subconceptual level as it is the level that initiates the bottom-up information processing.

The bridge that connects the subconceptual and the conceptual level is the expectation built up by the symbolic level. If the expectation failure leads to the emotion of surprise then the organism perceiving the stimulus at the subconceptual level would search into the conceptual level and try to deal with the novel input.

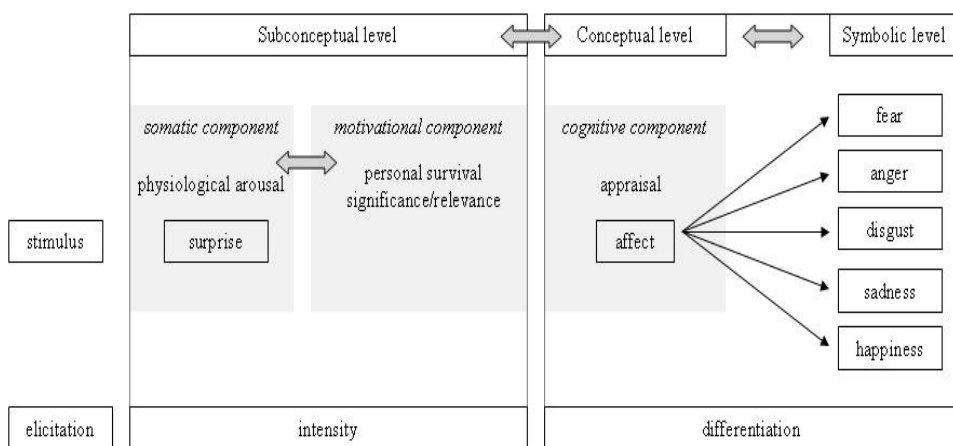


Fig. 1 Graphic representation of an emotion episode, the *affective-conceptual spaces model*

Figure 1 shows a graphic representation of an emotional episode. The *affective conceptual spaces model* is proposed as a framework for representing affective information on the conceptual level. The stimulus is analyzed at the three levels proposed by Gärdenfors – the subconceptual, the conceptual and the symbolic levels. Within the subconceptual level, the somatic component of the emotional episode is represented by the psychological arousal which elicits the emotion of surprise. Emotions act as motivational amplifiers¹ and that calls for the motivational component of the emotional episode. At the conceptual level, the cognitive component attributes “value” to the stimulus by appraisal processes and the stimulus is labeled with a certain valence, positive or negative, according to the effect it produces on the organism. The organism experiences an affective state which in the symbolic level could be “named” as fear, anger, disgust, sadness, or happiness. The intensity of the stimulus is analyzed at the subconceptual level. The differentiation of the affective states takes place at the conceptual and symbolic levels. At the subconceptual level the representations are organism centered while at the conceptual and symbolic levels it is stimulus centered.

The *affective-conceptual spaces model* allows us to explain a mechanism of emotion elicitation and differentiation into different affective states and it also supports the idea that culture and shared knowledge play a distinct role in building up our conceptual spaces. The main advantage offered by the proposed model is that it can serve as an explanatory framework for recent claims of neuroscience research regarding the fast, nonconscious and automatic perception of the stimuli. Unlike other existing models of affective responses (symbolic network models, exemplar models, and subsymbolic network models) the affective-conceptual spaces model offers details regarding the elicitation of an automatic emotion episode (at the subconceptual level) and provides an account about how previous experiences and culture would outline the differentiation of the affective experience (at the conceptual and symbolic level).

¹ Marion, R., *The Boy Who Felt No Pain*, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1990.

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Real World Semantics

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Abstract:

If the necessary true propositions are the same with the tautologies, then the paradoxes of strict implication appear. In order to avoid such paradoxes, it must be factual necessary propositions. The semantics of possible worlds failed in its attempt to define necessity without paradox. Moreover, the term *possible world* is self contradictory. There is only one world, the *real* one. It follows that the possible world semantics must be replaced with *real world semantics*. In the frame of real world semantics, a proposition is necessary true if and only if it is a consequence of the past. In this way, the modal values of propositions depend on time.

Keywords: possible world, semantics, modal value, heat death.

According to the principles of logic, a proposition is *true* or *false* in relation to a certain *context*. If a proposition is true in any imaginable context, it is called *tautology*, and a false proposition in any imaginable context is called *contradiction*. *Factual* propositions are true in certain contexts and false in others. Tautology, contradiction and factuality represent *logical* values of propositions which, in contrast to truth values, are invariable relatively to context.

In addition to the truth and the logical values, propositions are characterized through their *modal value*, namely, a proposition can be *necessary true*, *possible true*, *necessary false* or *possible false*. The modal value of propositions has an epistemological importance. A proposition is certain in a justified way only if it is necessary. The acceptance of contingent propositions is uncertain as they can be false. Certitude is founded on necessity, while opinions are relative to contingent propositions.

Because the modal values are reducible to one of them and negation, it is sufficient to define one modal value in order to determine the meaning of all modal values. However, for many times, the attempts to define modal values lead to vicious circle. One of the first attempts to define modalities so that vicious circle is avoided belongs to Aristotle. He defines necessity in relation to the *consequence relation* between propositions. For him, the conclusion of a *correct inference necessarily* follows from the premises.¹ According to Aristotle, if “ $P \rightarrow Q$ ” is a correct inference then, if P is true, then Q is *necessary* true (it can not be possible to be false). In other words, a proposition, Q , is necessary true if and only if:

- 1) There is a proposition P so that Q is a *consequence* of P ;
- 2) P is a *true* proposition.

According to Aristotle’s definition, the modal value of a proposition depends on the truth value of another proposition and on the consequence relation between them.

The attempt of Logic to symbolize the consequence relation through *material implication* has generated the *paradoxes of material implication*: there are propositions connected through material implication, but which are not in a relation of consequence. In order to surpass the paradoxes of the material implication, C. I. Lewis suggests the representation of consequence relation using another connector, different from material implication, called by him *strict implication*. The American logician argues that material implication cannot render the dimension of necessity of the consequence relation, noticed by Aristotle. Because of this, in order to obtain a correct representation of consequence, we must add necessity to material implication. In this way, a proposition P *strictly implies* another proposition Q if and only if P materially implies Q *with necessity* (Lewis C.I., Langford C.H., 1959, p. 124).

From Aristotle’s definition it results that the proposition P is necessary true if it is the consequence of another true proposition, Q . In order for the modal value of P not to depend on another proposition but only on itself, the

¹ “A syllogism is an argument in which, certain things being posited (the premises), something other than the premises *necessarily* results from their being true” (Aristotle, 2009, 24b18–20).

truth value of the proposition Q must depend only on the truth value of P . Thus, the proposition Q must be a truth function of the proposition P . At the same time, in order to be in accordance with Aristotle's definition, Q is not a necessarily true proposition. Because the only truth function that fulfils these conditions is *negation*, we find the definition of necessary propositions given by C.I. Lewis: *a proposition P is necessary true if it is strictly implied by its negation*. Starting from the definition of necessity, the definitions for the other modal values are obtained. For instance, a proposition is *possible true* if and only if it is *compatible* with itself (Lewis C.I., Langford C.H., 1959, p. 161).

Although it surpasses the inconvenient of paradoxes of material implication, C.I. Lewis' analysis of modalities generates other paradoxes called the *paradoxes of strict implication* (Lewis C.I., Langford C.H., 1959, p. 251). The cause of paradoxes of strict implication consists in identifying tautologies with necessary true propositions. According to Lewis a proposition is necessary if it is strictly implied by its negation. Such a relation occurs if and only if the given proposition is a tautology. Therefore, C.I. Lewis' analysis generates the following relations among the values that characterize propositions:

TABLE 1

True propositions		False propositions	
Tautologies	Factual propositions	Contradictions	
Necessary propositions	Contingent propositions		
Possible propositions		Impossible propositions	

On the first line of the table (1) the propositions are classified by their truth value. The second line of the table divides the set of propositions based on their logical value, and the last two lines contain the classes of propositions depending on their modal values as it results from C.I. Lewis' analysis. The coincidence between tautologies and necessary propositions and between impossible propositions and contradictions can be noticed.

As it was mentioned, the classification from table (1) generates paradoxes. At the same time, such a classification of propositions gives rise to some epistemic problems. If necessary propositions coincide with tautologies, and if the only propositions that can be accepted with certitude in a justified

way are the ones necessary true, then only tautologies are certain in a justified way. It follows that only logic is justified and any discourse that can not be analyzed by logical laws should be regarded with skepticism.

We are faced with Kant’s problem: how is physics possible, more exactly, how can a field of knowledge which propositions are not tautologies can be grounded? In order to exist justified and certain propositions that are not tautologies, factual necessary propositions should exist, namely, there should exist „necessary synthetic propositions” in Kantian terminology.² Kant solves this problem by arguing that there are synthetic *a priori* propositions (Kant I., 2009, p. 11).

Hence, Kant’s problem is solved if it is accepted a different classification of propositions according to their modal value, where there are factual necessary or impossible propositions:

TABLE 2

True propositions		False propositions	
Tautologies	Factual propositions	Contradictions	
Necessary propositions		Contingent propositions	
Possible propositions		Impossible propositions	

The difficulty arising, in this case, is to *distinguish between factual necessary propositions and the contingent ones*. As long as the necessary propositions coincide with tautologies, because the methods of decision in logic allow the recognition of tautologies, as they can be used to determine necessary propositions. The methods of decision do not distinguish factual propositions among themselves. Hence, they can not differentiate between factual necessary propositions and the contingent ones. As a result of this situation, the modal logic systems have proliferated (Garson J.W., 2006, p. 2). In this way, the definition of modalities becomes relative to a certain logic system. Anyone can choose their desired interpretation regarding modal values by selecting a certain system of modal logic without the possibility to reject such a choice. Thus, necessary propositions, namely

² Kripke S. uses the term “*a posteriori* necessary propositions” (Kripke S., 1972, p. 140).

propositions which can be accepted with certitude in a justified way, become a matter of preference.

The most important attempt to solve the problem of the proliferation of modal logic systems is the *semantics of the possible worlds*. By *possible world* is understood a world described by the conjunction of all propositions compatible among each other.³ If a proposition, *P*, belongs to a possible world, *L*, then all propositions compatible with it belong to the world *L* and all propositions that are not compatible with *P*, respectively, all propositions that are in opposition with *P* do not belong to the world *L*. The semantics of possible worlds accepts that it cannot be discriminated among worlds; more exactly, any world can occur as much as any other. Leibniz tried to introduce a difference based on ethics: the best possible world occurs because only this one can be created by God (Ekeland I., 2006, p. 36).

If by “necessary proposition” it is understood a true proposition in any possible world, it allows the confusion between necessary propositions and tautologies, falling into paradox. Therefore, in order to avoid the paradoxes of strict implication, we must understand by necessary proposition a true proposition in the possible worlds of a certain set, which does not coincides with the set of all possible worlds. Hence *a proposition is necessary if it is true in any possible world which satisfies a certain condition*.

Saul Kripke developed a method to determine the defining condition for necessity. He defines a structure over the set of possible worlds based on the *accessibility relation*. By necessary proposition relatively to a possible world it is understood a *true proposition in all accessible worlds in relation to that world* (Kripke S., 1963, p. 83). Modal values become relative to the possible worlds: a necessary proposition in a possible world can be contingent in another possible world. If this method is used in order to differentiate systems of modal logic, it is noticed to be inefficient in eliminating them. The only result is that, to each system of modal logic corresponds a specific accessibility relation. In other words, it is not

³ “A possible world isn’t a distant country that we are coming across, or viewing through a telescope. Generally speaking, another possible world is too far away. Even if we travel faster than light, we won’t get to it. A possible world is *given by the descriptive conditions we associate with it*” (Kripke S., 1972, p. 44).

obtained an unambiguous concept of necessity. But this time, selecting a convenient meaning for necessity is reduced to choosing an accessibility relation. In this case, who prevents such a choice from being an arbitrary one, since it is not a subject to procedures of logical decision? In spite of this, many researches argue the success of the possible worlds' semantics because, through it, the systems of modal logic can be justified.

The permissivity of the possible worlds' semantics is caused by the inconsistency of the term "possible world" and by the fact that from a contradiction anything can follow. It becomes explainable why possible worlds' semantics is regarded as successful, since anything we want can be proved by appealing to it. It is not surprising that this semantics is used in the most diverse purposes, especially ideological ones.

Since a possible world contains all propositions that are compatible among each other, it follows that two possible worlds are not compatible one with the other. Therefore, *two given possible worlds are not possible together*. On the one hand, if possible worlds were compatible they would form only one world, as there is no means to differentiate them. Thus, *only one world can exist*. On the other hand, if there were possible several worlds simultaneously, it would follow that it is *possible* for an object to both hold and not, a characteristic, in the same time, against the principles of logic.

Consequently, keeping into account that two different worlds are not possible together, it follows that there is only one world, the *real* one. Leibniz' thesis must be modified as follows: we do not live in the best of the possible worlds, but *in the only possible world*. Of course, *we can imagine* other worlds, different from the real world, but this does not mean that those worlds can really occur; it does not mean they are possible. For instance, we can imagine that Napoleon won the battle of Waterloo, but we can not conclude it is possible he won that battle. If we supposed it is possible that Napoleon would have won at Waterloo, the question arising is: *when?* Napoleon couldn't have won the battle neither before it took place, despite all his military qualities, nor after that, when he had already been defeated. Therefore, Napoleon could win that battle neither before nor after its final moment, that is, never. Besides the real world, there are only imaginary worlds or counterfactual, but which can not occur, namely they are *impossible*.

Since there is only one world, it results that defining necessity by using the hypothesis of the existence of more possible worlds is incorrect. Modalities can be defined only with respect to the real world, having the meaning that it is necessary or possible for a proposition to be *true* or for a fact to *occur* in reality, and not in an area or another of imagination. The semantics of possible worlds must be replaced by the *semantics of real world*.

In order to explain why there are factual propositions which change their truth value in time, we must admit that real world changes its state. There is a bijection between the moments of time and the states of the world that take place. The states of the world are divided into two sets, the ones that have already occurred, which constitute the *past* and the ones that will occur and which represent the future.

If proposition P is true at a moment t then also the proposition $(P,t) = "P$ is true at moment $t"$ becomes true at moment t and conversely. For example, if in the year 2010 it is true that "Romania is a republic" then the proposition "Romania is a republic in 2010" is also true and vice versa. If a proposition, P , is true at the moment t , then (P,t) is true at any moment. Let us suppose that P is true at the moment t and that there is a moment t_1 when (P,t) is false. Thus we follow into contradiction: P is both true and false at moment t .

Since a proposition (P,t) is true, any of its consequences *must* be true. If there was a false consequence of the proposition (P,t) , it would follow that (P,t) is false, contrary to the hypothesis. Thus, if a proposition (P,t) is true at the moment t then, at that moment, any consequence of the given proposition becomes *necessary true*. In other words, if there is a true proposition (P,t) , where t precedes the moment t_0 , then any consequence of the proposition (P,t) is necessary at the moment t_0 . We have obtained the result that *all the consequences of the past at moment t_0 are necessary true propositions*.

Also, if a proposition is necessary true at the moment t_0 then it is a consequence of the true propositions until that moment. Let us suppose that the proposition Q is necessary true at the moment t_0 , but it is not a consequence of the past at the moment t_0 . If Q is necessary true at the moment t_0 , then it must be true at any moment t after t_0 . At the same time, if Q is not a consequence of the past at the moment t_0 , then the past is

compatible with the negation of the proposition Q , so it is possible that the proposition Q to be false after the moment t_0 , which contravenes the hypothesis that proposition Q is necessary at moment t_0 . Hence:

A proposition is necessary true at a given moment if and only if it is a consequence of the past at that moment.

If we take into account the relations between the modal values, we reach the following definitions:

- 1) A proposition is *possible true* at a given moment if and only if it is *compatible* with the past at that moment;
- 2) A proposition is *impossible true* at a given moment if and only if it is *incompatible* with the past at that moment;
- 3) A proposition is *contingent true* at a given moment if and only if it is not a *consequence* of the past at that moment.

We have reached the result that modal values of propositions depend on time. A proposition that has a modal value at a given moment could have a different modal value at another moment in concordance with what happens in reality. For instance, let us suppose that, until the moment t_0 there are only white swans. In this case, if we refer to all swans, from the past or the future, we obtain the modal values:

- 1) “All swans are white” – possible true at moment t_0 ;
- 2) “Some swans are white” – necessary true at moment t_0 ;
- 3) “No swan is white” – impossible true at moment t_0 ;
- 4) “Some swans are not white” – contingent true at moment t_0 .

If, at a following moment, t , a black swan appears, the modal value of the mentioned propositions will be changed as such:

- 1) “All swans are white” – impossible true at moment t ;
- 2) “Some swans are white” – necessary true at moment t ;
- 3) “No swan is white” – impossible true at moment t ;
- 4) “Some swans are not white” – necessary true at moment t .

The modal value of propositions (2) and (4) has changed from the moment t_0 to the moment t . Proposition (2) became necessary from possible, and proposition (4) has modified its modal value from contingent to necessary.

From the fact that the modal values of propositions are determined relatively to the past, it does not result that these values only regard the future. The consequences of certain facts that occur at a moment (or of true propositions at a given moment) can reflect both on the future and the past. For example, since the proposition $R = \text{“Romania is a republic”}$ is true in 2010, all its consequences are necessary true at this year. One of the necessary conditions for Romania to be a republic is that Romania exists as a state in the year 2010. Accordingly, the proposition “Romania is a republic” has as consequence the fact that there was an anterior moment when the state called “Romania” was born. In other words, since the proposition R is true in 2010, the proposition $S = \text{“The state Romania was formed before 2010”}$ is necessary true in 2010. At the same time, this sentence will be necessary in any temporal moment.

By defining modal values in the frame of real world semantics, the paradoxes of strict implication are avoided, because there are admitted factual necessary propositions. For instance, even the anterior proposition, S , is not a tautology because we can imagine variants of the course of history in which Romania was not formed as a state before 2010, but these variants remain *imaginary*. In real history, the proposition S is necessary, because in real history, Romania is a republic in 2010, an *impossible* fact if Romania did not exist as state in 2010.

If a proposition is necessary true at a given moment, it remains necessary true at any moment that follows. The consequence relation does not depend on time, thus, if a proposition is consequence of the past at a moment t_0 , then it is a consequence of that past at any future moment. In addition, the past does not change with time, so that it is impossible for a necessary proposition at a given moment to become, with time, a contingent one. In the same way, impossible propositions at a particular moment remain impossible, no matter what happens, because a proposition is impossible if and only if its negation is necessary; but we saw that necessary propositions no longer change their modal value.

Furthermore, the modal value of propositions does not depend on the evaluator, because the past is the same for everyone, therefore the consequences of the past can not differ from an evaluator to another.

Necessary propositions for an evaluator must be necessary for all evaluators. In this sense, modal values act differently from truth values. While a proposition can be true for some and false for others, in a justified way, logic and modal values of propositions are the same for everyone. Hence, it is impossible to have several logic systems equally justified regarding modal values. If there were more systems of modal logic, anyone could choose one or another of these systems, which opposes the conclusion that modal values do not depend on the evaluator.

Modal values of propositions resemble truth values in the sense that they are changed with time and differ from the logic values that remain constant in time. A tautology remains tautology irrespective of what happens in the real world. In what concerns modal values, the only change that could occur is the transformation of possible propositions and contingent ones at a given moment, into necessary or impossible propositions. The necessary true or impossible true propositions are not subject to change regarding their modal value.

Because of this property modal value of propositions define the *arrow of time*. For instance, if it is noticed that a proposition is possible at moment t_0 and that it is necessary at moment t it can rightfully be concluded that moment t is posterior in relation to moment t_0 . The more we advance in time, the more necessary and impossible propositions are accumulated. Still, truth values and logic values do not determine a temporal sense. Due to the fact that, a proposition is true at a given moment, and the same proposition is false, at another moment nothing results regarding the succession of the two moments. Let us say that at moment t_0 , the proposition “Ion Iliescu is the president of Romania” is true, and at moment t , the given proposition is false. It couldn't be concluded in any way that t precedes or succeeds the moment t_0 , because, for example, if $t_0 = 2001$, it could be that $t = 2010$ or $t = 1995$. Also, logic values of propositions do not determine time flow, because they are independent of time.

The time arrow is determined by the following principles:

- 1) If a proposition is necessary at a given moment, then that proposition is necessary at any following moment;

2) If a proposition is possible at a given moment, it is possible at any anterior moment. (If a proposition is possible at a given moment, it can not be impossible at an anterior moment, because its negation would be necessary giving rise to the contradiction that, at a given moment, simultaneously, a proposition would be possible and its negation would be necessary).

Since only possible and contingent propositions are open to change so, with accumulating necessary and impossible propositions, the variants of evolution of real world or of the universe become more and more reduced. If we admitted that the universe is described by a finite number of propositions, we could foresee a future when all propositions describing the universe were necessary or impossible, when any change would stop, generating the *modal death of the universe*. The heat death of the universe, theorized in thermodynamics, represents only an instance of the modal death. The heat death is generated by the increase of entropy in the universe, seen as a closed system. The increase of entropy represents the decrease of probability of events. With time, any event, any change tends to be extremely improbable. Thus, any event or change ceases to be possible or contingent, but becomes impossible or necessary, as it results from the analysis of modal values.

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Rethinking Deconstruction in America

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Abstract:

This paper seeks to rethink this narrative of deconstruction in America. The essay is organized into three sections: (1) The first investigates academic debates on deconstruction in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Participants in these debates charged Derrida and de Man with being anti-historical. Repeated outside the academy in the popular press, this accusation conflated Derrida's and de Man's work and obscured their philosophies of history. (2) The second section examines the central, yet overlooked, role history played in Derrida's and de Man's work. A close inspection also reveals that de Man did not merely deviate from Derrida but in fact opposed his philosophy of history. (3) The third section focuses on the media war of the 1987 de Man Affair to demonstrate how the claim that deconstruction, specifically de Man, was anti-historical reached non-academic audiences. Ultimately, this discussion concealed the centrality of history in Derrida's and de Man's work and deeply shaped the reception of deconstruction in the United States.

Keywords: Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Deconstruction, Presence, Intellectual History, Philosophy, 20th Century America.

The standard account of deconstruction in America describes the domestication of French philosopher Jacques Derrida's philosophy in the late 1970s by a group of literary critics at Yale University.¹ Known as the

¹ Jeffrey T. Nealon, "The Discipline of Deconstruction", *PLMA* 107:5 (1992), pp. 1266-1279; James O'Rourke, "The Fatality of Readings: De Man, Gasché, and the Future of Deconstruction," *symplekē* 5:1/2 (1997), p. 49; François Cusset, *French Theory: How*

Yale School, this group included Paul de Man, Derrida's most prominent friend in intellectual life. While Derrida developed deconstruction, a strategy of interpretation that exposes and then subverts the oppositions of Occidental thought, de Man staged his deconstructions via literature. De Man argued that, regardless of social context, a text deconstructs, as it contains contradictions or irreconcilable meanings. Deconstruction alarmed many scholars, who argued that deconstruction rejected reality in favor of an exclusive focus on the language of a text. Deconstruction therefore repudiated the tenets that grounded historical scholarship.

Paul de Man, considered most responsible for transforming Derrida's philosophy into a method for reading literature, died in 1983 at the height of his power and prestige. There followed lavish outpourings from some of the most famous academics in America.² De Man's legacy was to be complex, however. In 1987, it was discovered that de Man wrote almost two hundred pro-Nazi articles for collaborationist newspapers during the German occupation of his native Belgium. The revelation ignited The de Man Affair, a debate over de Man's thirty-five years of silence and the relationship between his early and later writings. After the discovery, many considered deconstruction finished. Today, deconstruction is viewed largely as a relic of the "culture wars."³

The Reception of Deconstruction in America

The popular story of deconstruction in the United States narrates the transformation of Derrida's philosophy into a technique of close reading by a quartet of literary critics at Yale University during the 1970s. Despite having little in common, the group was known as the *Yale School* and included Harold Bloom, Geoffrey Hartman, J. Hillis Miller, and Paul de Man. Casual remarks about their ideas first appeared in the early 1970s. By

Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 107-128.

² "The Lesson of Paul de Man," *Yale French Studies* 69 (1985).

³ *Theory's Empire*, edited by Daphne Patai and Will H. Corral (New York: Columbia University Press: 2005).

1975, one critic denounced the “hermeneutical mafia” of Yale; organized debates on deconstruction began the following year.⁴

Polemics from the Left and the Right blended the members of the *Yale School* together, charging them with collectively dismissing reality because of their exclusive attention to the language of the text. In other words, deconstructive criticism was anti-historical, only concerned with the internal logic of literature. For example, in his influential article of 1977, American literary critic Meyer H. Abrams defended “traditional historians of Western culture” against “deconstructionist principles”, which, if taken seriously, guaranteed that “any history which relies on written texts becomes an impossibility.”⁵

Notwithstanding the tone of polemics, *Deconstruction and Criticism*, a 1979 collection of essays by the Yale critics, introduced deconstruction as a tool for literary study to the English-speaking world.⁶ De Man’s prominence grew. The 1979 publication of *Allegories of Reading* established his position as the leading figure of deconstruction in America.⁷ By the early 1980s, his book *Blindness and Insight* (1971) had acquired iconic status.⁸ Not Derrida’s, but de Man’s students came to hold prestigious positions in literature departments in the American university system.

The most significant attack against deconstruction in the name of history came in 1980 from literary critic Frank Lentricchia, who organized his history of modern criticism around the thesis of a “repeated and often extremely subtle denial of history by a variety of contemporary theorists.”⁹ Lentricchia considered de Man the logical conclusion of the tradition of

⁴ William H. Pritchard, “The Hermeneutical Mafia, or, After Strange Gods at Yale,” *The Hudson Review* 28: 4 (1975-1976), pp. 601-610; J. Hillis Miller, “The Critic as Host,” *Critical Inquiry* 3:3 (1977), pp. 439-447.

⁵ M.H. Abrams, “The Deconstructive Angel,” *Critical Inquiry* 3:3 (1977), pp. 426, 458.

⁶ Harold Bloom, et al. *Deconstruction and Criticism* (New York: Continuum, 1979).

⁷ De Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

⁸ De Man, *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1971); James Atlas, “The Case of Paul de Man,” *The New York Times*, August 28, 1988, p. 6.

⁹ Frank Lentricchia, *After the New Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1980), xiii, 282-317. British literary theorist also condemned de Man in a similar fashion. See Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), p. 150; and *The Function of Criticism: From “The Spectator” to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 96.

rejecting the past for the study of literature.¹⁰ De Man, Lentricchia asserted, possessed a “critical intention to place literary discourse in a realm where it can have no responsibility to historical life.”¹¹

This initial wave of criticism culminated several years later. In 1982, American literary critic Walter Jackson Bate denounced Derrida, who had a “nihilistic view of literature, human communication, and of life itself.” “[D]econstructionism,” Bate claimed, was “gloriously free of any necessary relationship to history, to philosophy, or to human lives.”¹² René Wellek, founder of the department of comparative literature at Yale, warned in a significant 1983 article that the “edifice of literary study has come under [...] attack”. A culprit is the theory of deconstruction, which asserts that “there is ‘nothing outside of the text[,]’” and maintains that “man lives in a prison house of language that has no relation to reality”. “[D]econstructionist theory”, Wellek cautioned, “is a flight [...] from history”.¹³ Wellek also berated de Man, whose “‘deconstruction’” amounts to a “study of rhetoric, understood [...] as a study of figures and tropes. The entire question of meaning is bracketed.”¹⁴ Derrida’s oft-cited statement that “there is no outside-the-text” came to be interpreted as evidence of Derrida’s view that there is nothing outside a printed book and that life is meaninglessness.¹⁵ Wellek’s essay nourished the discourse that deconstruction was anti-historical.

Debates on deconstruction in the 1970s and early 1980s were not exclusively conducted between literary scholars on the Left and the Right. Scholars sympathetic to deconstruction also conducted critical exchanges. These exchanges focused on whether de Man tamed Derrida’s philosophy or refined it into a more rigorous confrontation with the literary text.¹⁶ Debate occasionally revolved around the status of de Man’s relationship to history – there was little agreement. In 1981, Rodolphe Gasché asserted that, though

¹⁰ Lentricchia, pp. 141, 145.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

¹² Walter Jackson Bate, “The Crisis in English Studies,” *Harvard Magazine* (September-October 1982), pp. 41-53.

¹³ René Wellek, “Destroying Literary Studies,” *Theory’s Empire*, pp. 42-45.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ See below.

¹⁶ Wlad Godzich, Foreword to *Blindness and Insight*, xvi.

de Man was concerned with a self-reflexive and anti-historical theory of reading in his first book *Blindness and Insight*, he broke with these themes in order to concentrate on language and “rhetoricity” in his later work *Allegories of Reading*.¹⁷ Against Gasché, Suzanne Gearhart argued in 1983 that de Man's defense of literature, separation of literature and language from history and the phenomenal world, and his disregard for Derrida's explicit concern with history demonstrate the extent to which de Man was committed to an anti-historical theory of reading.¹⁸

Derrida never explicitly addressed de Man's relationship to history. For instance, in a footnote to lectures presented between January and February 1984 in honor of de Man, Derrida explained that he would refrain from participating in the discussion about de Man because the debate is “too complex” to address in “lectures only several hours”, “it would be foolish to believe that [...] the ‘true’ is on one side or the other”, and that he does not “have the natural position of an observer[,]” because what he wrote “is part of the litigation.” Derrida concluded: “The only lesson I wish to give today is [to] [...] learn to read Paul de Man, Suzanne Gearhart, and Rodolphe Gasché.”¹⁹ Instead of clarifying his difference from de Man, Derrida modestly noted the complexity of the debate and de Man's thought.

Having died in 1983, de Man never participated in this discussion. The question of his relationship to history remained unanswered and, by the mid-1980s, the campaign waged by critics on the Left and Right inside the academy against deconstruction because of its denial of history seeped into nearly all discussion about deconstruction outside the academy, becoming the default definition in the popular press.²⁰ Criticism often converged on de Man.²¹ Moreover, the chief representatives of deconstruction, particularly

¹⁷ Rodolphe Gasché, “‘Setzung’ and ‘Übersetzung’: Notes on Paul de Man,” *Diacritics* 11:4 (1981), pp. 36-52.

¹⁸ Suzanne Gearhart, “Philosophy before Literature: Deconstruction, Historicity, and the Work of Paul de Man,” *Diacritics* 13 (1983), pp. 63-81.

¹⁹ Derrida, *Mémoires: for Paul de Man* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 40-41, f. 3. For Derrida's defense of the ethical and political dimension of de Man's work, see *Mémoires*, p. 142.

²⁰ Herman Rapaport, *The theory mess: deconstruction in eclipse* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), pp. 30-31.

²¹ Derrida, *Mémoires*, pp. 41-43, f. 5-8.

Derrida, never defended or explained deconstruction outside of academic journals. This helped open a space for misrepresentation of deconstruction in the media. In 1982, for example, William Bennett launched a defense of the humanities in the *Wall Street Journal*. He wrote: “A popular movement in literary criticism called ‘deconstruction’ denies that there are any texts at all. If there are no texts, there are no great texts, and no argument for reading.”²² In 1986, a *New York Times* article declared, “In Yale’s *Tropiques de Critique*, the text and its readings are everything. Authors, history and other contexts are secondary.”²³ While hostile professors such as Wellek, Lentricchia, and Bate directly fed these misrepresentations as their language and criticisms were mimicked in the press, Derrida’s avoidance of the discussion of de Man’s views of history indirectly encouraged the discourse that deconstruction was anti-historical. The following section explores what lay concealed by this discussion.

Derrida’s and de Man’s Philosophies of History

(A) Looking beneath the popular press’ depiction of deconstruction reveals the central role history played in Derrida’s and de Man’s work. A close reading also uncovers that de Man did not merely deviate from Derrida but in fact opposed his philosophy of history. Derrida explicitly claims that history is the deconstruction (*différance*) of presence; de Man implicitly formulates that history is presence. This section is thus also a, regrettably condensed, intervention into the critical exchange between Suzanne Gearhart and Rodolphe Gasché over Derrida’s and de Man’s relationships to history and each other.

Before approaching either Derrida’s or de Man’s texts, however, one must understand presence.²⁴ Presence occurs when there is no distance, difference, or deferment between a being and world. Presence thus happens external to language, interpretation, and subject/object relations because

²² William Bennett, “The Shattered Humanities,” December 31, 1982.

²³ Colin Campbell, “The Tyranny of the Yale Critics,” *The New York Times*, February 9, 1986.

²⁴ F.R. Ankersmit, “Sublime Historical Experience,” in *Sublime Historical Experience*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 317-368; Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Eelco Runia, “Presence,” *History and Theory* 45:3 (2006), pp. 1-29.

language, interpretation, and subject/object relations are not presence, but the distancing, differentiating, and deferral of presence. Presence is therefore not an object a subject can “put their finger on” as present, but the meaningless nothing of “now” that occurs before the subject names and interprets an object.

In his foundational texts of 1967, Derrida maintains that the history of the West has constructed a metaphysics that produces the illusion in having seized presence.²⁵ Metaphysics generates this fiction by privileging what is present over what is absent. Metaphysics’ exclusion of what is absent from what is present produces binary oppositions, such as speech/writing, male/female, and truth/error. By occluding the codependence of binaries, metaphysics produces the illusion in having captured presence. In his work, Derrida demonstrates that any apprehension of presence is always undermined by what is absent. Presence, Derrida maintains, should be thought of as starting from/relation to time as distance, difference, and deferral.²⁶ He coins the neographism *différance* to designate the distancing, differentiation, and deferral of any sign or reference of presence.²⁷

Derrida’s oft-quoted assertion that “there is nothing outside the text”²⁸ does not denote his conviction that there is no reality outside a book. His statement indicates that any claim to have seized presence asserts to have joined subject directly to object through language – an impossible task not only as presence happens external to language, interpretation, and subject/object relations, but also because the *différance* of presence always supplements what is present with what is absent, incessantly producing a gap and therefore mediation between subject and object. Derrida does not believe that there is no presence, then, but that every attempt to capture presence is *différance*. His assertion that “there is nothing outside the text”

²⁵ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) and *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 1978). See also Barbara Johnson’s “Translator’s Introduction” to Derrida, *Dissemination* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1981), pp. vii-xxxv.

²⁶ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 166.

²⁷ *Différance* plays on the fact that the French word *différer* means both “to defer” and “to differ.”

²⁸ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 158.

denotes that “there is no outside” the interference *différance* introduces between subject and object.

Critical for understanding Derrida’s work is his contention that the *différance* of presence is the movement and production of history. Derrida writes: “We shall distinguish by the term *différance* the movement by which language, or any code, any system of references in general, becomes ‘historically’ constituted as a fabric of differences.”²⁹ However, Derrida stresses, “‘Is constituted’, ‘is produced’, ‘is created’, ‘movement’, ‘historically’ etc.”, should be “understood beyond the metaphysical language in which they are retained.”³⁰ According to Derrida, the *différance* of presence is history. History therefore has no “origin”, as this “origin” is *différance*, the dispersal and division of presence.

In addition to his elaboration of history as *différance*, Derrida described his general strategy of deconstruction as history. He writes that,

In a traditional philosophical opposition we have not a peaceful coexistence of facing terms but a violent hierarchy. One of the terms dominates the other (axiologically, logically, etc.), occupies the commanding position. To deconstruct the opposition is above all, at a particular moment, to reverse the hierarchy [...], put[ing] into practice a *reversal* of the classical opposition *and* a general *displacement* of the system. It is on that condition alone that deconstruction will provide the means of *intervening* in the field of oppositions it criticizes and which is also a *field of non-discursive forces* [...]³¹

To “deconstruct” philosophy is thus to work through the structured genealogy of its concepts in the most scrupulous and *immanent fashion*, but at the same time to determine, from a *certain external perspective that which it cannot name or describe*, what this *history* may have concealed or excluded, constituting itself as *history* through this repression in which it has a stake.³²

²⁹ Derrida, “Différance,” in *Margins of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago), p. 12.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ “Reversal”, “and”, and “displacement” emphasized in original. Emphasis added for “intervening” and “field of non-discursive forces”. Derrida, “Positions,” in *Positions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 56-57; in the same volume, see pp. 36, 15-16, 104, n. 31.

³² Derrida, “Semiology and Grammatology,” in *Positions*, pp. 15-16. Emphasis added.

According to Derrida, the overturning and displacement of binaries is history. Consequently, for Derrida, if there is language, interpretation, or *any meaning-making*, there is history as the reversal and reinscription of oppositions, history as the deconstruction of presence. According to Derrida, we are endlessly caught in the *différance* of presence, the “historical” construction of meaning.

Derrida’s philosophy of history is obscure to the traditional historian, who, *generally*, views history as having occurred in the past as a consecutive process that the historian can represent in a narrative through empirical and archival research to authorize or control meanings of texts.³³ Champions of the traditionalist narrative often reproached Derrida for refusing to appreciate the historical determination of meaning. From the Derridean perspective, though he never explicitly confronted his critics, it is the traditionalist who ignores history. Derrida writes: “If the word ‘history’ did not in and of itself convey the motif of a final repression of difference [*différance*], one could say that only differences [*différance*] can be ‘historical’ from the outset and in each of their aspects.”³⁴ The traditional historian uses the word “history” or appeals to history so as to suppress the *différance* of presence. This repression generates the illusion of access to presence, thus providing the chimera of narrative and perspectival closure.³⁵

There is, however, an equivocation in Derrida’s project. If, as explored, deconstruction intervenes into and thus interferes with presence, deconstruction requires presence. Derrida thus indirectly acknowledges the importance not only of deconstruction but also of presence in the movement and production of history. However, as presence happens outside *différance*, presence occurs when the subject is not making meaning about objects. Though presence cannot be captured in *différance*, presence happens. The unscripted silence of presence could, for example, be conceived of as the immediate social or historical reality that encircles and therefore shapes

³³ Jonathon Culler, *On Deconstruction: theory and criticism after structuralism* (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 129.

³⁴ Derrida, “Différance”, p. 11. See also Derrida, “Positions”, pp. 56-58.

³⁵ Bennington and Young, “Introduction: Posing the Question,” in Derek Attridge, Geoffrey Bennington, Robert Young (eds.), *Post-Structuralism and the Question of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 9.

what the reader or subject identifies as the present. Derrida's claim that "there is no outside-the-text" should be rephrased: "there is presence outside-the-text/*différance*/deconstruction."

(B) This paper's first section investigated how critics on the Left and Right as well as many sympathetic to Derrida portrayed de Man's work as anti-historical. De Man's work is not anti-historical, however. Instead, he formulated a philosophy of history unrecognizable to the traditionalist, forbidden to the Derridean. De Man implicitly elaborated an understanding of history as presence.

There are undoubtedly passages in de Man's work where he characterizes literature and language in opposition to the social world. In *The Resistance to Theory* (1982), de Man writes: "Literature is fiction not because it somehow refuses to acknowledge 'reality', but because it is not *a priori* certain that language functions according to principles which are those, or which are *like* those, of the phenomenal world."³⁶ De Man argues elsewhere that literature cannot be reunited with the "real world." In *The Rhetoric of Temporality* (1971), de Man claims that "true irony [...] asserts and maintains its fictional character by stating the continued impossibility of reconciling the world of fiction with the actual world."³⁷ De Man also emphasizes the ethical and political danger that accompanies the conviction that language and reality are linked. "What we call ideology," de Man observes in *The Resistance to Theory*, "is precisely the confusion of linguistic with natural reality, of reference with phenomenism."³⁸ For de Man, to deem literature, language, and reality as connected is to remain unaware that literature is fiction, language unnatural or inhuman, both therefore unable to access the world. For the traditionalist, de Man isolates literature and language from reality, closing all the doors that might lead out of the world of referentiality to "reality."

Phrased in Derridean terms, de Man erects a binary opposition between literature and history, between the inside and outside of a text. This

³⁶ De Man, "The Resistance to Theory," in *The Resistance to Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 11. Emphasis in original.

³⁷ De Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," in *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 218-219.

³⁸ De Man, "The Resistance to Theory," p. 11.

dichotomy treats literature as present for interpretation, while caring for history as absent and thus uninterpretable. Because the history exterior to literature is absent, the binary de Man constructs between literature and history is without reinscription – the text remains frozen, isolated from and against the world. For de Man, there is no history, no deconstruction between the inside and outside of a text. According to de Man, social and historical reality has no connection with and cannot be placed into a text. There is instead the silent, unwritten, void between literature and reality. De Man implies that, as there is nothing outside the text, this exterior nothing contains and surrounds the text. He indirectly suggests that he considers presence outside language and literature.

De Man makes one of his strongest claims about the nothing (presence) outside the text in the conclusion of his essay “Shelley Disfigured (1979)”. He writes:

The Triumph of Life warns us that, *nothing*, whether deed, word, thought or text, *ever* happens in relation, positive or negative, to anything that preceded, follows, or exists elsewhere, but only as a *random event* whose power, like the power of death, is due to the *randomness of its occurrence*.³⁹

If de Man’s history is unpredictable, singular, and discontinuous, then his history is a history of non-relation – his history is the happening of presence outside deconstruction. By remaining silent about the reality exterior to literature and language as well as caring for history, as Derrida writes in reference to Western metaphysics, “in the form of the arbitrary and in the substance of naturalisms,” de Man executes the “gesture [that] presides over metaphysics.”⁴⁰ History, for de Man, is presence exterior to any reference, external to the text. De Man thus performs Derrida’s axiom that “there is nothing outside the text” in a manner that Derrida, because presence for him is always deconstruction, cannot.

The portrayal of de Man as anti-historical also disregards his view of history as presence inside the text. Throughout his work, de Man explores

³⁹ De Man, “Shelley Disfigured,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 122. Emphasis added.

⁴⁰ Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, p. 33.

how the tension between grammar and rhetoric guarantees that every literary text and, by extension, language in general, contains reciprocally self-destructive points of view.⁴¹ For de Man, while language in its grammatical aspect aspires to logical, determinate, and referential assertions, this grammatical feature is always dispersed by its rhetorical aspect, leading to an open set of illogical, indeterminate, and non-referential possibilities.⁴² De Man terms the interpretation of this tension “rhetorical reading,” in fact favoring the term “rhetorical reading” to the word deconstruction.⁴³ Opposed to Derrida, for whom binaries are reversed and reinscribed into a different interpretation, for de Man, the “rhetoricity” of text ensures binaries are not overturned and then displaced but remain simultaneous with each other.

Moreover, while for Derrida history is the deconstruction of presence, de Man’s “rhetorical reading” is an implicit articulation that history is presence via the text.⁴⁴ For example, for de Man, the reader identifies an interpretation of a text. The identification of and thus foregrounding of what is present dislocates its absent, opposing reading, placing it in the background. This displacement renders the absent interpretation an outside view that the reader cannot express but which supports its opposite interpretation in its silent immediacy. If one “rhetorically reads” as de Man, the oscillation of opposing interpretations, the alternation between binaries, in the text endlessly, dizzyingly, constructs and deconstructs presence. De Man, citing Gérard Genette, describes this reading process as a “whirligig”⁴⁵, while he refers to those fleeting, unstable moments between binaries as “undecidable.”

De Man elaborately discusses his view that history is presence inside and outside the text in “Literary History and Literary Modernity (1969).”⁴⁶ In this essay, de Man argues that history is blind to its “rhetoricity” and therefore destined to “make statements contradictory with the rhetorical nature of

⁴¹ M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt Brace, 1993), p. 229.

⁴² De Man, “Semiology and Rhetoric,” in *Allegories*, pp. 10, 17.

⁴³ Cusset, p. 115.

⁴⁴ In his reading of Rousseau, de Man argues that the deconstruction of presence occurs inside literature. See de Man, “The Rhetoric of Blindness: Jacques Derrida’s Reading of Rousseau,” in *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 102-141.

⁴⁵ De Man, “Autobiography as De-Facement,” in *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁶ De Man, “Literary History and Literary Modernity,” in *Blindness and Insight*, pp. 142-165.

language.”⁴⁷ De Man suggests at the end of his essay, however, that it may be possible to write a history aware of its “rhetoricity”. The revision of history necessitates the reconceptualization of the relationship between text and history, as “[t]he relationship between truth and error that prevails in literature cannot be represented genetically, since truth and error exist simultaneously.”⁴⁸ De Man concludes his essay with the provocative statement:

If we extend this notion [of “rhetorical reading”] beyond literature, it merely confirms that the bases for historical knowledge are not empirical facts but written texts, even if these texts masquerade in the guise of wars and revolutions.⁴⁹

If, as de Man suggests, the basis of history became the “rhetorical reading” of texts, a method that accounts for a text’s synchronous, reciprocally self-destructive meanings, history could then become properly historical. A history that recognizes its “rhetoricity” is the proper foundation for historical knowledge. For de Man, then, history is neither the narration of a consecutive process nor Derrida’s deconstruction of presence. History is the non-knowledge of presence outside the text and the vacillation between binaries inside the text, the oscillation through which knowledge is plagued by non-knowledge, insight beset with blindness, presence constructed and deconstructed. According to him readers of literature are actually historians.

For critics in the 1970s and early 1980s, de Man’s separation of the language and text from social reality and his theory of “rhetorical reading” demonstrated his anti-historical theory of reading. Those supportive of Derrida claimed that the history de Man speaks of remains a history defined by the autonomous sphere of literature and language. However, the honor de Man bestows on literature and language and denies to “reality” rests on his philosophy of history as presence. Nevertheless, de Man’s understanding of history was overlooked, as his formulations were implicit, structured by concepts unrecognizable to traditionalist and Derridean, indeed prohibited by the Derridean.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 164-165.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

The Media War of *the de Man Affair*

In December 1987, the *New York Times* revealed de Man, who died in 1983, wrote cultural essays for Belgian newspapers when they were under the control of the Nazis during the Second World War. One of de Man's articles in the newspaper *Le Soir*, "Jews in Contemporary Literature,"⁵⁰ contains anti-Semitic remarks. Following the revelations, a debate ensued over de Man's wartime writings, his silence, and the relationship between his collaboration and post-war work. This controversy became known as *The de Man Affair*.

The commentary in the press drew from and reinforced the already established discourse that de Man and deconstruction were anti-historical.⁵¹ For instance, in January 1988, Professor of History Jon Wiener reported in *The Nation* on the revelations in his article "Deconstructing de Man." Wiener wrote: "Deconstruction claims that not only are books 'texts', but that everything is at some level a text and thus 'undecidable'. De Man wrote that this is true even of the texts that 'masquerade in the guise of revolutions'. ('Tell that to the veterans of foreign texts', a Yale historian remarked)". Wiener wove together his characterization of de Man's theory of "rhetorical reading" with the trope that de Man's work was anti-historical:

Critics on the left have argued that the presuppositions of deconstruction – that literature is not part of a knowable social and political reality, that one must be resigned to the impossibility of truth – make it at worst nihilistic [...]. De Man's critique of history is also relevant. He goes beyond the useful post-structuralist point that facts about the past are structured like texts; Lentricchia wrote that de Man "is saying that history is an imitation of what he was defined as the literary", a "projection [...] of all those paralytic feelings of the literary onto the terrain of society and history."⁵²

Wiener's article drew upon the claim that deconstruction, specifically de Man, rejected history and isolated literature from reality. His use of Lentricchia links his article with the campaign to annihilate deconstruction that began in the late 1970s.

⁵⁰ De Man, "The Jews in Contemporary Literature". Originally published in *Le Soir* (March 4, 1941).

⁵¹ Rapaport, pp. 30-31.

⁵² Jon Wiener, "Deconstructing de Man," *The Nation*, January 9, 1988, pp. 22-24.

A series of articles followed Wiener's. For example, in February 1988, poet David Lehman published "Deconstructing de Man's Life: An Academic Idol Falls into Disgrace" in *Newsweek*. He wrote: "Until his death in 1983", de Man was the "high priest of the arcane philosophy known as 'deconstruction', a controversial analytic method which turns literature into a play of words, robbing it of any broader significance."⁵³ Lehman predictably followed his portrayal with a comment on de Man's self-serving denial of history:

One forerunner of deconstruction is Humpty Dumpty, who declared that words mean what he wants them to mean. The deconstructionist view of the past was ably stated by automobile magnate Henry Ford: history is bunk. [...] It's history, of course, that is debunking de Man.⁵⁴

It fell to Derrida to be the first of de Man's supporters to address his past, as de Man was his most prominent friend in intellectual life. Derrida did not, however, publicly engage the discussion about deconstruction or de Man. He instead published "Like the Sound of the Deep Within A Shell: Paul de Man War"⁵⁵ in *Critical Inquiry*, a leading journal within literary studies. The most controversial part of Derrida's essay was his deconstruction de Man's anti-Semitic article "Jews in Contemporary Literature". Derrida argued that, though de Man's article begins with a "critique of vulgar anti-Semitism" which initially seems to argue for a refined anti-Semitism, the article is also a critique of the "vulgarity of anti-Semitism," since "to condemn 'vulgar anti-Semitism', especially if one makes no mention of the other kind, is to condemn anti-Semitism itself inasmuch as it is vulgar."⁵⁶ Derrida's interpretation resulted from his philosophy of history as the deconstruction of presence, though he or others never clarified this fact.

Most academics wanted Derrida to wholly repudiate de Man. Derrida failed to comply and his interpretation led to a flurry of responses in *Critical*

⁵³ David Lehman, "Deconstructing de Man's Life," *Newsweek*, February 15, 1988, p. 63.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Like the Sound Deep within a Shell: Paul de Man's War," *Critical Inquiry* 14:3 (1988), pp. 590-652.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 625.

Inquiry.⁵⁷ Respondents, again unsurprisingly, charged Derrida with being anti-historical. One respondent writes that “[w]e know [...] that like de Man himself, Derrida is skeptical of [...] ‘vulgar’ historical reconstruction, that statistics and related ‘hard information’ are likely to be dismissed as mere empiricism.”⁵⁸ Another respondent writes: “[W]hen you read these [de Man’s] articles in their original context, it is difficult to excuse a clear affiliation with the anti-Semitic collaborators who took over *Le Soir* at this period.”⁵⁹ Jon Wiener, not only a participant in the Affair as a journalist, but also a participant as a respondent to Derrida, suggested that Derrida’s interpretation of de Man’s “Jews in Contemporary Literature” is “lacking in logic” because “[i]f you condemn vulgar art and make no mention of the other kind, [you] have [not] [...] condemned all art.”⁶⁰

When Derrida asserted that de Man was not silent about his past, but that his past was “all he talked about[,] [...] all he wrote about,”⁶¹ he shocked the majority of American academics, who believed de Man remained silent and concealed his past – Derrida, in addition to being anti-historical, was also judged ethically and politically bankrupt. De Man’s detractors saw the existence of his pro-Nazi articles as evidence of why his work was anti-historical. They argued that he not only hid his past by remaining silent but also by creating his theory of “rhetorical reading”. De Man guaranteed the impossibility of understanding the meaning of his wartime articles. Derrida’s enemies used de Man’s past and Derrida’s defense as proof of his and his followers’ fundamental repudiation of history. The reaction to Derrida’s interpretation of de Man illustrates the degree the discourse about deconstruction inside and outside the academy became an echo chamber that concealed the centrality of history in Derrida’s and de Man’s work.

⁵⁷ See *Critical Inquiry* 15:4 (1989), pp. 765-773.

⁵⁸ Marjorie Perloff, “Response to Jacques Derrida,” *Critical Inquiry* 15:4 (1989), p. 768.

⁵⁹ Jean-Marie Apostoloidès, “On Paul de Man’s War,” *Critical Inquiry* 15:4 (1989), p. 766.

⁶⁰ Wiener, “The Responsibilities of Friendship: Jacques Derrida on Paul de Man’s Collaboration,” *Critical Inquiry* 15:4 (1989), p. 801.

⁶¹ Derrida, “Like the Sound,” pp. 637-640, 649.

Conclusion: Aftermath and Possible Future

Beginning in 1987, the year of The de Man Affair, a flood of books and articles challenged what their authors deemed the assault on truth.⁶² A new enthusiasm for history rose after a “period of twenty years during which it was fashionable to deny or avoid” the use of “anything called history.”⁶³ This return to history was a call for referentiality, for connection with the world. There also developed a sentiment that the important critics and theorists of the 1960s made it difficult to locate a place for history and should thus be supplemented.⁶⁴ Former deconstructionists moved away from text-based analysis to a social studies approach.⁶⁵ By 1990, the deconstructive legacy at Yale was eclipsed. The cold war came to an end and American academics in the languages and literature made the turn toward cultural studies.⁶⁶

The de Man Affair, along with the 1987 Heidegger scandal, even prompted Derrida to indirectly reassert his commitment to history. He declared in a 1987 interview that his statement that “there is nothing outside the text” “means nothing” more than “there is nothing outside context”. “We can call ‘context’ the entire ‘real-history-of-the-world’.”⁶⁷ Derrida also took his political and ethical turns in the 1990s. Yet, despite Derrida’s protestations and due to his failure to distance himself from de Man, the discourse about Derrida and de Man remained framed by the charge that both were anti-historical. Derrida’s obituary in the *New York Times*, for example, was largely a discussion of *The de Man Affair*,⁶⁸ while acceptance

⁶² Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987); Lehman, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991); Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History* (California: Encounter Books, 1996); Richard Evans, *In Defense of History* (W.W. Norton & Company, 2000).

⁶³ David Simpson, “Literary Criticism and the Return to ‘History’”, *Critical Inquiry* 14:4 (1988), pp. 721-722.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 724.

⁶⁵ Barbara Johnson, *A World of Difference* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).

⁶⁶ Cusset, p. 269; Rapaport, pp. 32, 59.

⁶⁷ Derrida, “Afterword,” in *Limited Inc.*, pp. 136-137.

⁶⁸ Jonathan Kandell, “Jacques Derrida, Abstruse Theorist, Dies at 74,” *New York Times*, October 10, 2004.

that de Man rejected history for personal gain aided his condemnation and expulsion from high-literary-theoretical circles.⁶⁹

The reception of deconstruction in the United States has obscured the role of history in Derrida's and de Man's work and concealed their opposition to each other, burying Derrida's explicit claims that history is the deconstruction (*différance*) of presence and de Man's implicit formulation that history is presence. Prospective work therefore involves not only a comprehensive investigation of the role history plays for Derrida and de Man. Potential research also entails rethinking of the story of deconstruction in America through the lens of different understandings of history. For example, unless we "rhetorically read" de Man's work, a task that remains undone, we read de Man in defiance of his own philosophy of history. Unless we understand that Derrida and de Man oppose each other we will remain unable to determine their precise relationship and thus incapable to tell their stories.

Commentators have too often denounced deconstruction in the name of history. However, their accusation illustrates the way in which an authentically modern writer such as Derrida or de Man will, as de Man writes about Baudelaire, Hölderlin, Wordsworth, and Yeats, be "compulsively misinterpreted and oversimplified and made to say he opposite of what he actually said."⁷⁰ And, as de Man says of Derrida's treatment of Rousseau, "the pattern is too interesting not to be deliberate."⁷¹ Derrida and de Man are historians, albeit in a manner yet to be either fully recognized. Their histories remain to be told, to be brought back to a public perhaps more willing to listen.

⁶⁹ Marc Redfield, introduction to *Legacies of Paul de Man*, ed. Marc Redfield (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 5. De Man, for example, is not mentioned in a comprehensive course book. See Julia Rivkin and Michael Ryan, *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (London: Blackwell, 1998).

⁷⁰ De Man, "Lyric and Modernity," in *Blindness and Insight*, p. 186. There have been recent, though insufficient, attempts to grapple with the issue of de Man and history. See *Legacies*, pp. 49-61, 62-73, 129-161.

⁷¹ De Man, "The Rhetoric of Blindness," in *Blindness and Insight*, p. 140.

Towards a Typology of Spatial Representations

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Abstract:

My paper is concerned with a tentative categorisation of the various modes of representing space that have shaped and continue to shape modern identity. Viewing the relationship between the subject and space as reciprocal and productive (in the line suggested by French philosopher's Henri Lefebvre's seminal work on the *Production of Space*), it is concerned mainly with the possibilities of representing space in an age of antifoundational, aestheticised thought such as the present stage of "late modernity". Its theoretical sources are mainly sociological and philosophical, but traced back to a sort of aesthetic variety of active agency that shapes spaces according to its own versions of identity, here tentatively termed as "symbolic", "allegoric" and "reflexive".

Keywords: space, representation, modernity, postmodernity, symbolic, allegoric, reflexive.

The social representation of space

The present paper starts from the widely accepted premises that the space around us is socially constructed and culturally mediated, that there is an inextricable reciprocal relationship between the identity of the subject inhabiting a space and that of the space inhabited, and that the epoch we are currently experiencing (by any name we may know it) is best approached in terms of spatial/spatialising concepts. The view on the social production of space embraced for my immediate purposes involves the act of (self-)relating identity, in both its communal and individual dimensions, to the space to

which it is both producer and product. The nature of this double-faced relationship, itself conceived in Foucauldian fashion as the site of the intersection of various cultural forces, may provide the basis for a (admittedly provisional) typology of spaces and of the respective subjects inhabiting them. In delineating this typology I will draw on and expand a distinction drawn by sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry in their investigation of what they label *Economies of Signs and Space* (Lash & Urry, 2002). I will also attempt to integrate various theoretical perspectives on space, especially Lefebvre's conceptual distinctions and de Certeau's radically liberating spatial practices, by re-interpreting them from the somewhat narrower light of the specifically cultural – in fact, downright literary – sources suggested by Lash and Urry. Following such suggestions, I will propose the concepts of the *symbolic*, the *allegoric* and the *reflexive* as modes of space production and sources of subjectivity, as well as methodological tools in the discussion of spatial representation.

Scott Lash and John Urry start from a view on “late modernity” (a term which in other researchers' accounts can be transcribed as “postmodernity”) and “disorganised capitalism”, which they take as representative for the conditions of the end of the twentieth century. Late modernity is characterised by the chaotic and endless flux of mobile subjects, objects and signs. What makes the book especially interesting is that, although they start from the predictably Baudrillardian premise of the precession of derealised and emptied-out signifiers, the authors attempt to recover both meaning and agency in a vision of selfhood turned unacknowledged “expert” in an account that recalls the aptness of de Certeau's subjects to discriminate, manipulate and make their own selection from the endless play of signs (Certeau, 1988). Lash and Urry's basic claim is that

[...] the sort of “economies of signs and space” that become pervasive in the wake of organised capitalism do not just lead to increasing meaninglessness, homogenization, abstraction, anomie and the destruction of the subject. Another set of radically different processes is simultaneously taking place. These processes may open up possibilities for the recasting of meaning in work and leisure, for the reconstitution of the

community and the particular, for the reconstruction of transmogrified subjectivity, and for heterogenization and complexity of space and of everyday life (Lash & Urry, 2002: 3)

Bent on finding the “way out” of the postmodern conundrum, Lash and Urry turn towards the modernist tradition of dissent and particularly to its aesthetic critique of the exclusively cognitive bias of the Cartesian disembodied ego. In this, they seem to come close to standard account of postmodernism in which the latter is said to derive from the generalised pervasion of artistic enterprises as the avant-garde and high-modernism in everyday life (Jameson, 1991). In this respect, they are right to identify the new “universal” ground for communication in popular culture, more precisely in the Jakobsonian poetic function of such cultural forms which they take, following Habermas, to have little or no descriptive or prescriptive value – in other words, to be distinguished from both the moral and the cognitive discourses. This issue deserves a more detailed discussion, but, for the moment, suffice it to say that what is termed “poetic discourse” is conceived as unconsciously informing social practices, acting as “everybody’s ‘elementary forms of religious life’”. They operate by means of “the least mediated of universals” and do not trigger acceptance or rejection, but the omnipresence of their form, since according to Jakobson the poetic is defined by the preeminence of the medium over the message. In order to accept or decline, we need to attune ourselves to these very media: “information communicated from the core as poetic function affects not so much what those on the periphery will classify, but their very classificatory categories themselves” (Lash & Urry, 2002: 29).

However, the aesthetic critique of Enlightenment rationalism, rooted in the Romantic image of the poetic genius and in the Romanticist rejection of technological modernisation remains primarily critical and orients the new ground of a reconstructed subjectivity. This is the direction indicated by Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor’s study of what he terms the “expressivist” dimension of modern identity in *The Sources of the Self* (Taylor, 1989) – a direction taken up by Lash and Urry. For the other side of their argument, they fuse the aesthetic tradition delineated by Taylor with

Anthony Giddens' focus on the reflexive and self-reflexive dimension underlying the advent and the historical identity of modernity, involving – we are reminded – the “accelerated individualisation” which has necessarily led to “a process of *de*-traditionalisation in which social agents are increasingly ‘set free’ from the heteronomous control or monitoring of social structures in order to be *self*-monitoring or self-reflexive” (Lash & Urry, 2002: 33). The generalisation of the aesthetic involves more than hedonistic indulgence into the flow of simulacra: it also presupposes “evaluation”, albeit unmediated. Reflexivity becomes the site for the reorganisation of the modern identity as a multiple and fluctuant self whose very (critical) inward turn warrants its instability and provisionality.

This concept of reflexivity, its theoretical sources, as well as its bearings upon the construction of space, will be shortly granted a more detailed discussion. For the moment, it is sufficient to conclude that their excavation into what, following Charles Taylor, they see as the “sources of the modern self”, Lash and Urry turn towards the resulting combination of “aesthetic reflexivity”. Aesthetic reflexivity rises from critical culture of aesthetic modernism, finding its roots “in another modernity – not of Descartes but of Baudelaire, not of Rousseau but of Rimbaud” (Lash & Urry, 2002: 5-6).

The idea of the reflexive subject stems from the belief that the fashionably “apocalyptic” accounts of the position of the postmodern self (in this respect Jameson or Baudrillard might provide an illustration) result rather from the methodological concerns of political enterprises. As valuable and accurate as they might be, they are not the only side of the coin. On the contrary, the increased attention paid to subjectivity and intersubjectivity by contemporary thought seems to mirror certain forms of (de-centred) agency, characterized primarily by ironical reflexivity and evaluative discernment. These are best understood by means of a brief exploration of their historical sources.

Symbolic space

Lash and Urry's sociological account suggests a view on space that is far from homogenous, but rather multiple and contradictory. While their interest in the postmodernity as restless flow and chaotic circulation of information or “virtual” objects lends space a crucial importance as a

framework for the conditions of the postmodern, it would also seem to preclude classifications and differentiations. Yet, the very flexibility of such apparently uncontrollable floating of signifiers allows for both the survival of former modes and the emergence of radically new spaces. What they term as “symbolic space” is an instance of continuity with more traditional ways of positioning the self within the world. In defining symbolic space, Lash and Urry maintain the gist of Charles Taylor’s description of the “expressivist logic” of the self as the voice of nature in *Sources of the Self*.

The theory of the symbol as it has come down to us today departs from classical rhetoric inasmuch as it treats it less as a stylistic trope than a mode of existence invested with full ontological reality. Here is Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the most ardent and celebrated proponent of the symbol in English aesthetic theory (drawing inspiration from the German romantics and idealist philosophy, Coleridge’s view on the symbol was to set the path for almost two centuries of dominant poetics):

In the Scriptures [symbols] are the living products of the imagination; of that reconciling and mediatory power, which, incorporating the reason in images of the sense, and organising (as it were) the flux of the senses by the permanence and self-circling energies of the reason, gives birth to a system of symbols, harmonious in themselves, and consubstantial with the truths of which they are the conductors.... Its contents present to us the stream of time continuous as life and a symbol of eternity, inasmuch as the past and the future are virtually contained in the present. (White 1953: 24)

While Coleridge invests the symbol with the status of experiential mode, he dismisses allegory as the “counterfeit product of mechanical understanding”, the arbitrary superimposition of discourses that are “unsubstantial” – most likely taken to mean artificial/unmotivated. The symbol lets surface the transcendental meaning whose reality it shares, but allegory is just the shadow of a shadow (the representation of a representation), disjunctive and fragmented. The cultural and epistemological rank of the symbol is so high, that Coleridge includes its study among the aims of “true natural philosophy”, since the symbol “always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible; and while it

enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity, of which it is the representative” (White 1953: 24).

When Lash and Urry graft the traces of the theory of the symbol on the experience of space, the result is their notion of *symbolic spaces* which may be defined as the projection of the “embedded subject” whose illusion of the “natural” unity of being is still unshattered; they function according to the logic of the symbol (envisaging the sign as sharing the substantial reality of the referent); they focus primarily on the relationship between the self and the place the former is located in. Symbolic spaces are spaces of memory and historical embedment; they are the lived spaces of experience which Lefebvre sought under the category of “representational spaces”.

The description provided by Scott and Lash echoes (albeit unwittingly, and certainly starting from very different methodological assumptions) Paul de Man’s distinctive treatment of symbol and allegory in his study on the “Rhetoric of Temporality” from the seminal *Blindness and Insight*. The essay aims not only at reversing the current of aesthetic theory, following the path opened up by the likes of Charles Baudelaire or Walter Benjamin, but also at proposing allegory as the essential figuration of our experience of time. De Man starts from deconstructing the received category of the symbol and establishing the fundamental temporal character of allegory:

In the world of the symbol it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being, but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories. Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas, in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category (de Man, 1983: 206).

He then proceeds to a deconstructionist reading of the structure of allegory, which he conceives as the juxtaposition of sign sequences that are not to be regarded constrictive or conventional (“decreed by dogma”) and whose arbitrariness paradoxically becomes the necessary element in the existence of language. Allegory is thus defined as the perpetual deferral of meaning, as the awareness of the essential difference lying at the heart of

identity and selfhood – finally, as figuring the very consciousness of the void of transcendental meaning, (bringing us to the next section of the present essay):

Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of its temporal difference (de Man, 1983: 207).

Allegorical space

I will next attempt to investigate what happens when the concept of allegory is applied to a theory of space and, moreover, how useful it can be in the study of contemporary representations, since, as de Man himself has taught us, all texts are allegories or their own impossibility. The concept of “allegorical space” will prove to be extremely complex and always in danger of being reduced to one or another of its dimensions, not least because starts from a paradoxical inversion: it approaches the experience of space by way of temporality, only to reveal – not history, tradition and the lived – but a version of the deconstructionist void that will suit many of today’s apocalyptic accounts of postmodernity, starting with the Jamesonian “nostalgia for the present” (see Jameson, 1991).

Thus, allegory has been seen as both a specifically modernist, and a defining postmodernist mode, for all its roots in classical rhetoric and for all its glorious career in medieval scriptural interpretation or in neo-classical works. Other theorists have connected allegory to impersonality and self-effacing stylization: the beginnings of modernism, rooted in the break with the Romantic unity between life and art, celebrate a notion of style that may be dubbed as allegorical inasmuch it relies on artificiality, excess and arbitrariness (Schlossman, 1991).

Due to its very nature, allegory (“speaking other”) evokes and constitutes itself as “other” by deviating from the normality of language and from a notion of the natural that allows the self to be posited as a coherent whole. Schlossman identifies allegory’s otherness in the very figurality of modernist language, a language turned towards itself in an effort to eliminate the traces of the author from the de-subjectified text. The features

of modern allegorical modes that she identifies correspond both to this sense of deprivation on the part of the authorial subject, and to the disorientating fragmentation indicated by alternative accounts written in the wake of Walter Benjamin's interpretation: "the depersonalisation of sentiment, the representation of evanescence and loss, and the revelation of an absence that renounces (or renders impossible) the comforts of nostalgia" (Schlossman, 1991: 3). Allegory stems from the perceived gap between the author's personality and an ideal of the sublime which can never be attained subjectively, but only by means of the principle of alterity embraced in the style of a work of art, be it Flaubertian neutrality or Proustian probings of the subconscious. The work acts to both reveal and transcend the incommensurability between the subject and this theologically-modelled ideal, thus marking the hiatus as the very essence of modern allegory: "In contrast to the early Romantic theory of the symbol and its celebration of art as an organic and natural creation, the process of Modernism makes it clear that Art cannot be assimilated to an outgrowth or extension of subjectivity's heart" (Schlossman, 1991: 39).

The surplus of allegory comes to disrupt the transparency and "naturalness" of all discourse, grafting upon the latter the impossibility of its own reading: as Paul de Man sets out to demonstrate in *Allegories of Reading*,

The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction. But since this model cannot be closed off by a final reading, it engenders, in its turn, a supplementary figural superposition which narrates the unreadability of the prior narration. As distinguished from primary deconstructive narratives centered on figures and ultimately always on metaphor, we can call such narratives to the second (or third) degree allegories. Allegorical narratives tell the story of the failure to read whereas tropological narratives tell the story of the failure to denominate (de Man, 1979: 209).

In modernism, the mask of artistic impersonality stylistically transposed in Flaubertian "surface" realism or the unconscious workings of involuntary memory is presented as an allegory of the absence within and –

more interestingly for the present purposes – explicitly linked to a Baudelairian vision of modern spatiality:

In the mid-nineteenth century, Modernist allegory rose from a new impersonal interiority of the “other” world within subjectivity, and a new allegorical temporality that clasped modernity to antiquity. The meeting between interior and exterior occurs at the crossroads of antiquity and modernity, represented in Baudelaire’s image of Paris (Schlossman, 1991: 18).

Baudelaire’s modernised space is mediated by the transparency of glass, which Schlossman compares to the allegorical figurations of Flaubert and Baudelaire, produced in similar fashion via a tropological set of windows, stained glass and magic lanterns that both promote and prevent meaning from coming into being. Once again, allegory reveals its close connections to the visual. In the postmodern allegory, the baroque or even modernist ruins are replaced by the recycling of the past after the model of the heritage industry and under the pressure of globalisation.

Most scholarly attempts to rehabilitate allegory from a late-twentieth century perspective stem from an adaptation Walter Benjamin’s efforts to provide a philosophical foundation for what he sees as a quintessentially allegorical modernity (Benjamin, 1998). The adaptation usually consists in sidestepping or critiquing Benjamin’s theological or metaphysical grounds for his reinterpretation of modernity. To be more specific, in his rather little-known study on *The Origin of the German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin traces the roots of allegorical representation in the obscure and forgotten baroque “mourning play” (*Trauerspiel*), carefully distinguished from classical tragedy and grounded in the metaphysical gap between the human and the nonhuman opened up by allegory (Benjamin, 1998). The book effectively closed its author’s way into the German academia due to the radical revision it suggested both of the dramatic canon, and the conventions of Romanticism aesthetics upholding what Benjamin calls a distorted understanding of the theological symbol as the organic and natural connection between meaning and sign. The critique of the champions of the symbol, such as Goethe, Schopenhauer, and, from among his contemporaries, Yeats, whose expressivist theories dismiss allegory as the

conventional grafting of image and abstract meaning, and define the symbol in terms of necessity, instantly available totality, nature and “being”, results in allegory’s appropriation of the categories of (secular) time, history, fragment and, finally, death.

The theological remnants active in Benjamin’s view of allegory become apparent in his description of the doubling of meaning of the allegorical “vehicle”, which always points to something else than itself – a position that is both destructive (since it involves the depletion of meaning and the arbitrariness of reference), and metaphysical – if seen as a “power which makes them appear no longer commensurable with profane things, which raises them onto a higher plane, and which, can, indeed, sanctify them” (Benjamin, 1998: 175). Contradiction lies therefore at the very heart of allegory, as well as becoming the essence of writing itself; moreover, baroque allegory, with its intricate burden of the (sacred) unsaid, recalls the functioning of hieroglyphic writing, which allows Benjamin to bring in the visual: “allegorical intuition” accompanied by the image as “fragment” or “rune”.

It is extremely important to note that the connection between allegory and the very space of modernity was actually effected, although in a more indirect manner, by Benjamin himself. Embarked on the unfinished *Arcades* project, he writes about the allegorical interpretation of urban space by the gaze of the *flanêur*, modernity’s paradigmatic figure, who eyes the city’s iron buildings in search for a hidden meaning that proves forever elusive:

Baudelaire’s genius, which is nourished on melancholy, is an allegorical genius. For the first time, with Baudelaire, Paris becomes the subject of lyric poetry. This poetry is no hymn to the homeland; rather, the gaze of the allegorist, as it falls on the city, is the gaze of the alienated man. It is the gaze of the *flanêur*, whose way of life still conceals behind a mitigating nimbus the coming desolation of the big-city dweller. The *flanêur* still stands on the threshold-of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet. In neither is he at home. He seeks refuge in the crowd (Benjamin, 2008: 104).

One major difference between symbolic and allegorical spaces seems therefore to lie in their relationship with “nature”. If one subscribes to the

description of Romantic poetics as expressivist, with nature as the substratum, even the *content* of expression – as one must – it is easy to see why my notion of the allegorical can be fully applied to postmodern (or late modern) spaces. The allegorical problematises the closeness to nature and the organic integration that the Romantics felt they had to defend against the advent of the mechanic and high modernist authors, for all their cosmopolitanism, attempted to retrieve. To give some examples from the history of British fiction, Virginia Woolf’s insistence on the authenticity of raw experience or D.H. Lawrence’s interrogation of the unconscious as the gate towards cosmic merging may be interpreted as efforts to recapture the organicity of the symbolic location under the pressure of the new public spaces of modernity. In the post-industrial society, nature is finally recognised as the absolute other that has lost its footing in the world and needs either to be reconstructed or replaced.

The type of subjectivity corresponding to allegorical spaces is closely connected to what Frederic Jameson described as capitalist “schizophrenia” in his study of late modernity (Jameson 1991). It also adds value to the argument that, as Lefebvre reminded us, the death of the subject is a “spatial affair”. Under the pressure of the visual and consumerism, subjectivity is both exacerbated and extinguished at the same time. Thus, exile becomes first a paradoxical manner of recuperating the symbolic and eventually an attempt at aesthetic self-construction in a globalised world. To put it differently, the nostalgia for the symbolic exhausts itself in the allegoric siege on the lost meaning and is turned into the self-reflexive flow of constantly changing spaces of the cybernetic age.

The reflexivity of late modern spaces

In my reading, reflexive spaces are the spaces of “practical memory” described by de Certeau (1988) – a notion of memory that remains phenomenological and embodied and that allows for a partial resubjectification of the fluid self along the lines of flight of Deleuze and Guattari’s *Thousand Plateaus*. One of the best sociological accounts of reflexivity occurs in the work of Anthony Giddens (1990), who starts from positing the “discontinuities of modernity” in order to explain that the

conditions that have brought about and characterise modernity are specific and historically unique, involving an unprecedented transformation of existing social orders. Giddens is less concerned with the practicalities of everyday life, and even less with the regenerating work of memory, but his efforts point in this direction when he discusses the possibilities of relocation and reembedding offered to the self.

Giddens describes the installation of modern spatiality in terms that recall Lefebvre's history of abstractisation and rationalisation. Premodern cultures are defined by the close intertwining of time and space: location determined the telling of time, which remained imprecise. The spreading of the clock as a means for measuring time and the uniformisation to a global scale of the social organisation of time gradually resulted in the "separation of time from space" and the eventual "emptying" out of space and time. The transformation of space in modernity involved the separation of space from place, understood as localised, geographically situated space: by allowing for relations with increasingly distant others, modernity opens place to distant control and renders the locale superfluous. Modern empty space is defined by the fading away of the privileged locale in relation to which other spatial representations could occur, and the substitutability of different places (Giddens, 1990: 19).

The separation of time from space is conceived both as facilitating social control over the latter and allowing for new spatiotemporal combinations. For Giddens, such a concept is paramount because it accounts for characteristically modern phenomena: disembedding, rational organisation and the recombination of space and time in a "genuinely world-historical framework for action and experience" (Giddens, 1990: 20-21). For my current purposes, it proves useful because it provides new facets of the processes of "allegorisation" and "reflexivisation" at work in the production of contemporary space. Thus, in the terms I have suggested, the advent of allegorical spaces may very well be understood in terms of the separation of time from space, which becomes deprived of memory and therefore of history. Reflexive space, defined as the heterotopian consequence of the consciousness of both the past and the global, is paradoxically given a lease on life by the very standardisation of historical

accounts which it seems to oppose: some sort of (universalised) order has to exist, if any re-ordering is to make sense. But, for a better understanding of the matter, it might be well worth reverting to the concepts used by Giddens and paying closer attention to them.

What Lefebvre describes as the domination of representations and the modern instalment of the abstract space is best approached in Giddens's account by way of the notion of disembedding. Giddens defines disembedding as "the 'lifting out' of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (Giddens, 1990: 21). Disembedding mechanisms are "abstract systems" (Giddens, 1990: 83), such as "symbolic tokens" – media interchanged without reference to particularities – and "expert systems". Expert systems are professional or technical systems that organise our life; what makes them "disembedding" is not so much their high level of specialisation, but rather the fact that they require "trust" not in persons, but in abstract knowledge unavailable to the lay individual, thus decontextualising social relations (Giddens, 1990: 28). Trust, for example, is a disembedding mechanism because it involves absence in space and time (an absent other to put one's trust in); it is related to risk, whose undesired consequences it is designed to minimise.

Giddens uses the concept of reflexivity as the defining feature of modernity. Reflexivity as a basic human characteristic is attached new meanings which had not existed in premodern societies where tradition reflexively monitors human actions by integrating them in the continuity of past, present and future. Modernity, with its erosion of tradition, turns reflexivity into a means of "system reproduction, such as thought and action are constantly refracted back upon one another":

The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their very character (Giddens, 1990: 37).

While disembedded institutions continue to increase their hold over the modern, a counterbalancing phenomena is simultaneously seen at work. What

Giddens calls “reembedding” refers to the subversive practices of reappropriation and reinsertion that temporarily connect disembedded relations to local contexts in a dialectical relation. In this account, despite the widespread belief into the increasing dominance of abstract mechanisms over the “life-world”, local conditions influence the emptied-out dimensions of disembedding mechanisms, however fleetingly. But the reflexivity of modernity also accounts for its dilemma. Reflexivity undermines reason, Giddens adds, because it constantly reveals its fragility and subverts certainty. It discloses the circularity of reason and exposes our faith in it as irrational (“How can we justify a commitment to reason in the name of reason?”).

Furthermore, Anthony Giddens convincingly argues that reflexivity is inherent to modernity given the latter’s critical stance towards tradition and the continual incorporation of new findings which are reflected back on and alter the very practices that have given them birth. The conditions of modernity involve perpetual reflexive loops acting both to legitimise change and erode the very foundations of legitimation. The unprecedented scope of reflexivity in modern societies has as a consequence the emergence of what Giddens calls “radicalised modernity” (Giddens, 1990: 150), characterised by the vision of the self whose claims to (partial) agency are rooted in active constructions of reflexive inwardness. Radicalised modernity’s preservation of selfhood involves the dialectic interplay of the local and the distant, of abstract systems and “facework”, of technical expertise and personalised use. Reflexive space can be described in terms of Anthony Giddens’s analysis of the dialectic between location and dislocation as one of the features of modernity. Giddens’s emphasis lies again on the concept of time-space distancing, which conditions the reception of the local in an interaction that undermines the nostalgia for the fullness of belonging.

Against the widespread criticism of contemporary flatness and narcissism, Giddens proposes a more practically-oriented notion of the individual, involving personal trust and trust in others obtained by means of a reflexive process of self-enquiry and reciprocal disclosure. This can be seen as an attempt at safeguarding forms of contemporary individualism and “care for the self” which would otherwise lend themselves to an agonistic interpretation. To the modern self, the threat comes from the danger of

meaninglessness inherent in the project of reflexive self-construction. The point is not that depth has disappeared and that leveled surfaces are all that is left for us to narcissistically aestheticise. It is rather that the context of such reflexive constructions, depth and surfaces cease to behave as opposites in a reciprocal contamination of meaning: if the sense of inwardness depends on and is actively informed by Giddens's disembedding mechanisms, the boundary between the inside and the outside tends to flicker even more. Contemporary thought seems to indicate that the solution lies in attention to memory, history (de Certeau or Paul Ricoeur) and emplacement and embodiment (phenomenologists such as Edward S. Casey, Jeff Malpas, Merleau-Ponty)¹ as markers of the identity of the self.

Conclusive remarks

Symbolic space has been defined as the highly localised and traditional space of organic communities whose individuals define themselves in relation to the place they occupy and to their strong connection with nature. Expressivist ideas of the self, romantic poetry or romantic philosophy of integration within nature, or the genius as the voice of the cosmic order, to name but a few possible extensions, fall under this category. Such a vision of space would therefore have to be based on a concrete locale, with time most likely attuned not only to natural rhythms and the cyclicity of the seasons, but also to the larger historical time of communal identity. As far as "allegorical space" is concerned, it would logically bring forth a dehistoricised perception of time, and a dominantly globalised, highly mediated, sense of space. Place is most often replaced by a sense of the void, the nothingness lying at the heart of things, revealed as simulacra, signs lacking referents or abstract geometrical arrangements. What I have termed "reflexive space" is possibly the most difficult to describe, mainly because it is conceived as essentially unstable, chaotic, provisional and opposed to most attempts at generalisation. Its spatial image

¹ For a discussion on place and location, see Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place. Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993; and Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience. A Philosophical Topography*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

is best captured by Deleuzian, multi-directional flows and by concrete, albeit ephemeral localizations, while its temporal dimension involves the fragmentation of “*petites histoires*”, the coming together of incompatible individual times, the aestheticised manipulation of historical signifiers to “materialize time in space”. In fact, reflexive space may be said to be composed of as many configurations as texts, characters, fragments. In it, symbolic location and geometric abstraction emerge momentarily in a synthesis which does not complete, but carries forward a perpetual dialectic of signified and signifying space. On the other hand, with the reflexive dimension, the temporal comprises both repetitiveness and the sense of progressive linearity underlying modernity: to function reflexively means to constantly look back at and analyze the past while critically altering course in the light of recent discoveries.

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Ceașescu was my father!

Letters about the Children of the Decree at the end of the '60s.

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Abstract:

The present paper proposes a Lacanian discourse analysis of 38 private letters addressed to Nicolae Ceaușescu, the general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), in 1968. Most of the authors of these letters, found in the National Archives of Romania, were inviting the agnostic, openly anti-religious, general secretary of the RCP to participate to the baptism of their newborns, to be their godfather, and even to give his name, “Nicolae”, to their children. I argue that these requests indicate the transformation of Ceaușescu into the Symbolic Father of the newborn children, and by extension, of the future Romanian nation. Moreover, they show the citizens’ renunciation of their parental functions on behalf of the state: their children are not theirs anymore, but become “children of the decree” (*decreșei* in Romanian), as the children born in Romania between 1967 and 1971 were commonly called. Ceaușescu, the new “symbolic father”, society’s source of law and prohibition, is articulated at the most intimate structures of the citizens it governs, becoming “Nicolae”, a Symbolic Father, source and custodian of the higher symbolic order of culture.

Keywords: abortion, psychoanalysis, Ceaușescu, communism, Romania, letters.

The present study intends to bring a new perspective of study on a theme that in the last 20 years has become familiar not only to the academia, but also to a larger public¹: Ceaușescu’s harsh pro-natalist policy between 1966 and

¹ The documentary films about the Romanian orphanages and special centers for handicapped children realized by foreign reporters at the beginning of the ‘90s, Florin

1989. Along the decades, the pronatalist policy initiated through the Decree No.770/1966 was characterized by severe restrictions of the access to legal abortion and modern contraception, accompanied by serious violations of citizens' privacy and women's dignity. Furthermore, these restrictive measures, never supported by adequate socio-economic and educational measures,² resulted in thousands of casualties³ and long-lasting traumas.

The most important studies have explored this subject on different levels of analysis: the institutional and legislative deconstructions have been completed with discursive analysis and oral history approaches,⁴ putting in evidence the dreadful consequences of this policy. In addition to the casualties and personal tragedies, the brutal intrusion of the state into what was supposed to constitute the (most) private sphere of the citizen represents another gloomy side of the story, and a "detached" and "objective" analysis becomes thus even harder.

This is one of the reasons for which I have decided to approach this theme from a different, somehow collateral standpoint. My research approaches the pro-natalist policy of communist Romania from a rather minor viewpoint, which of some "harmless" letters addressed to Ceaușescu by apparently happy parents in communist Romania two years after the Decree No.770/1966, which severely limited the access to abortion on request, had been issued. I consider that Lacanian reading of these "half

Iepan's *Children of The Decree (Născuți la comandă. Decrețului)*, released in 2005 as well as Cristian Mungiu's Palme d'Or winning film "4 months, 3 weeks and 2 days" (2007) have had a major impact on the larger, international public.

² See Corina Doboș (ed.), *Politica pronatalistă a regimului Ceaușescu. O perspectivă comparativă*, Iași: Polirom, 2010.

³ Between 1966 and 1989 around 10000 women died because of illegal abortions and thousands of children were abandoned and exterminated in State institutions, where the living conditions can be qualified as "inhuman". Gail Klingman, *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceaușescu's Romania*, Berkely: University of California Press, 1998.

⁴ Klingman, op. cit, Lorena Anton, *Abortion and the making of Socialist mother during Communist Romania*: www.k-state.edu/sasw/kpc/eedemo/PDF/eedemowp5.pdf; Vladimir Trebici, *Genocid și democrație* (Bucharest, Humanitas, 1991); Corina Palasan, "Caracterul profund restrictiv al politii pronataliste în România comunistă (1966-1989)", in Ruxandra Ivan (ed.), *Transformarea socialistă. Politici ale regimului comunist între ideologie și administrție*, Iași: Polirom, 2009.

private – half public” sources will clarify the “obscure”, “grey” zone where the public sphere articulates the intimate.

My research explores some of the possibilities of interpretation that Lacanian psychoanalysis opened up for social scientists. My interpretation revolves around the difference between Lacanian key-concepts as the name-of-the-father and The Name-of-the-Father. For doing this, I have organized my study in 2 main parts: the first represents a theoretical introduction, which seeks to elucidate a few indispensable conceptual elements (part A.) The following second part proposes a lacanian critique of the letters is pursued, bringing to light the transition in the “symbolic father’s” function from prohibition to integration into a higher symbolic order.

Conceptual clarifications: a lacanian “symbolic father”

The “paternal figure” constitutes one of the most important archetypes that structures the Western culture, as Freud’s modern rediscovery of the Oedipian myth made it clear.⁵ Under the disguise of the “Oedipus complex”⁶, the Oedipian myth has become a corner stone for the entire corpus of knowledge of psychoanalysis in the 20th century. The “paternal function”, “the Name-of-the-Father,” “the castration complex”, “the Dead Father”, “the primordial father (totem)”, “the No-of-the father” have become referential terms in the psychoanalytic language.

⁵ Jacques Lacan, “Introduction to the Names of the Father Seminar”, in Jacques Lacan, *Television*, London & New York : W.W. Norton & Company, 1990, pp. 79-96, p. 89.

⁶ “The Oedipus complex was defined by Freud as an unconscious set of loving and hostile desires which the subject experiences in relation to its parents; the subject desires one parent, and thus enters into rivalry with the other parent. In the “positive” form of the Oedipus complex, the desired parent is the parent of the opposite sex to the subject, and the parent of the same sex is the rival. The Oedipus complex emerges in the third year of life and then declines in the fifth year, when the child renounces sexual desire for its parents and identifies with the rival. Freud argued that all psychopathological structures could be traced to a malfunction in the Oedipus complex, which was thus dubbed “the nuclear complex of the neuroses”. Although the term does not appear in Freud’s writings until 1910, traces of its origins can be found much earlier in his work, and by 1910 it was already showing signs it was already showing signs of the central importance that it was to acquire in all psychoanalytic theory thereafter.” Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*, London & New York: Routledge, 1996, p. 130.

At the end of the '40s Lacan reasserted the importance the “figure of the father” had in Freud’s work⁷ and during the '50s he began to develop and nuance his own theory. Lacan’s “rediscovery” of the importance the paternal figure holds in the economy of Freudian psychoanalysis constituted a response to the predominant contemporary interpretations of Freud’s work.⁸

The name-of-the-father & The Name-of-the-Father: From prohibition to integration into the symbolic order

In the early '50s Lacan subsumed to Freud’s original insights of the symbolic function the figure of father played in the family and bigger communities.⁹ “Father’s” main functions were those of prohibition of the incest and imposition of the Law:

It is in the *name of the father* that we must recognize the support of the symbolic function which, from the dawn of history, has identified his person with the figure of the law.¹⁰

At this stage, “Lacan played on the homophony of *le nom du père* (the name of the father) and *le ‘non’ du père* (the ‘no’ of the father), to emphasize the legislative and prohibitive function of the (symbolic) father”¹¹.

Later on, Lacan developed his own theories about the complexity covered by the concept of “father.”¹² He thus distinguished between the symbolic father, the imaginary father and the real father.¹³ For the purpose of the present paper I will look in more detail to the meaning and function Lacan designates to the “symbolic father”. Fundamentally, the symbolic

⁷ Lacan, Seminar IV, pp. 204-205, apud Evans, op. cit., p. 62.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Psychoses. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book III 1955-1956*, translated with notes by Russell Grigg, London: Routledge, 1993, pp. 315-316; from now on it will be referred as: S. III.

⁹ Lacan, Introduction to the *Names of the Father Seminar*, p. 88.

¹⁰ Lacan, *Ecrits*, 67 apud Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 122.

¹¹ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 122.

¹² The most important and first seminar where he makes these distinctions and formulates his conceptions is the Seminar. Book III, the seminar delivered between 1955 and 1956 (originally published in French as *Le Séminaire. Livre III*, by Editions du Seuil, Paris 1981). The present references to this work follow the English translation.

¹³ See Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, pp. 62-64; Lila J. Kalinich and Stuart W. Taylor, *The Dead Father. A psychoanalytic inquiry*, London & NY: Routledge, 2009.

father is defined in relationship with the function he plays.¹⁴ The main function of the “symbolic father” is the conquest of the *symbolic order*, defined “as something superimposed, without which no animal life would be possible for this misshapen subject that man is.”¹⁵ Even if the symbolic father is not an actual subject but a position in the symbolic order, “a subject may nevertheless come to occupy this position, by virtue of exercising the paternal function. Nobody can ever occupy this position completely.”¹⁶

Following Freud, Lacan has shown the manner in which a non-pathological resolution in the Oedipal complex can be achieved only through the figure of the “symbolic father” and the symbolic castration of the child¹⁷, an equivalent of realization of the signifier “father” at the symbolic level.¹⁸

In order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations, that between male and female, a third party has to intervene, one that is the image of something successful, the model of some harmony, there has to be a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is, of the father. Not the natural father, but what is called the father. The order that prevents collision and explosion of the situation as a whole is founded on the existence of this name of the father.¹⁹

Thus, this first function of the “symbolic father” is that of imposing the LAW and regulating desire in the Oedipus complex. At this point, the imposition of the law made possible the conquest of the symbolic order.

The symbolic order can subsist as such only “outside” and distinct from the “subject”, but entirely determining his/her existence.²⁰ The entering from the state of nature into the symbolic order of culture is marked by the inscription of the subject into a line of male descendance:

¹⁴ Eric Laurent, “A new love for the father”, in Kalinich and Taylor, *The Dead Father...*, pp.75-90, p. 79; Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 62.

¹⁵ Lacan, S III, p. 96.

¹⁶ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 63.

¹⁷ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 130.

¹⁸ Lacan, S III, p. 204.

¹⁹ Lacan, S III, p. 96.

²⁰ Lacan, S III, pp. 96-97.

[...] it is only when we seek to inscribe descendance as a function of males that any innovation in the structure intervenes. It's only when we speak of descendance from male to male that a cut intervenes, which is the difference between generations. The introduction of the signifier of the father introduces henceforth an ordering in the descendants, the series of generations.²¹

In the new order of culture, an order defined in opposition with the one of nature, nothing animal remains in Abraham's lineage. Now it is a lineage tied to an act of speech, the transmission of the benediction, of the *berakhak*,²² such that the father transmits to the son the effectiveness of the spoken word in its particularity.²³

Thus, the "symbolic father" performs "the introduction of an order, of a mathematical order, whose structure is different from the natural order."²⁴ Further on, the function of a proper name is needed at the level of the "father."²⁵ The name is defined as "a mark [...] imprinted on something that may be, but not at all necessarily, a speaking subject."²⁶ By getting a name, the virtual subject is inscribed into the symbolic order.

The Name of the Father, as primordial signifier, manages to give coherence to a fragmented symbolic order: "I am what I am, this is a hole, isn't it? A hole [...] it swallows up and then sometimes spits out again. What does it spit out? The name, the Father as a name."²⁷ The Name-of-the-Father is the fundamental signifier which permits signification to proceed normally. This fundamental signifier both confers identity on the subject (by naming him, it

²¹ Lacan, S III, p. 320; see also Lacan, *Introduction to the Names of the Father Seminar*, especially the pages 90-94.

²² "*El Shadday* is he who chooses, he who promise, who causes a certain convent-which is transmissible in only one way, through paternal *barachach*-to pass through his name". Lacan, *Introduction to the Names of the Father Seminar*, p. 92.

²³ Eric Laurent, "A new love for the father", p. 77.

²⁴ Lacan, S III, p. 320.

²⁵ Lacan, *Introduction to the Names of the Father Seminar*, p.88.

²⁶ Idem.

²⁷ Lacan, 1976, p. 54 apud Eric Laurent, "A new love for the father ", p. 86.

positions him within the symbolic order) and signifies the Oedipal prohibition, the “no” of the incest taboo and imposition of the Law.²⁸

An external critique of the letters

I have come across the letters to be examined more or less accidentally, at the Central Headquarter of the National Archives of Romania, in the archival collection of the Central Committee of the RCP, section Chancellery, Dossier nr.188/1966.²⁹

The data base I have worked with is constituted by 38 letters addressed mainly to Nicolae Ceaușescu, the General Secretary of the RCP in the year 1968 by Romanian citizens, of both sexes. Most of them are authenticated, having a seal and a registration number of entry to the Chancellery of the Central Committee of the RCP. 27 of them are also accompanied by reports, with reference to the content of the letter, and of the manner in which the different requests have been solved and of future actions required. Generally, these accompanying reports come from the county organizations of the RCP and are addressed to the Chancellery of the Central Committee of RCP, Section of Letters and Audiences. With the exception of 4 cases in which instructions are sent from Bucharest into the territory, in the rest of the cases the reports inform about the manner in which these invitations have been taken care of at local level.

If we use as differential criteria *the purpose* of these letters, we find out that 33 out of 38 letters were inviting Nicolae Ceaușescu to participate to the baptism of children born in the year 1968. Most of them (27) were inviting Ceaușescu to be the godfather for those children, whereas 6 of them were inviting Ceaușescu simply to participate to the ceremony, without specifying in what quality. In all these cases the invitation was politely refused, and in most of the cases local representative of the RCP were sent to congratulate the new parents. There were two more wedding-invitations addressed to Ceaușescu and one that was inviting him to act as a godfather for a wedding.

²⁸ Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary...*, p. 122.

²⁹ Referred from now on as ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966.

As I was very much surprised to discover that the parents of the “children of the decree” were asking Ceaușescu to take part to a religious ceremony, addressing the General Secretary of the RCP in very warm words, inviting him to take part to a important event of their (private) lives, my analysis went further by trying to determinate the *social profile* of those who addressed these invitations.

12 letters were written by females, 16 by males and 5 by couples. 3 of these invitations were coming from large cities of Romania (3 from Timișoara, 1 from Deva and 2 from Suceava), but most of them were coming from the rural area and a few from 8 small cities (3 from Agnita, 3 from Lugoj, 1 from Șimleul Silvaniei and 1 from Fălticeni). Generally, those who were inviting Ceaușescu to baptize their children had in 1968 more than 4 children, but a significant number (15) had 4 or less children.³⁰ Five of these invitations include lists with the names of the other children of the respective families. Two of this invitations are accompanied by requests for material support (money or a larger living place), of which just one is positively answered, 7 of them describe the poor material conditions of the household but they do not request for a material support from the state. There are 8 cases in which a form of material support is granted even if it was not requested, and the rest of 15 letters of invitations do not make any reference to state material support.

The large majority of those who invited Ceaușescu were workers (qualified or not qualified). Those who were asking Ceaușescu to baptize their children were low-educated people (their handwriting, and the frequent grammar and spelling mistakes undoubtedly show it), living in less urbanized if not rural area, with relatively difficult socio-economical situation and rather large families, more than half having more than 4 children, most of the others having 4 children. And in most of the letters a

³⁰ I have used as criteria for my analysis the number of children the petitioners have taking into account that from October 1966 abortion on request was permitted for women with at least four children. Given the fact that most of those who invited Ceaușescu to baptize their babies had more than 4 children, we can assume that the newborns were really desired by their parents and were not born as a consequence of the restriction imposed over access to abortion to request and modern contraception. Surely, this assumption does not work in the case of the “minority” of those with less than 4 children.

material support from the State or the Party is not requested, even in an implicit form. Amazingly or not, the fundamental rationale for which most of the people were inviting Ceaușescu to participate to the baptism of their children seemed not to be a material one.

When we return to the text of the letters, we can notice a detail whose repetition in 26 out of the 27 letters accompanied by a report makes it even more evident: if in letters of invitations, the General Secretary of the RCP was asked to come to the baptism of the newborns, or even to baptize them, the accompanying reports were almost always referring to the baptism as the “ceremony of conferring/ giving name to the child” and sometimes “to the ceremony dedicated to the birth of the child”. At the first sight, the repetition of this semantic transfer can be explained quite simply: in order to avoid the reference to a religious ceremony,³¹ a reference not at all comfortable for the members of an openly atheist party, those in charge have found and used a little “linguistic detour”. It looked perfectly reasonable to assume that that this detour could have been used by those in charge in order to deal in an easier, or at least in a more politically correct way, with this problem. At a second thought, the obsessive repetition of the idiom “conferring/ giving name to the child”, coming from party officials scattered around the country made me think that this repetition could in fact have a deeper significance. A psychoanalytical explanation of this recurrence appeared as a challenging alternative.

A content critique

At this point an external, structural approach of the letters under study appeared to be of no use any more, as a psychoanalytical approach recommends a case-based study. Consequently, I have selected fragments from these letters, which are at least symptomatic, if not representative, for the data base I have created. I have divided these “symptomatic letters” along with the following lines:

³¹ Thus, in response to an invitation to the religious ceremony of the wedding, the local representative of the RCP is said to have attended the “civil ceremony” of the wedding: ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d. 188/1966, page 63.

A. The babies are given the name of Nicolae (6 invitations out of 33):

1. C.A. from Valea lui Mihai: "I am asking you to accept to be the godfather of my forth child, who is going to wear your name, 'Nicolae' ".³²

2. B.T. from Vatra Dornei: "Grace to the great decree you have released so wisely, today we have our second son, born on 28 of November 1967 and as we want to show you how much love of gratefulness we have for you, we gave him the name Nicolae."³³

3. M.T. from Mereni: "Through the decree from 1967 we got a boy, young boy, who your name: Niculae M."³⁴

4. B.A. from Timiș County: "I am inviting you to the baptism of our son; B.A. Nicolae [...] B.A. Nicolae is born on 31st of October 1968. As a citizen of the R.S.R. I did my duty in conformity with the Decree."³⁵

5. D.G. from Timișoara: "In the name of the decree and of mine [personally] and the love for my country and communism. Allow me to invite you to baptize my son, D. Nicolaie."³⁶

6. D.E. from Diasod: "[...] I am inviting you to be the godfather to my 10th child, born on 26th of January and whose name is Nicolae."³⁷

B. Any kind of relationship between the new baby born and to Ceaușescu is formulated (2 letters):

1. A.E. from Lugoj: "In 1967, when I was pregnant with my second child, I was supposed to get through a cholecyst operation, and the doctors decided to provoke an abortion as they said they will not perform my cholecyst operation if I am pregnant, telling me that if something happen they do not want to take the responsibility and I replied that I don't want not to break the word of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu and of the other rulers. In 1968 I gave birth to a little boy, and I am begging you from the bottom of my heart, me and my family to come to give him a name..."³⁸

³² ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 4.

³³ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 60.

³⁴ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 94.

³⁵ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 106.

³⁶ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 115. The 3rd child, while the 2nd child is living in a State Institution for children- see ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, 188/1966, page 114.

³⁷ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 149.

³⁸ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 98.

2. D.E. from Timișoara: “I am asking you to be so kind to baptize my youngest son. I would not disturb you with this request, but I had this wish since I was pregnant with my little girl, when I said it that when I will have a boy I will ask you to be his godfather.”³⁹

C. Any kind of relationship is established between the birth of the new baby and any decree of law is formulated (4 out of the 5 letters in this category were also included in the Category A: The babies are given the name of Nicolae)

1. B.T. from Vatra Dornei: “Grace to the great decree⁴⁰ you have released so wisely, today we have our second son, born on 28 of November 1967 and as we want to show you how much love of gratefulness we have for you, we gave him the name Nicolae.”⁴¹

2. M.T. from Mereni: “Through the decree from 1967⁴² we got a boy, young, who your name: Niculae M.”⁴³

3. B.A. from Timiș County: “I am inviting you to the baptism of our son, B.A. Nicolae [...] B.A. Nicolae is born on 31st of October 1968. As citizen of the Socialist Republic of Romania I did my duty in conformity with the Decree.^{44,45}

4. D.G. from Timișoara: “In the name of the decree⁴⁶ and in mine [name] and the love for my country and communism. Let me invite you to baptize my son, D. Nicolaie.”⁴⁷

5. B.F. from Făget: “With the occasion of the third child I have given birth to, my thoughts are directed toward you, wise ruler of our Party and of our Socialist State, who through the Decree that you gave rights and better conditions to the mothers with more children.^{48, 49}

³⁹ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 119.

⁴⁰ Most probable the Decree No. 770/1966.

⁴¹ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 60.

⁴² Most probable the Decree No.770/1966.

⁴³ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 94.

⁴⁴ Most probable the Decree No.770/1966.

⁴⁵ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, 188/1966, page 106.

⁴⁶ Most probable the Decree No. 954/1966 that stated for each child beginning with the 3rd one the mother will receive 1000 lei.

⁴⁷ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 115.

⁴⁸ See note 46.

⁴⁹ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 101.

6. A.E. from Lugoj: “In 1967, when I was pregnant with my second child, I was supposed to get through a cholecyst operation, and the doctors decided to provoke an abortion as they said they will not perform this operation if I am pregnant, telling me that if something happens they are not responsible and I replied that I don’t want not to break the word of Comrade Nicolae Ceaușescu and of the other rulers⁵⁰. In 1968 I gave birth to a little boy, and I am begging you from the bottom of my heart, me and my family to come to give him a name...”⁵¹.

D. The presence of Ceaușescu at the baptism is not necessarily requested (2 letters):

1. A.E. from Agnita addressed to Ceaușescu with “Dear and bellowed Ruler of the Country and of all of us [...] we kindly ask you from the bottom of our heart of parents to participate to the baptism ceremony of our daughter... *We are very satisfied (even) with a congratulation card from your part*, [our emphasis] as we are poor people and I am very grateful to the Party that it made a life for us, so that we are able to rise so (many) children, [to rise] my little girl to baptize her.”⁵²

2. D.S.C from Timișoara: “We married on 3rd of June 1968, and as we wanted to have joy in our home, and in the same time we wanted to increase the number of citizens in our beloved R.S.R. [...] We are addressing this invitation to you, or to any other person of you.”⁵³

Ceaușescu/RCP – a Symbolic Father?

The findings of our above analysis indicate a certain transformation of the role the Ceaușescu plays in the “happy parents” imaginary of those inviting Ceaușescu to the baptism of their newborns. The first identification of the Ceaușescu with the “Law” and he plays the role as the symbolic interdiction (“the no-of-the-father”) evolves towards Ceaușescu’s assimilation with “The Name of the Father” and his integrative function as the Symbolic Father.

⁵⁰ Severe restriction of the access to abortion through the Decree No. 770/1966.

⁵¹ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 98.

⁵² ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 32.

⁵³ ANIC-CCPCR-Cancelarie, d.188/1966, page 112.

When Ceaușescu is invited to the baptism, he is invited to perform a function that defines the Name-of-the-Father, namely to insert the newborns in the symbolic order, by giving to each of them a name. In 5 out of the 33 letters lists of names of children are given, in which, on the last position, the name of the last born who is supposed to be baptized by Ceaușescu is introduced. In 6 letters Ceaușescu is asked to give his own name, “Nicolae” to the new born baby. This can be seen a clear attempt of the symbolic identification of the new baby with the one who for the citizens in cause plays one function of the symbolic father. The fact that in 4 cases out the 6 where it is mentioned that the child has the name Nicolae a clear reference is made to an article of Law (Decree No. 770/1966 or Decree No. 954/1966) is quite meaningful for the transition Ceaușescu’s role underwent: it is the prohibitive function of the symbolic father (prohibition brought through the Law⁵⁴) together with his other function, of inserting the new born into the symbolic order by naming him/her. The fact that in 2 cases the effective presence of Ceaușescu is not necessary, “a post card from him” (D.1) that is, his word, is suggestive enough for the fact that the function of the symbolic father is actually undertaken by the RCP, as a whole. In almost all the cases, the accompanying reports were stating that the local representatives of RCP went to congratulate the new parents, bringing thus to them the so much desired word of the symbolic father.

The fact that Ceaușescu, RCP respectively, play not only the prohibitive function of the symbolic father but also the integrative function of the Symbolic Father for the newborns may suggest that the “happy parents” were ready to renounce, without knowing it, to their integrative role as parents. This implicit renunciation becomes significant for the destinies and future lives of the babies: it is Ceaușescu and/or the RCP who were supposed to act as their “spiritual” parents and guiders in the new socialist society to be build, to educate and to take care of the future citizens.

These conclusions seem less provocative if we keep in mind that their validity is restrained, to 33 citizens of Communist Romania. They are case-based and cannot go beyond the sphere of the analyzed letters. However, the

⁵⁴ See above especially the letter from C.6.

future challenge is to investigate the opportunity of integrating these findings into the frame of the bigger narrative of the socialist paternalism promoted by the communist states in Eastern-Central Europe, as it was written by K. Verdery.⁵⁵ In the light of my partial conclusions, the task of nuancing and completing her conceptualizations announces itself to be a promising one.

⁵⁵ Katherine Verdery, *What was socialism and what comes next?*, Princeton Univ. Press: Princeton, 1996, especially pp. 70-79.

Sexist and Non-Sexist Language

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Motto:

*... This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh:
She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
(The Holy Bible, Genesis 2: 23)*

*... Unto the woman God said, I will greatly multiply
thy sorrow and thy conception;
in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children;
And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.
(The Holy Bible, Genesis 3: 16)*

Abstract:

The present article focuses on some lexical aspects of the English language claimed to be sexist, namely on the so-called “generic” nouns and pronouns, some *man*-compounds denoting occupations, derivations from “male” words, derogatory meanings for “female” words, as well as on the lexical order in some expressions or fixed phrases. The viewpoint is only apparently feminist, it is definitely impartial, the author merely trying to describe and analyse certain linguistic facts and, at the same time, to offer unbiased alternatives to some uses of English, considered now more and more obsolete.

Keywords: “androcentric generics”, gender-neutral language, female term, male term, sexism.

Introduction

Man and *Woman* were created to be different, in some way, and also so much alike, as human beings. From the beginning of times, they were viewed upon almost exclusively as a pair of antitheses: *strong – weak, superior – inferior, sensible – sensitive*; one referred to as culture, the other one as nature – “...we are leaves of ivy and sprigs of wallflower. We are women. We rise from the wave. We are gazelle and doe, elephant and whale, lilies and roses and peach, we are air, we are flame, we are oyster and pearl...” (Griffin, 1978: 1).

The history of women has generally been one of submission, of a second place, of the “other”, implying the existence of “one”, *the* man. As Dale Spender (1985: 152) quotes Elaine Morgan: “He [man] sees himself quite unconsciously as the main line of evolution with a female satellite revolving around him, as the Moon revolves around the Earth”. Women’s claim that language is “man-made” (see Spender 1985), thus ignoring and excluding them, translates in their attempt to change it, to make themselves “visible”. In a patriarchal society, women started to demolish what had held true for centuries: “ye who enter patriarchy abandon all hope” (Spender, 1994: 2).

Is language sexist? Does it really reflect the male supremacy and make women “only a decorative sex” (Oscar Wilde)? Are there any alternatives for a non-sexist language? These are the questions this article will try to answer, or, at least, draw attention upon, focusing on the lexical level of sexism in language, since it is firstly at this particular level that sexism occurs. It will talk about certain “male” nouns and pronouns, some feminine words derived from the masculine nouns, common gender nouns with the “female” derogatory sense, some compounds and also unfavourable terms regarding the female sexuality. They all cast light upon the priority of maleness in the linguistic discourse; in a rather too blunt or too obsolete expression, they point to “the construction of male power and the concomitant oppression of women” (in Johnson and Meinhof, 1997: 18). At this point, I should make a preliminary observation: the perspective of the present article is not feminist, but neutral, trying to offer a non-biased alternative to what has been considered sexist language. Yet, at the end of this article, we may wonder,

together with Sigmund Freud: “The great question I have not been able to answer despite my thirty years of research into the feminine soul is: *What does a woman want?*”

A. The generic male term

“The *he / man* approach to language involves the use of male terms to refer both specifically to males and generically to human beings” (Martyna, in Thorne and Henley 1983: 25).

A.1. Generic nouns?

According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), volume VI, *man* is defined as “a human being (irrespective of sex or age)” (OED, 1961: 99). Most of the *man*-compounds have been used this way (in a generic sense), comprising and implying both male and female features; actually, “male terms used to include females are called ‘androcentric generics’” (Romaine, 1994: 114). Nevertheless, because they can also refer to “male” exclusively, women have felt misrepresented in a man-dominated world and this is their main point in claiming that language is sexist. They denied words like “*mankind*”, “*chairman*” or “*man-made*” to reflect an equal treatment of sexes. Thus, they tried to avoid them and make everybody aware of the necessity of changing them to a “gender-neutral”, “non-discriminatory language” (Pauwels, 1998: 8).

For quite a long time, *man* has been perceived as a “false generic” (Miller and Swift, 1982: 9) and alternatives to a “sex-fair language” (Pauwels, 1998: 8) translate in the replacement of *man* with *person*, *human*, *individual* and some other “neutral” words, or in the complete erasure of the sexist words. As an illustration, the sexist *mankind* has its non-sexist counterparts *homo sapiens*, *humankind*, *humanity*, *the human race*, *human beings*, *folk*, *individuals*, *mortals*, *people*, *the man in the street* is “*the average person, typical or average citizen, ordinary people, people in general*”, *manpower* reads as “*work force, available workers, human resources, personnel, staff, labour power*”, while *man-made* means “*synthetic, fabricated, manufactured, constructed, hand / machine-made, artificial*” (see Pauwels 1998, Miller and Swift 1982, Freer 1997 [Online], *Guidelines on Anti-Sexist Language* [Online]).

Further illustrations can be seen in words denoting occupations, domain in which sexism is most likely to appear (see Miller and Swift 1982, Graddol and Swan 1989, *Frequently Asked Questions* – GNP [Online]):

SEXIST

Airline steward / stewardess
 Barman
 Businessman / Businesswoman
 Cameraman
 Chairman

 Fireman
 Foreman
 Headmaster / Headmistress
 Layman
 Maid
 Man of letters
 Milkman
 Newsmen
 Policeman / Policewoman
 Postman, mailman
 Repairman
 Salesman

 Spokesman
 Statesman

 Tradesman

NON-SEXIST

Flight attendant
 Barkeep, barkeeper, bartender
 Business executive
 Camera operator
 Chairperson, chair, convenor,
 co-ordinator, director, master of
 ceremonies, mediator, presider,
 president, head, presiding officer
 Fire-fighter
 Supervisor
 Head teacher, head
 Layperson
 House worker
 Writer
 Milk vendor, deliver
 Reporter, journalist, newscaster
 Police officer
 Mail / letter carrier
 Repairer
 Sales agent, sales associate, sales
 force
 Spokesperson
 Statesperson, politician, leader,
 diplomat
 Skilled worker

Already in 1933, the grammarian Otto Jespersen drew attention to the word *man*, which “requires special mention on account of its ambiguity ... in most combinations it will be understood of a male human being...” (Jespersen, 1946: 190). At the end of the century, feminists would cast light upon the same problem.

A.2. Generic pronouns?

“I utterly refuse to mangle English by inventing a pronoun for *he / she*. *He* is the generic pronoun, damn it” (Le Guin, in Bucholtz et al. 1994: 434).

The generic use of the masculine pronoun *he* refers even more directly to sexist language. Although Jespersen stated that there are “words used of male beings, e.g. *he* (and) words used of female beings, e.g. *she*” (Jespersen, 1946: 188), the masculine term, being “the superior and more excellent” (Harris, in Baron 1986: 3), was chosen to represent both men and women in the language. Thus, women felt again their “invisibility” and argued that the masculine generic *he* should be replaced by other pronouns or the passive voice, the gender problem eliminated by the repetition of the noun, whereas the male and female examples and expressions should alternate.

a. The replacement of *he* with other pronouns in generic contexts

The use of the plural *they* instead of a generic *he* has been talked about for more than three centuries; Shakespeare himself said: “God send everyone their heart’s desire” (in Miller and Swift, 1982: 34). It seemed to be the best solution, since it implies both the feminine and the masculine, and thus, it became to be used with reference to indefinite pronouns (*some-*, *any-*, *every-* and *no one / nobody*) and to other generic nouns:

e.g. Everybody is required not to leave *their* children unattended (and not *his*).

What a psychologist talks to *their* clients should be confidential.

Other alternatives were the use of the “dual, gender-inclusive pronoun” (Pauwels, 1998: 132) *he or she*, the impersonal *one*, *you* – with a very strong sense of directness, and even the neutral, “inanimate” *it* (not frequently preferred):

e.g. Every person can talk about *his or her* family, if *he or she* wants to.

One can talk about *one’s* family, if *one* wants to.

You can talk about *your* family, if *you* want to.

or A person can talk about *its* family, if *it* wants to.

At the same time, it was argued that the pronoun *she* should be used as a generic instead of *he*, since at some point in the history of language it

was used generically alongside *he* in some dialects of English (Bodine, Baron, in Pauwels 1998: 131).

Nonetheless, all these solutions were more or less rejected and even talked about as a result of the “pronoun-envy” (in Martyna, in Thorne and Henley 1983: 26). *They* is said to be grammatically incorrect and ambiguous, *he or she* is cumbersome, redundant and even sexist (because of the priority of maleness), *one* is pedantic and formal, *it* is too impersonal, while *she* would come up with a sexist, discriminatory language against men.

Therefore, new, gender-neutral pronouns were coined throughout the last century and a half, such as *ne, thon, hi, ons, heesh, h`orsh`it* (Baron, 1986: 205-206) and developed to some other neologisms: *per, sheehy, E, eir, im, le, zie, smrtz, herm, jhes* (John Williams – GNP FAQ [Online]). Yet, they sound unfamiliar and strange, somehow artificial and sometimes, difficult or impossible to pronounce. As Dennis Baron (1986: 190) stated, “the creation of a common gender pronoun to replace the generic masculine *he* [...] stands out as the [...] most often attempted and the one that has most often failed”.

b. Recasting the sentence in the passive or the plural

e.g. When a student borrows books from the library, *he* must return them in due time.

becomes

When *books in the library are borrowed* (by a student), they must be returned in due time;

respectively,

Every member was asked whether *he* could help.

should turn to

The members were asked whether *they* could help.

c. The repetition of the noun or the elimination of the gender problem

e.g. “Style means that the author has fused material and technique with the distinctive quality of the *author’s* own personality.” (Miller and Swift, 1982: 42).

“We are looking forward an administrator who is *his own man.*”

can be re-phrased as

“We are looking for an administrator with a *sense of independence and integrity*.” (Julia Freer 1997 [Online]).

d. The alternation of male and female examples and expressions
e.g. “Let each student participate. Has *she* a chance to talk? Could *he* feel left out?” (Purdue University Online Writing Lab, 1999).

B. Feminine words derived from masculine nouns.

Some negative connotations

Generally speaking, man is seen “as the norm or reference point ... The linguistic portrayal of women is [...] one of dependence: grammatical and other features of language often contribute towards a view of linguistic dependency or derivation of the female element on (from) the male” (Pauwels, 1998: 34). Words such as *empress*, *goddess*, *waitress*, *princess* or *prosecutrix*, *executrix*, *aviatrix*, *administratrix* (Jespersen, 1946: 190-191; Graddol and Swann, 1989: 100), together with *heroine*, *czarina* (Jespersen, 1946: 190), *chanteuse*, *ballerina* (Baron, 1986: 115) are accurate illustrations of women as “borrowers of the language” (Spender, 1994: 12). Anyway, exceptions can be found in the case of *widower* and *bridegroom* (Jespersen, 1946: 191), in which the basis is a female term.

“The feminine suffix may simply signal that the word refers to a female (as in *actress*) or it may mean “wife of” (as in *duchess*)” (Graddol and Swann, 1989: 100). Gradually, a “semantic degeneration” (Miller, in Smith 1985: 48) in the feminine words occurred, leading to discrimination in the use of language. Everybody is aware of the negative connotations of *mistress* and *lady*, besides expressions such as *lady-love*, *lady of the night* (NODE 1998: 1029), *foxy lady* or *lady of pleasure* (Graddol and Swann, 1989: 116). They have lost almost completely their primary meaning, which is still preserved in the “male” words (*master* or *lord*), and acquired a sexual sense (a prostitute or the owner of a brothel, as in *madam*).

If *bachelor* refers to “a man who is not and has never been married” (NODE 1998: 122), a *spinster* is “an unmarried woman, typically an older woman beyond the usual age of marriage” (NODE 1998: 1793). The same dictionary explains that “it is now always a derogatory term, referring or

alluding to a stereotype of an older woman who is unmarried, childless, prissy and repressed” (NODE 1998: 1793). A positive connotation can be found in *bachelor girl* (realised by means of a masculine term), which reads as “an independent, unmarried young woman” (NODE 1998: 123). Analogously, a *governor* is a “powerful ruler”, while a *governess* implies inferiority, because she is a “poor woman looking after children” (Cameron, 1985: 77).

Another case in point is within the common gender nouns, which bear a derogatory sense for the feminine terms. If a man is a *tramp*, he is a homeless person, a drifter; yet, when a woman is called a *tramp*, she must be a prostitute. The same holds true with *whore*, *harlot* or *wench*, all meaning once a lover, a fellow and respectively, a child “of either sex” (Spender, 1994: 22-23). “Referred to men, a *professional* is ‘a member of a respected profession’, when referred to women, it means prostitute” (Pauwels, 1998: 51). “He is a secretary” means “he works for an organization”, but “she is a secretary” implies that “she does typing and general office work for a person” (Pauwels, 1998: 51). It can be said that *secretary*, along with *nurse*, *cook*, *dressmaker* or *babysitter* are stereotypically used for women, while words such as *shoemaker*, *merchant*, *judge*, *driver*, *engineer*, *soldier* were / have been “practically always used of men only” (Jespersen, 1946: 191).

Furthermore, feminine “labels” seem to imply “minor, dominated powers” and the masculine ones, “major, active powers” (Joly, in Baron 1986: 105). The native speakers of English refer as *she* to a *boat*, *ship*, *locomotive*, *train*, *car*, *moon*, *nature*, *fortune*, *soul* (Jespersen, 1946: 194), *earth*, *vice* (Baron, 1986: 102) and *he*, to words like *sun*, *love*, *time*, *heaven*, *ocean*, *death*, *mind* (Baron, 1986: 102, Miller and Swift, 1982: 61). Suzanne Romaine argues that words such as *ships*, *boats* or *cars* are referred to as *she* because they are “generally owned and controlled by men” (Romaine, 1994: 113). Moreover, the pre-posed feminine words are used of men to indicate effeminacy or weakness: *she-king*, *she-he* (Baron, 1986: 113) and *woman-man*, which means “an effeminate man, or one who in some way resembles a woman” (OED, 1961: 248). To sum up, as Simon Kerl wrote in 1861, *he* is “preferred for what is large, bold, or pre-eminent” and *she*, “for what is effeminate or dependent” (in Baron 1986: 103).

C. Derogatory sexual terms for women

“A phallogocentric cockocracy...” (Taylor, in Hughes 1993: 206).

Swearing is another domain in which women are commonly perceived as “second-class citizens” (Doris Lessing) and sexism makes itself visible at this level, too. To begin with, the taboo expression *mother-f***er*, recorded from 1956, points out to an extremely sexist language, since “father-f***er” is not “a term used in any culture” (Hughes, 1993: 32).

As a matter of fact, women have been perceived from two different points of view: Eve and Mary, thus “the mistress-figure” and “the mother-figure” (Hughes, 1993: 218). Strangely enough, within the “extreme dichotomy of praise and abuse in the feminine archetypes” (Hughes, 1993: 218), the abuse terms reached a high number and a complex variety. For instance, favourable terms such as *darling, maiden, dear, sweet, heart, honey, treasure, lamb, angel, goddess, baby, kitten, sugar* or *sweetie pie* are obviously outnumbered by sexist, unfavourable expressions:

Witch, whore, queen, concubine, strumpet, hag, virago, wench, mare, bitch, harlot, slut, filth, mistress, dell, mutton, cat, courtesan, moll, bobtail, doll, brach, draggletail, bun, siren, amazon, minx, gypsy, filly, hen, puss, coquette, fireship, bunter, bawd, cow, kept-woman, sow, buttered bun, pancake, f***, duck, heifer, sweetmeat, hair, scarlet woman, chicken, tart, cherry, battleaxe, vamp, tramp, dish, cookie, call-girl, crumpet (Hughes, 1993: 225).

The same author, Geoffrey Hughes, draws up a concrete description of the feminine figure and its perception, and comments upon the categorisation of women: “the diabolical woman in the *witch / hag* group, which overlaps with the unnatural, aggressive or “manlike” woman, the *virago / shrew* group; the woman seen as the superhuman, spiritual creature of salvation, the *angel / goddess* group; the woman seen as an endearing pet in the *mouse / lamb* group; the woman castigated in the animal terms of the *bitch / cow* group; the woman seen as the available object of delight, the *dish / tart* group; the woman seen as an object of physical revulsion, the *filth*

/ slut group, and by far the largest category, the *whore / harlot* group, which tails off into the *hussy / broad* group” (Hughes, 1993: 217-218).

However, the few label-words used for men are perceived only in a very small degree as derogatory: *Casanova*, *gigolo*, *macho*, *ram*, *stallion*, *womaniser*. Moreover, the two expressions *hen party*, used for women only, and *stag party*, referring to a gathering of men exclusively, need no further explanations, due to their highly suggestive connotations.

D. The masculine-feminine order in compounds

The Linguistic Society for Non-sexist Usage issued “Avoid consistently putting reference to males before reference to females” (Macaulay and Brice, in Bucholtz et al., 1994: 452). Nevertheless, the “natural” order in compounds is firstly, the male term and only secondly, the female term, although it is a generic reference.

Thus, we say “men and women, male and female, boys and girls, his or hers, husband and wife, son and daughter, brother and sister, host and hostess, king and queen” (Smith, 1985: 47). The feminine word is again in a second place and it is linked and dependent on the masculine term; it is the latter that gives meaning to the whole compound and it seems to already “imply” the existence of a feminine feature. Some linguists argued, “It is easier to say a single-syllable word like *men* than a two-syllable word like *women*, and that we tend to put the single syllable first as a result” (in Miller and Swift, 1982: 88). Their argument also stands up with the only exception of the male-female order, which is *ladies and gentlemen*.

Yet, everything started from *Adam and Eve* ...

Conclusions

“Behind naming, beneath words, is something else. An existence named unnamed and unnameable” (Griffin, 1978: 190), a world claimed to be sexist because it places women in a secondary, dependent position, which is very often ignored in the language – situation reflected especially by the generic words borrowing the form of the masculine term and also by the feminine-masculine order in compounds. Because “sexist language is outdated and irrelevant today” (Sorrels, in Pauwels 1998: 86), women have

tried to modify, replace and, to some extent, to re-create the “patriarchal” language to a non-exclusive, non-discriminatory language, in which “the sexes are treated in an equal and symmetrical manner” (Pauwels, 1998: 97) and which would make women more visible and linguistically independent.

At the same time, new, eccentric words were coined, such as “herstory” (instead of “history”), incorrectly derived from “his story”, which would read like “the story of men and not that of women” (Pauwels, 1998: 99); even a completely new language was created, Laadan, “for the specific purpose of expressing the perceptions of women” (Elgin, in Pauwels 1998: 104).

Yet, their attempt to replace masculine generic terms with “genderless” (in John Williams [Online]) words was ridiculed by the adepts of the “leave-language-alone” approach; *man* was mockingly replaced even in the words which were not its compounds: “*nopersonclature*” (Baker, in Thorne and Henley 1983: 29), “*wobody*”, “*huperson*”, “*personipulate*” (Miller and Swift, 1982: 21), “*aperson*”(instead of “amen”), “*personners*”(instead of “manners”) (Baron, 1986: 180). Moreover, they played on the “feminine” and “masculine” words, “Chess will become very confusing when *kings* and *queens* become *monarchs*” (*The Australian*, 20/10/1988, in Pauwels 1998: 169).

Should a change occur in gender and language stereotyping? ...“Only the wisest and stupidest of men never change” (Confucius). Does it need an evolution or a revolution, since “language is the most intense and stubborn fortress of sexist assumptions” (Sontag, in Hughes 1993: 206)? Is it possible? We should bear in mind that routine and habit can make people be sceptic and reject a new language or any radical changes in the familiar one. As a matter of fact, “that language is the best which, at every single point, is easiest to the greatest possible number of human beings” (Jespersen, in Pei 1965: 418) and moreover, “everything which is usual is natural” (J.S. Mill). Yet, this is only for the moment. Nobody knows for sure what will happen in the long run and how or if the language will completely change, but we can simply make a wish: “MAY IT HAVE A HAPPY ENDING!” (Pei, 1965: 441), for both women and men.

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Carmen, Nietzsche's Muse.

Elements of Nietzsche's thinking in Bizet's *Carmen*

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Abstract:

Nietzsche's fascination for Bizet's opera is not the outcome of an accidental caprice. We shall look for the metaphoric illustrations of his philosophical thinking contained in this opera – which was not intended to be Nietzschean at all – and which are the canters that emanate fascination and horror towards the audience, but have inspired the philosopher as well.

Keywords: Friedrich Nietzsche, Georges Bizet, opera *Carmen*, superman, metaphor.

On 27th November 1881, Nietzsche attended for the first time the presentation of the opera *Carmen* by Bizet in *Politearna* theatre in Genova. After the performance he wrote to his sister:

Yesterday I saw an opera entitled *Carmen* [composed] by a French composer named Bizet and it was moving. So powerful passionate, so gracious and southern in style.¹

And at the same time to his musician friend Peter Gast²:

Hooray! My friend, I found something good, an opera by Francois Bizet³ (who is he?): *Carmen*. His work is like a short story by Mérimée, spiritual, strong, sometimes emotional. A pure talent of the French comic opera not

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Werke*. [s. l.]: Taschenausgabe, vol. II. Author's emphasis.

² Peter Gast, alias Heinrich Köselitz (1854-1918). Composer, became editor of Nietzsche. A close friend, he was among the few who could decipher the philosopher's writing.

³ Nietzsche did not know Bizet's correct name.

confused by Wagner, on the other hand, a true disciple of Berlioz. I never thought this could be possible. It seems that French are on the best way in dramatic music, and they have an obvious advantage to the Germans in an important question: to them passion is not exaggerated (as at Wagner, for example)⁴.

Shortly after, he bought a score of the opera (piano version), which he read, reviewed favourably and sent to the same friend as proof for his first letter. Peter Gast's reply contains a beautiful compliment addressed to the philosopher: "you are more talented in music than me, the musician!"⁵ He saw the opera for a couple of times, after which he wrote again to Peter Gast:

My friend, yesterday I saw *Carmen* again, perhaps the twentieth performance in this year, with the house closed as always, is the opera of operas [...] I feel lucky. From the opera, comes to me a deep sense that I intend to retain.⁶

He continued in *The Case of Wagner*:

Yesterday – would you believe it? – I heard Bizet's masterpiece for the twentieth time. Once more I attended with the same gentle reverence; once again I did not run away. This triumph over my impatience surprises me. How such a work completes one! Through it one almost becomes a "masterpiece" oneself – And, as a matter of fact, each time I heard *Carmen* it seemed to me that I was more of a philosopher, a better philosopher than at other times: I became so forbearing, so happy, so Indian, so settled.⁷

Having heard about Bizet's death, Nietzsche wrote:

The fact that Bizet died causes me great pain. I saw *Carmen* for the second time, and again I had the revelation of a first-hand short story, as

⁴ *Ibidem.*

⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁶ *Ibidem.*

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Case Of Wagner*, ch. 1.

that of Mérimée. A soul *so passionate* and *so graceful*! For me, this opera is like a trip to Spain. A very southern opera!⁸

His enthusiasm got crystallized in a long-term passion. The opera will be mentioned directly or as a hint in almost all of his important writings. Carmen and Bizet's music will be used as a term of comparison in his criticism of Wagner's opera, *The Case of Wagner*.

But Nietzsche was not only an enthusiastic spectator. His existence was closely tied to music, and in his letter to Peter Gast he confessed that "life without music is error, pain and exile." In fact, music has accompanied him since a child. His father, Karl Ludwig Nietzsche, a Lutheran pastor, was known for his improvisational ability at the organ. Nietzsche's first compositional attempt, *Ehre sei Gott*, written at nine years old, is an improvisation in the style of Handel, heard in his father's chapel. He followed then the Naumburg Gymnasium, where he continued his musical studies and piano with several instructors, including Gustav Krug,⁹ to whom he would tie a lasting friendship. At the musical evenings organized by his friend, were played works of the great German composers, but mostly those of contemporary composers, including Liszt and Berlioz. Also, around this time, he began self-study of Johann Georg Albrechtsberger's¹⁰ compositions. However, he did not follow a musical career, dedicating himself to philology. Although less known, his compositions are appreciated and show a rigorous musician, far from being amateurish. Even one of his most severe critics, Hans von Bülow¹¹, acknowledged Nietzsche's exceptional spirit shining through music.

We can claim, therefore, not only the philosopher's, but the philosopher-musician's enthusiasm, who was well acquainted with the opera performance. However, Nietzsche did not give us a full analysis of the opera

⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Werke* [s. l.]: Taschenausgabe (Author's emphasis).

⁹ Gustav Krug (1844-1902), Nietzsche's lifelong friend. His father knew Clara and Robert Schumann, and was a close friend of Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy.

¹⁰ Johann Georg Albrechtsberger wrote several preludes and fugues, but is better known for his educational results and some theoretical treatises.

¹¹ Hans von Bülow (1830-1894), pianist, conductor and critic. He studied with Franz Liszt and later married his daughter, Cosima, which left him for Wagner.

that was the subject of his fascination. Although both *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche Contra Wagner* include many references to opera, these references are more arguments in a polemic and an affirmation of his aesthetic convictions. The marginal notes on the score remain only comments delivering the emotions of the moment. We seek in this article to identify some the elements of the opera, in which the philosopher-spectator has discovered his expectations and attitudes that will serve as inspiration for his future philosophical ideas.

Stylistically uneven at its surface, Nietzsche's thinking has in depth a certain order, brought about by a few great themes – human will and wish, power, the dichotomy between master-slave, music and the twilight of gods – each of them being some kind of Ariadne's clew in the Nietzschean labyrinth. His sixth theme, the leitmotif of his life-work, is illusion, which he took from Schopenhauer. The world of appearances, of multiple truths, conveys merely "different degrees of appearance"¹² and the search for absolute truth is nothing else than a wandering through the labyrinth of illusion.

There is something to "truth", to the search for truth; and when a human being is too humane about it – when "il ne cherche le vrai que pour faire le bien" – I bet he won't find anything!¹³

As there is nothing to be revealed, apart from our world of wishes and passions, no higher reality can be grasped than the one of the instincts, and the only task that remains to do by the philosopher, is to give away those false ideas adopted by human thinking and society, ideas that can enchant the individual like Circe the witch. Nietzsche's nihilistic affinity towards details is based on subtle observation and psychological analysis very similar to the method of novelists belonging to the realist trend. These instruments enable him to discover "the falsity of real world". In *Ecce homo*, he transforms this desideratum into his profession of faith:

I was the first to discover the truth because I was the first to see – to smell – lies for what they are... My genius is in my nostrils...¹⁴.

¹² Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, The free spirit, p. 34.

¹³ *Ibidem*, The free spirit, p. 35.

This truth is “terrible” but must be uttered at all price, mainly in art. Nietzsche upbraids Wagner for counterfeiting this truth. He calls him a swindler and “Cagliostro of modernity”¹⁵. Without fully agreeing to the criticism directed against the operas of Wagner, which should be interpreted according to the code they were written in – the romantic one – we’ll go on to consider only those arguments of the *Wagner Case* which directly or by comparison point to some feature of the opera by Bizet.

Firstly, “Wagner’s opera is the opera of salvation”¹⁶. Somebody, most often the hero, is finally saved. This dramaturgic option – a weakness – in Nietzsche’s opinion diminishes the tragic effect. “What happens to a ‘wandering Jew’ when some woman starts worshipping him and fastens him down? He just stops wandering”¹⁷, so he is not a hero any more, and he falls in anonymity.

By contrary, *Carmen* presents the failing of a salvation. Two women, mother and fiancée, with all their efforts and sacrifice, do not succeed in giving José moral poise. Micaëla is a feminine ideal: an embodiment of gentleness and virtue. “Clairvoyant in the world of suffering and whose desire to help and save far exceed her ability actually to do so, [...] she would like to believe that love makes all things possible, – this is her true superstition.”¹⁸

José, in his turn, believes in the saving power of love:

Carmen, there is time still/ yes, there is time still - oh, my Carmen,/ Let me save you, you whom I adore./ Ah! let me save you and save myself with you!” (27. Duo finale) José tells Carmen a few minutes before he kills her. Their desperate and fearless but useless efforts do nothing else than to confirm “how impoverished, helpless, presumptuous, and mistaken even the best and deepest love really is – how much more likely it is to destroy than to rescue...”¹⁹.

¹⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Ecce homo*. Why I Am a Destiny, 1.

¹⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *The Case Wagner*, A Musician’s Problem, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*. 3.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*. 3.

¹⁸ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, The Psychologist Has a Word, 3.

¹⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, The Psychologist Has a Word, 2.

Bizet, faithfully following the short story by Prosper Mérimée, refuses conciliation or a *deus ex machina* solution, therefore the conflict gets a metallic intransigence, which is one of the seeds of tragedy. This conflict is psychologically and typologically perfectly justified by the temperament and ethnic origin of the two characters: José – a passionate and jealous Navarrese, whereas Carmen is the merry and frivolous gypsy girl. Their fate is decided beforehand, they can only follow it without being able to oppose it. José is aware that the gypsy girl will lead him to his ill-fate, he knows what to do in order to avoid this end, he wants this, but his nature opposes him: he is bound. The dissolution of his will starts with a faulty action: while he is preparing to marry Micaëla, he keeps unwillingly the flower that was thrown by Carmen. In the escape scene, she instinctively knows to what extent and when to ask for his help. If she had asked simply to set her free, José would have surely refused to do it. Carmen suggests him playing a game, a set-up, and requests only his passive contribution. (“You just fall, I know what to do”) and José, although the scenario is hard to believe (Zuniga eventually commented “[...] I cannot believe that such a small hand has the power to overturn a man”, Act II, scene 1, Dialogue), he can’t oppose resistance, as he cannot either oppose the feelings that, after his escaping from the arrest, drives him towards the pub of Lillas Pastia in Carmen’s arms. These feelings are increasing by accumulation, passing different grades of awareness and acceptance, until the point they become paranoiac. Karl Leonhard describes the cyclic cumulative evolution of desire and jealousy:

Given that the manifestations of love are usually secret, therefore hard to manifest, in the field of eroticism there is a great danger that the person to oscillate between hope and fear, intensifying its emotion. In addition, galling women like to maintain their partners in a state of unrest by their equivocal attitude, because, usually, love grows with jealousy. The alternation of emotions, grief at the thought of a potential partner’s infidelities, and the feeling of happiness at the thought that,

perhaps, however, it is faithful partner, reaching maximum intensity [...] can lead to Hassliebe.²⁰

What increases the dramatic tension is the fact that José is aware of his dependence that is destroying him. He suffers when giving in to the woman who enchanted him (“Oh, my Carmen! I became your toy.” Act II, nr. 17, duo), and later he blames himself for this weakness (Act III, Scene 1, dialogue). Nevertheless his conscience gradually gets faded, having been altered by the image of the loved one. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche describes this phenomenon as follows:

To the lover himself the rest of the world appears indifferent, pale, and worthless and he is prepared to make any sacrifice, upset any order, subordinate any other interest [to the desire of keeping the beloved person only for him.]²¹

The description fits José’s behaviour in the last scene when he is desperately trying to persuade Carmen to follow him: “Well, then, if it is necessary, to please you,/ I will remain a bandit, everything that you want / Everything! You hear me? Everything! / But don’t leave me, oh my Carmen” (Act IV, Nr. 27 Duo finale). In this moment, José’s consciousness gets defeated by desire and crime will unavoidably follow. This is the end of the psychological itinerary of José, a character whose super-theme is the dissolution of consciousness because of love.

However, José is not merely a victim. His love is selfish and commits crime out of this selfishness which he has cherished. Nietzsche, who thinks that one of the causes of the war between sexes is erotic selfishness, would comment this feeling of possessive love experienced by José:

Sexual love, however, is what most clearly reveals itself as a craving for new property: the lover wants unconditional and sole possession of the longed-for person; he wants a power over her soul as unconditional as his power over her body; he wants to be the only beloved, to live and

²⁰ Leonhard, Karl. *Personalități accentuate în viață și literatură*. Bucharest: Editura enciclopedică română, 1972, p. 87.

²¹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *La gaya scienza*, I, 14.

to rule in the other soul as that which is supreme and most desirable [...] and becomes the dragon guarding his golden hoard.²²

The same impulse towards domination is to be found in Carmen's character. However, if José embodies the *slave* (moral man), Carmen adopts the moral of the *masters*. Being situated at the antipode of Nietzschean morality, these representatives of mankind respect neither tradition, nor the well-being of the other part. They create their own morality according to which they will act. Nietzsche's characterization of masters could be that of Carmen as well:

Whoever can command, whoever is a "master" by nature, whoever appears violent in deed and gesture – what is he going to care about contracts! Such beings cannot be reckoned with, they come like fate, without cause, reason, consideration or pretext, they appear just like lightning appears, too terrible, sudden, convincing and "other" even to be hated. [...] They do not know what guilt, responsibility, consideration are, these born organizers; they are ruled by that terrible inner artist's egoism [...] ²³.

As early as her first apparition, Carmen asserts a particular erotic morality of her own. Love is a fleeting and uncontrolled feeling so it takes its value not from its steadiness but from its freedom:

Love is a rebellious bird
That nothing can tame, ...
Love is the child of the Bohemian,
It has never, never known any law.
(Act I, sc.5, nr.5: Habanera)

Nietzsche is passionate when commenting these verses:

²² *Ibidem.*

²³ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, II, 17.

Eros, as the ancients knew him, splendid, malicious, evil, impossible to be subjugated. [Carmen] is presented as a real witch. I don't know a song like (Italian or German).²⁴

In fact, Carmen claims for herself the same whimsical freedom that she attributes to Eros. It is the freedom of not being devoted in love, the freedom of not idealizing love – the freedom of the erotic instinct which, like every drive, tends to domination and tries to make philosophy in this position of power.

This erotic instinct, which is so impetuous that becomes more powerful than the one of self-preservation, seems more real to Nietzsche, who discovers in it the ultimate reality which is life:

Finally, Amor, Amor back to nature! Not the love of a vestal with high esteem! [...] Making love as fatality, cynical, innocent, cruel – as is nature! Amor that is war, and whose substance is deadly hatred between the sexes.²⁵

Nietzsche makes use of the love-bird metaphor expressed in the verses of Habanera when commenting man's attitude towards feminine mystery.

Men have been treating women like birds that have lost their way and flown down to them from some height or another: like something finer, more vulnerable, wilder, stranger, sweeter, more soulful, – but also like something that has to be locked up to keep it from flying away.²⁶

Of all these features of the woman as a magic bird, wildness would be the most obviously proper to describe Carmen. Her wildness is manifest almost in every scene: in her aggressivity with which she hurts her rival in the struggle, her fearlessness in the presence of the soldiers during the investigation, her brutal self-confidence by which she dominates her beloved, and in the end her “heroic fury “ when defying her jealous lover. Compared to the gentle, good-natured Micaëla, Carmen is too wild. This

²⁴ Nietzsche, Friedrich, Daffner, Hugo von, *Friedrich Nietzsches Randglossen zu Bizets Carmen*.

²⁵ *Ibidem*.

²⁶ Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 237.

excess, which can be explained as being rooted in her strong personality and choleric temperament, added to her overt denial of traditional love morality, gives her a barbarian²⁷ and demonic feature.

Nietzsche describes her as being bad and Habanera to be the charm of a witch. Carmen herself serenely accepts to be the demonic prospect of José:

José: Are you the Devil, Carmen?

Carmen: Yes.

(Act III, scene 2, dialog)

Seen from the side of the “civilized” masculine perspective upon femininity, Carmen is an anti-heroine. Her presence is disturbing; she concentrates fears and anxiety of patriarchal society towards the opposite sex. These fears, having been disguised for a long time, seem to have always existed mainly in patriarchal societies and acquired “all signs of an unconscious impulse”²⁸. Their roots are far more complex than were believed to be by Freud, who reduced them to the fear of being castrated and to the insecurity of men facing the woman-judge of male sexuality. One of these roots is suspended in the feminine mystery. The woman and her sexuality remain enigmas for the man – a fact pointed out by Freud. Simone de Beauvoir acknowledges that “female sex is mysterious even to the woman herself, concealed, tumultuous”²⁹. These anxieties, strengthened by phantasms, make women to be “a sanctuary of oddity”³⁰.

Feminine mystery is deepened by her close connection to life. She gives birth to life, has power upon it and, by magic extension, has the power to take it. This is the explanation of the large number of goddesses of death in diverse mythologies of the world but also the word “death” being of feminine gender in the majority of languages. This double power upon life is transposed in Christian spirituality as the Gnostic duality of the two

²⁷ Barbarism that Nietzsche counts among the strong human qualities, of the master: “The noble caste always started out as the barbarian caste. Their supremacy was in psychic, not physical strength; – they were more complete people (which at any level amount to saying «more complete beasts»).” (*Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 258).

²⁸ Lederer, W. *Gynophobia ou la Peur de Femmes*. Paris, 1970, p. 207.

²⁹ Beauvoir, Simone de. *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Paris, 1949, vol. I, p. 147.

³⁰ Lederer, W., *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Sophias, the canonical antinomy between holy woman and sorceress, the *femme fatale*.

The “femme fatale”, the woman who brings unluck and death has always been a character of mythology. Bloody Kali, Pandora and the Erines, Circe, Eva and Loreley are only few of her hypostases. She cajoles with her irresistible charm and man, once fallen in her arms, loses his identity and finally his life. Be it slow or violent, his extinction is unavoidable.

Carmen does not deny the danger she emanates, but instead she tries to warn her possible lover-victims:

“If I love you, keep guard on yourself!”

(Act I, sc. 5, Nr. 5: Habanera)

These verses are not only a warning for cautious men like lieutenant Zuniga, but also an invitation, a challenge addressed to maleness mean to select the strong ones. Carmen cannot love but strong men, capable of special deeds. She admires the chivalry of José, recognizes it as an act of power, and wishes him to go on being strong. This is why she despises him when he wants to return to the barracks. She dreams of him being powerful and free when she is enticing him to do a crime by her mermaid song:

Over-there, over-there, you would follow me.

On your horse you would take me.

And like a gallant across the countryside,

In a saddle, you would carry me away!

(Act II, scene 5, Nr. 17: Duo)

Her dream will get shattered because José, influenced by prejudice, fails to rise to her exigency. The decisive moment is his fight with Escamillo. Having defeated José, he wins rights upon Carmen. Carmen chooses as winner the stronger one. Escamillo seems to be the stronger one: he manages to defeat the bull and is praised by the crowd. Success and risk are an intense aphrodisiac. However, we must underline a difference between the character of the short story and the one of the opera. In the short-story, Carmen has control over herself; she keeps her temper,

sometimes cynically. In Bizet's vision, Carmen has passion in her – an instinctual one by all means – but purified by its intensity. Her actions are spontaneous; often uncontrolled, follies brought about by youthful energy and a huge thirst of life.

This uncontrolled character and thirst for life are those that dominate her instinct of self-preservation. She lives frenzily an over-exuberant life characteristic of Dionysian man. This is the *hybris* that Carmen bears. Despite being disguised in joy, tragedy follows its course with clockwork precision. Carmen finds out her destiny, and faces it in the “awful” scene of the card-play.

The scene is a “tour de force” of maestro Bizet. Earlier Frasquita and Mercedes see in tarot cards their sunny future in a duet of “Mozartian grace”. The joy with which they receive the destiny's gift makes Carmen hopeful. Although cards have repeatedly shown her death before, she tries once more. A musical passage as a stormy cloud makes the passing towards the death-theme:



“Frightening”, Nietzsche comments and adds to the following passage: “Music of fatality”. Future gets revealed without any doubt. After this “comprehensive glance on world's essences”, as a true Dionysian human being, Carmen will not try to avoid the end, but “looking not to humiliate herself”; she will defy her destiny. The heroic and tragic character of the deed urges us, according to a classic stereotype, to attach some value to it. This could be the freedom, professed by the character herself, or love being set free from prejudice. However, Carmen does not sacrifice herself on behalf of freedom or love. Her gesture is triggered by resources that stay aloof from the zone of the active consciousness: it is pure instinctual reaction. Carmen does not love José any longer and will defy him clearly

and intransigently (“but whether I live or whether I die,/ no, no, no! I will not give in to you!!”, Act IV, Nr. 27 Duo final) without knowing how and if she will determine him not to kill her. It is an aggressive reflex of self-defence – she does not flee as a deer but turns against the hunter fiercely as a wild boar. With the same aggressivity does she head for the arena when hearing the call of her lover (a moment that is solely prepared and developed musically by the intervention from off the arena noises): the instinct of self-preservation is annulled by the fury of desire. This instinctive conduct – primitive in the modern man’s view – added to the lack of meaning of the character’s death, reveals the simplest meaning of death – destruction of the living. The meaninglessness of this death is more touching than the death itself.

Nietzsche’s affinity for Bizet’s opera is not the outcome of an accidental caprice. Carmen is a metaphoric illustration of his philosophical thinking. Its characters have a Nietzschean nucleus, and their actions reflect mechanisms and psychological patterns contained in Nietzsche’s writings. There is also a similarity between the way the opera was received by the public and how Nietzsche was perceived by his contemporaries: from stigmatization to fascination. Nietzsche had his impact through fascination: fascination of humanism in its extreme form – (Super)man above all – the equal of a worn-out divinity. There is a mysterious relationship between Carmen and Nietzsche’s writings, one that is born as a result of the rebellion of the spirituality of the epoch against the failure and the fatigue of Romanticism.

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From Wisdom Inhabiting Bodies to Words Inhabiting Reality.

Representations of Corporeality in Jewish Sapiential Literature

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Motto:

*... the existential point of view about
reality cannot, it seems, be other than that
of an incarnate personality.*

(Gabriel Marcel, *Being and Having*)

Abstract:

In support of reflections on the spiritually unifying standpoint on the human being held to be the hallmark of Jewish wisdom tradition, the analysis put forward is an exercise of looking, by way of philological interpretation, into the book of *Proverbs* and discussing the representations of corporeality in it in relation to the sapiential component. A most representative piece of Jewish sapiential literature, foreign from any type of dichotomy, assuming that the world of appearance is real and that wisdom can be found in all creation, the writing is investigated to the conclusion that it describes the body of the sage or finder of wisdom as being fully and totally *inhabited* by wisdom. The sage, whose portrait is slowly being constructed from bits and pieces, appears as an initiate in the secret connection between words of wisdom and reality, hereby putting together *a most unique representation of reality as one inhabited by words*.

Keywords: (models of) corporeality, wisdom, words, sapiential literature, Jewish tradition, Proverbs, inhabiting, reality, representations of the body, subjective body, dichotomies.

Introduction: traditions and directions in body studies

Having become many people's only source of identity, as well as "the privileged site of experiments with the self"¹, the body is virtually today everybody's preoccupation; accordingly, being "the true historiographical menu of the day"², body history is the centre of many a different cultural contexts of scholarship. Either envisaged as pure discourse by *representationalists*, researchers following in the line of Foucault anti-essentialist understanding of the corporeal and looking mainly into the experiential reactions to a body which, with them, is completely structured by language, or conceived as a site of real experience by the *presentationalists*, followers of the opposite, essentialist direction of historical scholarship³, the historicized body is the subject of the most diverse monographs, ranging from the body *at war, in pain, at work, in literature*, etc. to the historicized body of *the artist, of the Jew, or of the lonely*. Even historically, body and history are categories mirroring each other, both being products of the modernist (Enlightenment) project performing the objectifying of the body (in medicine) to correspond to the objectifying of the past (in history).⁴ This objectifying movement introducing a relation of possession between human beings and their body turns the body into some sort of a man's *double*; man – according to the Cartesian model grounding the symbolic construction of the body in modern Western thinking – no longer *is* his body but rather *has* a body. Since expressed by Descartes in the 17th century, this ontological cleavage between man and his body is the model for all conceptualizations of the human being in Western thinking or, to put it differently, for a fundamentally dualistic perspective opposing man to his own body – which

¹ Rose: 2007, p. 26.

² Porter: 2001, p. 236.

³ For an outline of up-to-date research directions in body studies following Foucault's somatic turn in historical scholarship, see the Roger Cooter's article.

⁴ As L. Long explains, the invention of modern history as a would-be objective discipline practically coincided with the invention of modern medicine as an enterprise seeking to objectify the body.

however still is, by Daniel Le Breton's expression, the very time and place of human condition⁵.

Contextualizing the problem:

Models of corporeality in Western philosophy

Referring to the character, at once mysterious and intimate, of the “bond between me and my body” which colors all existential judgments, Gabriel Marcel's pondering on the inseparability of existence, consciousness of self as existing and consciousness of self as bound to a body, as incarnate⁶, memorably echoed by Michel Henry's phenomenology of the subjective body, at once accounts for the human being's fundamental condition of incarnated subject and allows a way out of the aporia of Western thought – torn between philosophies of existence and philosophies of conscience, or rather between spiritualism and materialism, idealism and realism⁷. Basically, topping a whole tradition of *body – soul* dichotomous Western thinking, the modern age is committed to the representation of the human being as a baffling juxtaposition between a self or a subjective conscience and a material, objective, finite, contingent body.

Conversely, Michel Henry places, at the very root of reality, a subjective body.⁸ He urges – voicing up an unjustly ignored Maine de Biran and radicalizing a phenomenological approach to the body already

⁵ Le Breton: 2002.

⁶ Marcel: 1949, p. 19.

⁷ In his rediscovering – as part of his project to set up a phenomenology of the body – Maine de Biran's line of thought centered upon the existence of an originary invisible subjective corporality, Michel Henry fights both the assertion of idealism, by underlying the corporal character of subjectivity, and the fundamental claims of materialism, by stressing upon the subjective and absolute character of the originary corporality – whose nature is related to the absolute subjectivity.

⁸ Life itself, an essentially subjective force, consists of purely subjective experience of oneself. As accounted for in Henry's *Incarnation. A Philosophy of the Flesh*, life is conceived by Greek philosophy as springing from the world and from thinking, when quite on the contrary, it is the world and thinking which are mere ways of Life. With Henry, the key distinction is between the world and Life; the body needs to be understood not through the world and exteriority, but through life or interiority. Henry deepens the phenomenological analysis of the body by showing the way in which perceptive experiences are rooted in bodily impressions.

introduced by Merleau-Ponty⁹ – the abolition of such a reduction of the human body to its objective manifestation, which he traces back to the archaic Greek worldview, insofar as all Western thought is basically rooted in ancient Greece’s tradition of conceiving the human being as a paradoxical synthesis of two heterogenous fundamentally opposite elements: the eternal spirit and the contingent, finite body.

The Jewish solution: the physical as an extension of the spiritual, both deriving from divine utterance

Equally free from dichotomies is the view on man in Jewish tradition. Patterson (2005, p. 78) explains:

The body is not the enemy of the soul, as Greek thought suggests (see, for example, Plato’s *Phaedo*, 80a-81a). Created in the image and likeness of the Holy One, both the body and the soul are instilled with sparks of holiness, with the form of the former related to the substance of the latter.(...) Made in the image of the Holy One, the human being is made in the image of the commandments, in the image of Torah. Or better: the human being is made *precisely of* Torah, body and soul. Because each part of the body is linked to a commandment, each part of the body is connected to Torah and, through Torah, to G-d.

Accordingly, from a Jewish standpoint, the physical is an extension of the spiritual, “part of a single continuum, all of which derives its being from divine utterance.”¹⁰ Consequently, from the standpoint of Jewish thought, everything – physical and spiritual, body and soul alike – is but a matter of language. Reality is inhabited by words. Jewish thinking describes a completely different, virtually reversed worldview, in which it is not the body that has a soul, but a soul has a body, and not the word which has a meaning, but a meaning has a word. And this meaning addresses the human being in a very personal way:

⁹ See more in Michele Marzano, *Philosophie du corps*, about the new direction opened in the post-Kantian philosophy by Merleau-Ponty’s observation that the body cannot be put at a distance, that it cannot be treated as a mere object.

¹⁰ Patterson: 2005, p. 158.

The Hebrew word for meaning, sense, significance is משמעות (mashmaut) from the root שמע (shama), to hear. Like language, meaning is first of all heard; like language, meaning addresses us. Jewish thinking, then, is not so much a matter of speculation as it is a mode of hearing and responding. (...) The other word for meaning is כונה (kavanah), a cognate of כוון (kivun) which means direction, purpose and devotion. Here is the key to determining who we are – the purpose of our life is inscribed in the name that gives us life. A cognate of מכונה (mekhuneh) drives home this point for מכונה (mekhuneh) means named, called and designated. The issue of meaning is therefore an issue of identity. The Jewish tradition has it that God names each soul and then each soul's purpose is inscribed in its name.¹¹

Since any language might serve as the basis for exploring thought, inasmuch as every language contains its own consciousness and ordering of reality, exploring Hebrew language in Scriptural texts would be the best way of exploring Jewish thought. The analysis below is given to Jewish sapiential literature, of which we have purposefully chosen the book of *Proverbs*, a book typical for Jewish wisdom tradition. Foreign from any type of dichotomy, Jewish wisdom tradition was founded on the assumption that the world of appearance is real and proceeded inductively to understand and appreciate that world on a more profound level¹², whereas, as Shanon Burkes explains in her *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Wisdom of Solomon*¹³, with *The Wisdom of Solomon* or *The Book of Wisdom*, as titled after the Latin translation, “wisdom literature has assumed a new dimension”. To put it briefly, *The Wisdom of Solomon* breaks with the wisdom tradition best expressed by the book of *Proverbs*, introducing a dichotomy between appearance and reality and hereby announcing an apocalyptic worldview, as concluded by specialists in the context of shifting worldviews in the late ancient Near East¹⁴.

¹¹ Patterson: 2005, p. 12.

¹² Collins: 1997, pp. 365-366.

¹³ Burkes: 2002, p. 44.

¹⁴ In his *Map is Not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*, the historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith provides another interesting model used to map the structural difference

Wisdom inhabiting the body of the sage in the book of *Proverbs*

Made up of three collections of proverbs, of which one attributed to Solomon and two other added towards the year 700 B.C., the book of *Proverbs* is a compendium of sentences of brief, categorical expression, typically concluding upon some experience which is often structured by way of contrasting two realities. As it has been observed, their sapiential badge is actually part of the specific style of the Middle East¹⁵, the big Jewish themes are merely announced, the *Proverbs* offering more of an orthopraxy, i.e. being concerned with teaching the way of leading a virtuous life, and wisdom is personified more in the fear of God than as a person with divine attributes.

While the apocalyptic premise is that the world is in a state of anomie, wisdom has retired to heaven and can be known only by heavenly revelations, the Jewish sapiential tradition is based on the premise that wisdom can be found in all creation.¹⁶ In its using sapiential language to describe the advantages of following wisdom, the book of *Proverbs*¹⁷ favors expressions of life and death as a way of designating the choice between good and evil acts:

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. (Pro 3:13 KJV)

Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. (Pro 3:16 KJV)

in worldviews, distinguishing between locative and utopian views of the cosmos. To him, the *Proverbs* put forward an old locative model in which the author of the *Ecclesiastes* seems to have lost confidence, while that of *The Wisdom of Solomon* recognizes a serious flaw in the world, the death of the righteous, but is not yet willing to abandon confidence in the locative view, being willing, on the other hand, to draw on utopian elements in support of locative assertions.

¹⁵ Where multiple discoveries have been made, among which Ras Shamla is definitely the one worth mentioning first, not to even speak about the Egyptian great sapiential heritage.

¹⁶ Collins: 1997, p. 366.

¹⁷ The Hebrew word for “proverb”, *Mashal*, used in the title of the book in the Jewish Scripture, comes from a word that signifies *to rule* or *have dominion*, suggesting the commanding power and influence of wise and weighty sayings.

My son, let not them depart from thine eyes: keep sound wisdom and discretion: (Pro 3:21 KJV)

So shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck. (Pro 3:22 KJV)

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. (Pro 4:20 KJV)

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. (Pro 4:21 KJV)

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh (Pro 4:22 KJV)

If found, חֲכָמָה (*hohma*, wisdom) will give אֶרֶךְ יָמִים (*orek yamim*, length of days) בְּיָמֶיהָ (*beyamiyna'h*, by her right hand) and עֶשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד (*osher vekavow*, riches and honour) בְּשֵׁמֹאלָהּ (*bisemowlah*, by her left hand); if kept, תְּשׁוּבָה וּמְזִמָּה (*tushiyah umezimmah*, sound wisdom and discretion) will give חַיִּים לְנַפְשְׁךָ (*chayyim lenapheshe'ha*, life unto thy soul) and חֵן לְגַרְגְּרֹתֶיךָ (*chen legargerote'ik*, grace to thy neck); if attended and kept בְּתוֹךְ לְבָבְךָ (*betowk levave'ha*, in the midst of thine heart) and not let them to depart מֵעֵינֶיךָ (*meeyney'ka*, from thine eyes), דְּבָרַי (*dvarai*, my words or things, as in Old Hebrew both are designated by the same root), meaning the words or things of the sharer of wisdom, are חַיִּים (*chayyim*, life) to those that find them, and if לְאָמַרַי (*la'amarai*, unto my sayings) הִטְאָזְנֶיךָ (*hat azne'ka*, you incline thine ear), they are לְכֹל-בְּשָׂרוֹ מֵרַפָּא (*lecol besarow marpe'*, to all their flesh health).

At a first glance, the text above is but a fine piece of patchwork intertwining words almost exclusively belonging to two semantic areas: that of wisdom and that of the body. The abundance of body representations is however hardly to be accounted for by the personification of wisdom. *Hohma* is practically only responsible for two words, the two hands by which she is bestowing her gifts to the one who finds her. All the other parts of the body mentioned belong to the finder of wisdom, whose portrait is slowly being constructed from bits and pieces.

The finder of wisdom is forever devoted to keeping the words of wisdom in front of his eyes; he never loses sight of them or rather never lets them depart from his sight. His eyes are riveted to the words or things of wisdom.

His ear is forever lent to the sayings of wisdom; the receiver of wisdom has a bowed or inclined ear, a position suggesting humbleness and readiness to hear the words of wisdom, the meaning addressing him.

And once he hears it, he keeps it in the midst of the heart. The meaning of the word לִבָּב (lebab, heart) is extremely comprehensive; it is, one could say, even semantically luxurious in Old Hebrew. It actually signifies the inner man as a whole, designating his will, heart, soul, understanding, mind, knowledge, thinking, reflection, resolution, determination, inclination, conscience emotions, even passion. The preposition in front of it, on the other hand, infuses the range of significance with even deeper, mystical connotations. Once received, wisdom is to be preserved at the very the centre of the whole being. It is the safest place and the only guarantee that it will remain uncorrupted. Echoes of בְּתוֹךְ לִבְבְּךָ (betowk levave'ha, in the midst of thine heart) could be traced everywhere in both Jewish and Christian mystical discourse and abundant associations with various texts of apophatic literature are possible.

Finally the whole body is made mention of. The words or things of wisdom are לְכֹל־בְּשָׂרָךְ מְרַפָּא (lecol besarow marpe', to all their flesh health). The words of wisdom are the health of all corporal beings. It is not only that they cure all the diseases of the world; as a matter of fact, there is more to the Hebrew expression than the mere idea that they function as a medicine or remedy curing all the corruptions and grievances, which are as thorns in the flesh. Of course, the understanding that there is in the word of God a proper remedy for all our spiritual maladies does not fail the originary meaning but something of the concreteness specific to the Hebrew text is undoubtedly lacking. Because of being constructed of so very concrete images, the meaning is much more comprehensive while at the same time it is, paradoxically, much more restrained: it is not only that we can find a remedy for our illnesses in the words of God, it is in the words of wisdom that stands the health of all corporeality. All sound corporeality is inhabited

by the words of God or the sayings of wisdom. Wisdom simply inhabits the body of the sage. Even his neck receives grace from the words of wisdom.

Indeed, looking at the fragment above, the secret intention of the book of *Proverbs* seems to be that of weaving, with the carefulness and minuteness of a jeweler and almost exclusively from parts of the body, the most detailed and precise portrait of a sage possible:

The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life: but violence covereth the mouth of the wicked. (Pro 10:11 KJV)

A wholesome tongue is a tree of life: but perverseness therein is a breach in the spirit. (Pro 15:4 KJV)

The semantic area of wisdom, of which three examples have been given (*hohma*, *tushiyah umezimmah*, accompanied by *dvarim* and *amarim*, the wise words and sayings) is sometimes extended to representations of life springing from a well or fountain or blossoming in a tree, the meaning of which is overlapping that of wisdom. Even if it is by all means clear that the meaning of wisdom in the *Proverbs* is identical to life – though not directly to immortality as the *Wisdom of Solomon* much later asserts (6:8) – the surprising discovery at the level of close text reading is that the body of the finder of wisdom fully participates in this springing or blossoming of life. פִּי צַדִּיק (*piy tsaddiyk*, the mouth of the righteous) is itself מְקוֹר חַיִּים (*meqowr chayym*, a well of life); מְרִפָּא לְשׁוֹן (*marpe' lashown*, a wholesome tongue) is itself עֵץ חַיִּים (*ets chayym*, a tree of life).

As outlet of the mind, the mouth is the enabler of communication; *being a well of life*, it is a constant spring for others, so wisdom springs in the body of the sage to be further shared. Likewise, a good, wholesome or healthy tongue is healing, it gives comfort to others; the body of the sage is turned itself into *a tree of life*, the leaves of which have a sanative virtue.

Looking back at the pieces analysed, one can hardly find a word describing the sage otherwise than by reference to his corporeality. The verse 3:22 mentioning נַפְשׁ (*nephesh*, soul, life) which will have life if sound wisdom and discretion are kept is maybe the only exception. Traditionally matched

with the Greek translation *psyche*¹⁸, *nephesh* is rather the *life breath* which returns to God at death, rather than an *immortal soul*, of which the *Proverbs* do however not make any mention. What the book of *Proverbs* makes is a promise: life will be unto it and unto them who find and keep wisdom.

To conclude, the book of *Proverbs* – a most representative piece of Jewish sapiential literature and a writing abounding with representations of the corporeality describes the body of the sage or finder of wisdom as being fully and totally *inhabited* by wisdom. Since corporeality supposes connectedness through the physical character shared with the world, the sage appears as an initiate in the secret connection between words of wisdom and reality. According to Jewish thought, however, everything – physical and spiritual, body and soul alike – is but a matter of language. Reality itself is inhabited by words.

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¹⁸ But, as Cristian Bădiliță points out in his introduction to the 2006 translation of the *Septuagint* into Romanian, it is enough to translate *nephesh* with *psyche* and the text gets a certain ambiguity in Greek, the meaning gathering a philosophical or at least spiritual or psychological nuance.

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Communication of Representations

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Abstract:

Museums are the keepers and interpreters of civilizations, where one can explore different artistic endeavors. Moreover, museums are now established as a means of communication of human culture to the viewers. The visitors expect ready background knowledge from the museum's exhibition. So, this article deals with the representation of the Buddha in symbolic and imagery forms in the museums of Eastern India; and, whether museums can create and maintain an effective communication in educating the public through visual interpretation on the moral principles of the Buddha and Buddhist identity.

Keywords: representation, communication, evaluation, symbolic, imagery.

Definition of Communication in terms of representational content

The word “communication” is derived from the Latin *communis*, meaning “common”. It is to establish “commonness” with someone for sharing of information or ideas or attitudes. Communication takes place when a sender and a receiver are “tuned” together for a particular message. The importance rests at two respective ends: teller/ sender and listener/ receiver. Likewise, Gupta, S.P. (Gupta, 2010) mentions that communication is the

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process of transferring information from a sender to a receiver with the use of a medium in which the communicated information is understood by both sender and receiver. Among the meaning of communication, Webster New World Dictionary (Simon & Schuster, 1994-1996) proposed a) the art of expressing ideas, esp. in speech and writing b) the science of transmitting information, especially in symbols.

Nevertheless, meaning is typically understood in terms of representational content: that is, that one of the functions of communication is to “refer to” or “represent” things: objects, people, places, and abstract concepts. Dictionaries are generally seen to be a resource for explaining this aspect of meaning: we look up words to see what it is they represent. This understanding of meaning in *representational* terms is certainly important: it encompasses the meanings we make in order to engage with, understand, and refer to our world. It reflects the fact that all communication is “about” something (even if that “something” can be very vague or abstract), and that part of the purpose of communicating is to convey some kind of “content” in this sense. However, this is only a very partial view of meaning. There are other ways of making meaning, less obvious and less widely understood, but equally important. Consider the following scenarios. If a museum was choosing their next exhibition focus, and deciding between an exhibition on transport, and an exhibition on spiders, the resulting exhibitions would obviously have to make very different meanings, because the “content” would be different (Ravelli, 2006).

Basic concept of museum communication

In a world of transnational media and global communications networks, new models of the museum are necessary, that are appropriate for an age of networks, of decentered and diffused distribution of knowledge, and of access and reciprocal communication (Gere 1997). In a museum perspective (it is said that), Museum Communication is a study of methods by which a museum interacts with the people, not only those who come to the museum but also those who do not come to the museum (Gupta & Srivastava, 2007).

Communication within a museum potentially encompasses all of an institution's practices which make meaning – from the pragmatic effect of whether or not there is an admission charge (which makes meanings about what the institution is, and who may enter it), to the overall aesthetic impact of the building, to the organizational layout of the galleries, to the written texts pasted on walls or written in brochures, which support exhibitions. This, of course, is the broadest possible definition of communication (Ravelli, 2006).

Communication is a chain of events in which the important link is a message. The chain connects a source, which has an *origin* and a *destination* interpreting the message, i.e., production, transmission and reception of message and returning a feedback in some way if that message has or has not been understood.

The circular composition of communication in a museum is made of:

- Research and planning of exhibition
- Organization of exhibition
- Sending encoded information through channel / mediator
- Receiving and decoding and interpreting of the message by visitors
- Visitors' feedback
- Alteration
- Execution

What is meant by *communication medium*? A medium is a channel – the spoken word, printed word, or likewise. An effective communication process needs a route through which a message is transmitted to the receiver and, in the same time, a feedback is received. In case of museum, channels / mediators are – physical (docent), and technical (graphics, text, written guide, recorded sound, projected picture, etc.).

(A) Communication through exhibition

- Communication starts with the environment of the museum gallery, exhibits and their presentation. It means a neat and clean gallery, selection of the exhibition theme, colour scheme of the gallery and background of showcases, graphical aspect (map and photograph), text, and arrangement of exhibits.

- A docent can communicate with visitors by explaining exhibits, giving oral instruction, interpreting and encouraging viewers to interact in learning.

- Labels are the principal part of a museum's communication method. It conveys key information about the exhibit content – name, chronology, use, mode of execution, origin, significance, etc.

- Written guide, i.e. illustrated book, catalogue, brochure or folder, affords auxiliary information.

- Recoded sound – background music / narration or guide-o-phone.

- Pictures like still pictures, slide show, video show, etc.

(B) Communication through events and activities

- Spotlight talk – a time-bound in-depth discussion on the life of the Buddha and events.

- Film show – on various sites related to Buddhism and their significance.

- Lecture – on the life and events of the Buddha supplemented by slide or film show.

- Story-hour programme for children (4 – 9 years age group) – Jataka tales, the life of the Buddha and events are told in an interesting way. Before and after the story telling, children are asked simple questions on the main topic.

- Temporary exhibition – arranged with the exhibits taken from the reserve collection or borrowed from other museums, to encourage repeat visit.

- Home-use folios – prepared on the previously mentioned topic with text and illustration. These are available in the museum shop.

Visitors' composition

To some extent, visitors are the mirror of a museum. Visitors in a museum consist of a variable and heterogeneous group being based on age, profession, abode, education, socio-economic background, motivation, etc. with a qualitative, as well as quantitative range. Thus, it is the duty of a museum to conduct visitors-survey for establishing a better communication system.

Evaluation of communication process for the research project

Miles (Miles, 1993) mentions that evaluation is practical, intended to solve specific problems; pragmatism is the guiding principle for carrying out studies rather than (necessarily) attempting the rigor of research. Miles seems to extend the distinction beyond what is necessary in stating that, “it is always wrong to treat a piece of evaluation as research, but not necessarily wrong to treat a piece of research as evaluation”.

• **Types of data** – Information are collected about communication of a museum by:

1. Visitors’ behaviors in a museum
2. Visitors’ remarks about the visit
3. Interviews with staff, museum authority, visitors, and potential visitors about the main problems to count.

• **Collection of data**

- (a) Personal visit and review of attendance records – The researcher collected primary data from enlisted museums of eastern India related to the images of the Buddha in museums. A *checklist* was used. Visitors’ remarks books are sometimes studied.
- (b) Visitors’ survey – Second type of primary data was compiled on the basis of a primary survey covering a sample of 200 visitors. A questionnaire that was designed completely by the researcher himself was used.

The evaluators must have a good understanding of the knowledge or emotional base of the visitors. This can only be obtained by pre-visit assessments such as interviews, questionnaires, or surveys. Having established the level of understanding in advance, the audience may then be tested after viewing the exhibition to determine whether it has had the desired impact on knowledge and attitudes. Post-visit interviews, questionnaires, and surveys can garner raw information. Comparing actual learning gained or attitudes affected with the established goals and objectives will give a sense of how successfully the exhibition has communicated (Dean, 2002).

Communication Methods about symbols and images of the Buddha in museums of Eastern India

Frequently, the mode of display of symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha in museums makes it difficult for a person to realize these objects. To a layman, these exhibits forming part of ancient religious culture, decontextualized from their original setting to the extremely visual domain of the museum, may appear to be sheer “objects of curiosity” made by anonymous creators.

It is a matter of dispute that a museum’s primary setting is the real things; such exhibits are to be placed on general exhibition and leave them stand for themselves. However, when presentation is the only factor feature, and interpretation and communication are least, the exhibition becomes an “open storage”. With no explanation, these objects are of no value. Without illumination of the past, the exhibition remains for visual marvel only, keeping away other connotations or uses. People, who are not well known with this discipline, even educated people who may have had a preliminary idea of Buddhism but have lost from memory most of what they learned, do not interpret these exhibitions when they are exposed to them. Thus, the idea and messages communicated by museums remain often unknown to a great number of visitors.

An exhibition in a museum is arranged to convey information, significance, idea, and feeling related to the “material evidence of people and their environment” by mostly visual and three-dimensional ways. From the visitors’ viewpoint, it is the exhibition, which makes the first impression as s/he gets into the museum, captivating him, appealing him to look gradually at what is present. The atmosphere of exhibition permits the viewers to observe the exhibits keenly. Again, accuracy in a communication process is more than presenting objects neatly because those solely are not a good medium to communicate all information. They help get only an outline. Exhibits in an exhibition are like jigsaw puzzles in which individual pieces of information are hidden and the whole exhibition combines the information to express a “big picture” or message.

Therefore, exhibits should be set in such a way that people can interpret the suitability of symbolic and imagery representations of the

Buddha from different angles. Naturally, when one appreciates the works of art s/he becomes inquisitive and is led to enquire why it is those objects of “museum quality” are to be set up only in museums and were in use in past.

In Eastern India, many museums are displaying the symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha. The existing communication processes are stated below. These are all the museums that I have visited for my research and the name of the gallery where the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed.

1. Indian Museum, Kolkata

Long gallery – the gallery exhibits the Buddha images, as well as related items along with trilingual labels. Labels are readable at some distance, but only limited information is provided. There are some enlarged photographs relating to Buddhism.

Gandhara Gallery – all the exhibits are labeled in tri-language. Otherwise, no communicative measures are noticeable.

Bharhut Gallery – The magnificent remains of the railings and the eastern gateway of the Buddhist Stupa is illustrated in trilingual introductory label and photographs along with the exhibited stupa railing.

Bronze Gallery – a trilingual introductory label and individual labels are the only communicating measure in this gallery.

Central Courtyard and Eastern Corridor – a number of votive *stūpas* and footprints in stone are provided with trilingual labels. Besides, the sculptures in the corridors are labeled in three languages (Bengali, English, Hindi).

Minor Art Gallery – this gallery provides sketches of *stūpa* and trilingual individual labels.

Textile Gallery – a Tibetan Thangka is provided with trilingual introductory label.

Painting Gallery – here also bilingual individual labels are found.

Staircase – individual label is provided.

The other communicative measures taken by the Indian Museum authority are as follows.

- Guide service is available at fixed time.
- In the audiovisual room, documentary films are shown frequently.

- This Museum has recently organized a temporary exhibition cum seminar on “Lord Buddha”.
- It regularly organizes “exhibits of the month” within a showcase at the very entrance of it, in which Buddhist art is highlighted from time to time.
- A number of illustrated books, monographs, picture postcards are other communication measures.

2. Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, Kolkata

Symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed in:

- *Ground floor Galley*
- *First floor gallery*

This Museum has a rich collection of symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha. However, there are only bilingual (English and Bengali) individual labels, which only provide crisp information. It is insufficient for the interested person; there are no guide lecturers to explain the exhibits to the visitors. Published materials on these are absolutely limited. No audiovisual aids are present.

3. Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum & Chitrashala, Kolkata

The exhibits are provided with trilingual labels. Moreover, there are picture postcards for common people.

4. The State Archaeological Museum, Behala, Kolkata

Galleries where the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed:

- *Stone Sculptures of Bengal Galley*
- *Metal Sculptures of Bengal Galley*
- *Terracotta Plaques Galley*

All the collections are properly labeled as well as introductory labels, maps of excavations, photographs, model of the excavated site of Jagjibanpur, etc. are provided so that a nonprofessional can easily understand what the Museum exhibited. Moreover, there is a touch screen kiosk, which is easily operable. Associated information can be retrieved in this kiosk.

5. Haraprasad Sastri Museum, Sanskrit College, Kolkata

Though this Museum has a collection of symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha, these are only labeled in English. Sometimes, there are no labels found along with the exhibits.

6. Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture Museum and Art Gallery, Kolkata

There is only one image of the Buddha in the main gallery. An individual label is provided with it. There are no other communication methods.

7. Museum of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata

There are two manuscripts relating to Buddhism and these are labeled.

8. Sundarban Regional Museum, Baruipur

Only a single item of the Buddha sculpture is exhibited here with no label.

9. Museum & Art Gallery, University of Burdwan, Burdwan

Only one sculpture of the Buddha is exhibited here with monolingual label.

10. Ananda Niketan Kirtishala, Bagnan

Only one sculpture of the Buddha in *dharma chakra mudra* with an inscription (tenth century) is exhibited here with monolingual label.

11. Malda Museum, Malda

Monolingual labels in Bengali are found. Besides, a handbook on the collection is available in the Museum.

12. The Orissa State Museum, Orissa

There are the gallery and open areas where the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed:

- *Archaeology Gallery*
- *Veranda*
- *Garden of the museum*

Introductory, Group, and Individual Labels are available. Printed information like brochure, folders, etc. is available. Audiovisual aids such as recorded voice and video corner are installed in the gallery. Maps, Photographs, charts, etc. are sufficient.

13. Archaeological Museum, Ratnagiri, Orissa

The galleries where the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed:

- *The first gallery*
- *The second gallery*
- *The third gallery*
- *The fourth gallery*

Introductory, Group, and Individual Labels are available. Brochure is the sole publication of the Museum. A video corner is there. Maps, photographs, charts, etc. are sufficient.

14. Lalitagiri Site Museum, Orissa

There is nothing there except the items crowded in a very small room. No labels, photos, computer, docent, etc. Nothing to inform the visitors, but the items are very beautiful.

15. The Archaeological Museum, Nalanda, Bihar

The following galleries display the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha: • *The main gallery*

- *The third gallery*

Introductory, Group, as well as Individual Labels are available. Printed information is provided through a brochure. There is a video corner. Maps, photographs, charts, etc. are sufficient.

16. Archaeological Museum, Bodhgaya, Bihar

Following are the galleries and areas where the symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha are displayed:

- *Archaeology gallery*
- *The courtyard*

- *In outer verandah*

Introductory, Group as well as Individual Labels are available. There is a brochure, a video corner. Maps, photographs, charts, etc. are sufficient.

Discussion

Art & archaeological museums in Eastern India, which have the exhibits relating to the symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha, try to communicate the inner meaning of the exhibits in their own ways. Large museums like the Indian Museum (Kolkata), State Archaeological Museum (Kolkata), Orissa State Museum (Bhubaneswar), Patna Museum (Patna), etc. use textual as well as verbal information through labels (Caption, Introductory, Group, Individual labels), audiovisual aids (maps, charts, photographs, sketches, recorded voice, video corner, touch-screen), etc. Moreover, the museums arrange for educational programmes to convey the essence of the Buddhism to the common people through guide service, special exhibitions, seminars, spotlight talks, film show, etc. Another important mode of communication is the published materials available at the sales counters of the relevant museums. These are in the form of brochure, handout, folder, monograph, picture postcard, etc.

In museums, it is common that the exhibits under study are exhibited typologically. Thus, the continuity of observation creates fatigue on eye. The labels in most cases are individual. This situation creates fatigue on mind. Common instances are the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, State Archeological Museum (Kolkata), etc. They present too much homogeneity in exhibiting the exhibits under study. In some small museums, monolingual labels are provided, which cannot be read by foreign visitors. In some cases, inappropriately prepared and placed labels create disturbance in communication. Pitiabale conditions of small museums in rural and suburban areas also hinder satisfactory communication. Docent service is not always available in museums.

However, there are some good examples of communication. The Birla Academy of Art and Culture (Kolkata) also organized a seminar on the Buddha. The State Archeological Museum (Kolkata) has an interactive

video corner with facility for interaction. It also made a mock-up excavation site of Jagjibanpur (a Buddhist site in North Bengal).

Still, there are some problems also regarding such communication processes. In any art & archaeological museum, around 10% visitors may be eligible as “expert”, 30% as “novice” who want to learn from the exhibition. The rest, 60%, are general visitors, with some knowledge of art and archaeology but a good deal of confusion as well. (The percentage of non-experts is greater than that of the experts.) As a result, it forces such visitors to face the difference between their personal viewpoint and the explanation provided by museum. When they find out that something that has been interpreted does not match their own inherent assumptions, they feel that they have been cheated. Furthermore, they automatically refuse to see and depart from the museum. In the major museums in eastern India viz., Indian Museum (Kolkata), Asutosh Museum of Indian Art (Calcutta University), Orissa State Museum (Bhubaneswar), I noticed that the foreigner visitors in the gallery read the information minutely. However, unfortunately, the majority of the local people seem just to roam about and leave the gallery shortly without paying much attention to the available information. The picture is the same at the Archaeological Museum, Bodhgaya, Archaeological Museum, Nalanda, etc. Even though guide lectures are available, they are oriented specifically towards organized groups of students of VIP visitors and not for common visitors.

Small museums have a different problem. There is a least number of visitors throughout the year. Mention may be made of the Archaeological Museum (Ratnagiri), Haraprasad Sastri Museum (Kolkata), Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum (Kolkata), Archaeological Museum, Tamruk, etc. Besides, those have no guide service for the common people. Examples can be cited here of the museums like Archaeological Museum, Ratnagiri, Orissa, Orissa State Museum, Orissa, Ananda Niketan Kirtishala, Bagnan, Howrah, Museum & Art Gallery, University of Burdwan, Burdwan, Sundarban Regional Museum, Baruiapur, etc.

Museum fatigue is another problem in museums in Eastern India. It is a phenomenon, which comes from many things and factors in the sphere of the museum. It may be caused by two ways, i.e. external and internal by the

museum concerned when the visitor feels fatigue after his visit to the galleries of a museum. The common causes of fatigue in the museums under research were uncleanness, overcrowding of exhibits in showcases, specimens not arranged in their context.

In most of the museums in Eastern India, it is common that previously mentioned items are exhibited typologically. The continuity of observation creates fatigue on eye. The labels in many cases either indicate the type of the object or explain about these objects. This type of exhibition is very much dull to new viewers as they see those objects aimlessly and mechanically. This situation creates fatigue on mind. Common instances are the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Kolkata, Acharya Jogesh Chandra Purakriti Bhavan, Vishnupur, State Archaeological Museum, Kolkata, etc. The last instance presents too much homogeneity in exhibiting. In the Museum and Art Gallery, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata too much heterogeneity causes fatigue in the visitors' mind. Again, in the Archaeological Museum, Nalanda, or in the Archaeological Museum, Ratnagiri, objects related to the Buddha are displayed in an unselective way than in thematic method, which creates fatigue. Insufficient lighting or the contrast of the room lighting and object lighting must create fatigue as in the case of Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Calcutta University, where there is no object lighting. Much restriction, as found in the Museum and Art Gallery, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, also causes fatigue.

Guide service is another essential matter in communication method. However, it is opposed for, (1) it admits a one-way structure of communication: a person "guides", the others have to follow. The docent imposes education by interpreting exhibits by his own likes or dislikes. Visitors' reactions and experiences are not included in the guide's plan; (2) in principle; the visitor is not allowed to express himself with the same due as the guide. Therefore, that as regards content as well as the relationship between visitor and docent this event is lop-sided.

Illiteracy and unwillingness to learn about any novel thing led the people leave the museum gallery fast. In India, it is a great problem for the museums to communicate the meaning of an exhibition to the public. Even so, when the visitors coming as a group during festivals like, *Makara*

Sankranti, they visit museums, which are simply an attraction to them like visiting a great temple or a big top and those beat almost all other cultural shows. Owing to lack of museum mindedness, they do not want to have information. They just roam in the galleries, usually look at the sculptures of deities, touch their feet, and at last quit the gallery. They are extremely ignorant about the Buddhism and generally, the existing communication process cannot serve them.

Publicity draws in satisfactory number of common people to a museum. Nowadays, market-oriented trend has made its effects on every manner of life. However, museums in Eastern India, except a few, are not so much paying attention to attract the people largely by publicity. Rather they remain at a distance from its community. Moreover, some notable museums though have a good collection of symbolic and imagery representations of the Buddha do not provide any interpretation regarding them.

Opening and closing hours are not always communicated to the visitors. The Bangiya Sahitya Parishad Museum (Kolkata) is an example, which stores a valuable collection of Buddhist art. I went to this museum but unfortunately, the galleries were closed so I have no idea about the gallery. Anyway, I only got some information from whom I bought the catalogue (handbook to the sculptures in the museum) and an Introduction Centenary Gallery. Certainly, this situation is disappointing. A diametrically opposite scenario prevails in the Acharya Jogesh Chandra Purakriti Bhavan, Vishnupur. I went to visit this Museum on a national holiday (Dewali). The curator-come-secretary enthusiastically and spontaneously helped me in visiting the Museum in evening on that very day. He assured us of further assistance if needed. These two contrasting pictures prove that a person who loves his remuneration but avoids his responsibility is detrimental to the museum when holding a higher post in it.

Public image is an important factor to a museum's effectiveness. Unfortunately, art and archaeological museums in Eastern India had failed to establish a separate, clear national identity. The objects of material culture of man secured in museums are only means to determine the social traits and patterns of a particular society within given space and time. Museums pinpoint special attention on collection, care, and exhibition.

However, being a social institution a museum must also emphasize into our cultural environment, which is debased in value and in danger from cultural invasion. They have failed to draw a definite picture of our cultural heritage, to restrain the cultural deterioration, to create a sense of national pride in the people's mind. To stand in rivalry with our leisure and pleasure-time media, these museums do not conduct market research. They are not able to modify themselves to secure and interpret their service to the users. This situation is certainly subversive for their long-lasting and profitable existence.

In Western countries, museums serve people according to their need and it is fitting to the museum's educational goal, no imposing decisions are taken by the government about this matter. Western museums help people to arrive at their own fulfillment and to have the knowledge that they wish to have. In India, practically the museums are reluctantly forced to what the government wants, because most of these museums are backed by government support.

Label is a vital part of an exhibition of symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha. A label's place in/near a showcase and the role it plays in acquainting and explaining the exhibits are very important. Visitors do not only visit the gallery to have aesthetic pleasure, some also have intellectual interest. Such exhibition if not labeled at all remains unappreciated without communication.

Labeling also has its own problem in Eastern India, for diversified languages are in use. Again, museum must serve up the needs of foreign visitors. Many art and archaeological museums in Eastern India do not provide trilingual labels having an international language, national language and regional language. Moreover, we visited some small art and archaeological museums where trilingual labels were not provided in exhibition of minor antiquities. Only regional language and in a few cases English was used for labels. It is not feasible to provide labels in all major languages. If possible, take out labels should be available in different languages such as French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, etc. as the large museums like Indian Museum have many tourists from various countries.

Again, in some cases, the labels indicate the type of objects or simply the site-name as found in the Asutosh Museum of Indian Art, Kolkata, the

Malda Museum (Malda), Acharya Jogesh Chandra Purakriti Bhavan (Vishnupur), Archaeological Museum, Ratnagiri, etc. Here descriptive labels are necessary to communicate the essence of the Buddhism.

Besides, another factor regarding problems in communication methods is inattention to rural folks. A major portion (approximately 74%) of the population of Eastern India belongs to rural people (Chakrabarti, 2007). Most of Eastern Indian museums are situated in urban areas where visitors from the villages come in limited number. Though many solutions have been recommended in seminars and conferences to reach out the rural people and to attract them in city museums, hardly any endeavour was taken to realize the thoughts with a substantial success. The communication process has not planned effectively in such cases.

The small museums in rural and suburban areas also undergo financial crunch, problems of maintenance, security measures, efficient workforce, and organization. Fund is the most important thing in running a museum. The rural museums have no healthy fund by which they can plan a purpose-built space for preserving collections, collection policy, and recruitment of adequate staff, maintaining the collections, proper timing, and an effective communication system. The museums often remain closed because they have no adequate security staff. They seldom get grants from the government or private concerns. Since they suffer from these problems, people do not visit the rural museums, except a few for their research purpose. Here again, large sculptures are placed on dusty floors, sometimes on bricks and not interpreted at all. The interested persons have to seek those often. The museums often remain neglected and one cannot imagine or expect “communication” of exhibition in such cases. The Sundarban Regional Museum, Baruipur, Museum and Art Gallery, Burdwan University, etc. are the suffering instances.

Art & archaeological museums in Eastern India are still inaccessible to community though they claim that they are for the people. The friendly museum in the region is therefore an illusion, since it remains the special custody of some people only. Recent statistical demographic studies show that art museum participation is still the exclusive advantage of a small percentage of people (roughly 20 per cent of the people), who are on the

whole, more highly educated and have a higher occupational status and a higher income than the rest of the population (Chakrabarti, 2007). Furthermore, some studies reveal that only a small percentage of visitors frequently visit all museums.

Communication in the museums of art and archaeology would bring desired results if following a certain pattern, such as:

1. Museums displaying the images of the Buddha would have to provide communication with the visitors. They should display in miniature scenes related to different events of the life of the Buddha such as birth event, departure from his palace, living with ascetics, enlightenment, preaching, joining of disciple, *sangha*, *mahaparinirvana*, etc.

2. The communication method should aim at helping all visitors make sense of Buddhism and find inspiring connections between that religion and ancient life pattern of the people.

3. It should assist the study of Buddhism as a rich resource for improving education.

4. The communication should try to convert one-time visitors into repeat visitors.

5. It should develop special programmes for under-served groups (i.e. people with special needs, non-visitors) so that they can be potential museum visitors.

6. Communicating between the exhibits and the visitor should probably be based on the most recent theories of multimodal acquired perceptual knowledge and thus supply a deeper learning environment for its visitors.

7. The Indian Museum should serve as the national information centre and facilitate international communication.

8. The present computerization and label of the museums should be available in many languages such as French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese etc. as the Indian Museum has many tourists from different countries.

9. The Guide lecture programme should be available on every visitor's request.

10. Visitors' requests regarding the information the museum is supposed to offer should be met politely and not be regarded as a disturbance.

From above, the museums of eastern India could try to apply the idea of connecting each other for the collection and communication of symbolic and imagery representation of the Buddha and Buddhist identity in the

museums of eastern India. However, our focus in this work is the representation of the Buddha, as the Buddhist identity has been dealt with in details in a different article (Prasopchingchana and Sugu, 2009).

Keeping a continuous dialogue between museums and visitors intends to avoid oblivion of past and the destruction of the cultural heritage. The digital culture and technology could be useful in reshaping such a dialogue by increasing the visitor's interest, instigating its curiosity and learning. The visitor's personal interest could be met via internet as virtual tours of category interest such as selective galleries or collections offered by a particular museum. The museum could as well run online short quizzes and offer "free" visits to those who complete successfully such examinations. This requires that the docent of the museum would take a direct interest in keeping a permanent update of the museum's website and would inform its visitors through a database specially created for this purpose. The main idea is providing a link between the museum and the visitors by creating awareness of the potential learning facilities that the museum could offer through its educational programs. The educational techniques are continuously improved with the advancement of the neurosciences of cognitive understanding of how learning processes take place. Affective and cognitive processes that help in gathering information are closely related with the way the information is delivered. Keeping the "delivery" of information interesting facilitates learning and memory and thus contributes to keeping the cultural heritage alive in the common memory of the community as well as in those not directly involved in such groups.

Thus, museum networks would create a virtual relationship between the visitor and any museum, for the purpose of updating the museum information regularly. Such networks are becoming very popular as in the case of the social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, YouTube, etc. Anyone interested in any information could get into this "Museum Access" and find out any needed information, available in one location.

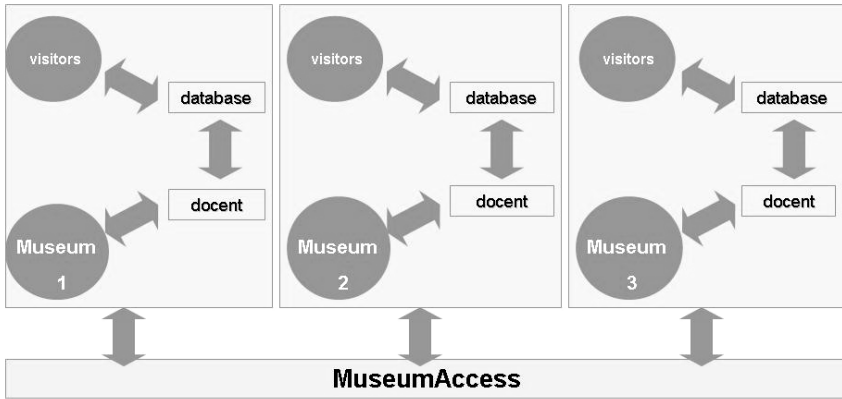


Figure 1. A proposed museum network “MuseumAccess” functioning as between-museums-information dialogue (See text for details)

An example of a museum network is shown in Figure 1. As it could be seen, Museum 1, through its docent, would create a database of its visitors and use it in order to update the visitors of its regular activities, exhibitions, new collections, etc. It is supposed to be a mutual dialogue as the visitors too request information of their interest and search for new information that the museum could try to provide.

A rating of the visitors’ museum-based-knowledge would allow the docent to classify them from novice to experts and thus to supply the museum information according to their expertise so that the information would not be inaccessible for the novice or futile for the expert.

The network is supposed to work at two levels:

(1) Within-museum network would be based on the docent-visitors dialogue through the database. The docent, on one hand, offers the updating information to the visitors to through the database and, on the other hand, mediates the dialogue between the visitor and the museum, by implementing the requests or the interests expressed by the visitors.

(2) Between-museums network, the basis of the MuseumAccess, as between Museum 1, Museum 2, and Museum 3, continuously gets the information regarding the activities of the museum network. In Figure 2 we offer a fictional daily update of such a network.

In museum based networks, communication of representations is a communication of information processed by museums, a multileveled-narrative process. In our case, it is a story (for the visitor) of the story (of the museum) of the artist's representation/embodiment of a particular concept of the Buddha. It is easily understood that any deficiency at any of these levels would disrupt the wanted communication between the Buddha, as a representation of the artist's concept, and the visitor. For avoiding such fractures in the process we propose in Figure 2 a continuous access to information and dialogue between visitors, potential visitors and MuseumAccess network.



Figure 2: A fictional update in MuseumAccess of 3 connected museums (see text for details)

According to our proposal the visitors logging in the MuseumAccess would be at once able to receive and search for the information needed and become acquainted with all the different activities that would take place in any museum connected to the MuseumAccess. The number of the museums connected to the MuseumAccess is unlimited.

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REVIEWS

William Dalrymple, *Nine Lives. In search of the sacred in modern India*, Bloomsbury, 2009, 288 pp., ISBN: 978-1-4088-0061-4.

**Reviewed by Wendy DONIGER *
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Manisha Ma Bhairava worships the Goddess and engages in Tantric ceremonies in the cremation grounds at Tarapith, in Bengal. Lal Peri is a devotee of the Sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalander. Tashi Passang lives as a Tibetan monk in Dharamsala, in India. Hari Das is possessed nightly by a god during a cycle of theyyam ritual performances every December to February in Kerala. Rani Bai is a sacred prostitute (a devadasi) in a town in northern Karnataka. Kanai is a blind minstrel who sings with the Bauls (“crazies”), an antinomian sect, at Kenduli, in West Bengal. Mataji wanders as a member of a sect of Digambara (“sky-clad”, that is, naked) Jains at Sravanabelgola. Mohan was a low-caste singer of the epics of the cavalier hero and deity Pabuji in Rajasthan. Srikanda Stpathy is a Brahmin idol-maker in the temple town of Swamimalai in South India.

What do these nine people, the subjects of William Dalrymple’s *Nine Lives*, have in common? All are in some ways purveyors of the sacred, but beyond that the patterns blur. They are Hindu, Jain, Buddhist, Muslim. Four women, five men. Only one (the idol-maker Srikanda, who serves as a kind of baseline point of contrast for all the others) is a Brahmin. Six of them inherited their jobs, while three of the four women, and one man, chose to renounce conventional life for

* This review was first published as “India’s sacred extremes: How the poor and the pious of modern India find salvation in ‘a great open air lunatic asylum for the divinely mad’ ”, in *The Times Literary Supplement*, January 6, 2010. (http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/the_tls/article6977681.ece). It is reprinted here with the permission of Wendy Doniger and *The Times Literary Supplement*.

various extreme forms of religion. What binds them together is the unusual suffering that they have undergone – all but Srikanda, whose chief sorrow is that his son wants to become a computer engineer instead of carrying on the family tradition. (“I do feel there is something special in the blood”, he says: “At some level this is not a skill which can be taught.”) Dalrymple notes that many of his subjects had been brutally affected “by invasions, by massacres, and by the rise of often violent, political fundamentalist movements: a great many of the lives of the searchers and renouncers I talked to were marked by suffering, exile and frequently, great pain: a large number turned out to be escaping personal, familial or political tragedies”. As one of the devadasis remarked, “If I were to sit under a tree and tell you the sadness we have to suffer, the leaves of that tree would fall like tears”.

Dalrymple reveals these tragedies to us, leaf by leaf: Hari Das, a Dalit (or Untouchable), works as a well-digger (filthy, dangerous, physically gruelling work) and as a prison warder (where the inmates brutalize and occasionally kill the warders); he also suffers, like most Dalits, daily indignities, such as not being allowed to drink water from the wells he digs for other people. Tashi Passang, who fought against the Chinese after they invaded Tibet and killed his mother, hated the invaders so much that for years he couldn’t bear to eat in Chinese restaurants. Finally, “I determined that I would try to eat a Chinese meal in a Chinese restaurant to try to cure myself of this rage”. Eventually he found a restaurant run by a Chinese woman whose mother, like his own, had been tortured to death by Mao’s soldiers. “After that we both burst into tears and hugged each other. Since then I have been free from my hatred of all things and people Chinese.”

When he was six months old, Kanai caught smallpox and went blind; when he was ten his brother was killed in an accident, and when he was eleven, his father died. With such bad luck in the family, no one wanted to marry Kanai’s sister, who hanged herself because, as Kanai recalled, “she must have thought she was too much of a burden on me, and that we could not afford the wedding” (a scene eerily reminiscent of Jude the Obscure, and the hungry children who hang themselves because “we are too menny”). Kanai left the village then and joined the Bauls.

Mohan died of advanced leukaemia in Rajasthan, when, because of his poverty, no hospital would treat him or even give him a painkiller. Rani Bai, the devadasi, services eight or ten customers a day. Her parents sold her when she was six; she was deflowered (by the highest bidder) right after her first period; her aunt said, “You should not cry. This is your dharma, your duty, your work. It is inauspicious to cry”. Her daughter died of AIDS, and she herself is now HIV-

positive. Her fatherless son accused her: “He said I should not have brought him into the world like this”.

Lal Peri was driven first out of India into East Pakistan after Hindu–Muslim riots in the late 1960s and then, when Hindu–Muslim tensions and Bihari–Bengali tensions increased there at the creation of Bangladesh in 1971, out of East Pakistan into Sindh. When her father died, her uncle grabbed the land, and her family was penniless. Her best friend, a Hindu, took poison and killed herself because her family would not let her marry the Muslim boy she loved. There were devastating floods. “Things were so bad that we stopped eating fish from the river because there were so many bodies rotting in the water.” Her traumatic life left her emotionally raw. She finally took refuge in the shrines of Sindh and struggled to live the life of a Sufi woman in the male-dominated and increasingly Talibanized society of Pakistan. Manisha Ma Bhairavi, dirt poor (her father drank away their money), was beaten by her husband, rejected by her mother-in-law, and lost her home and her three daughters. She left her husband and children to join the Tantrics at Tarapith.

Dalrymple vividly evokes the lives of these men and women, with the sharp eye and good writing that we have come to expect of his extraordinary travel books about India, such as *City of Djinns* and *The Age of Kali*, and his histories (*White Mughals*, *The Last Mughal*). But *Nine Lives* is different from his other works; it is not so much about places as about the religious lives of people who live in those places, and is a glorious mixture of journalism, anthropology, history, and history of religions, written in prose worthy of a good novel. Each chapter places the biographies in the context of the religious activities and history of the place. For Rani Bai’s role of temple prostitute, for instance, Dalrymple explains that British reformers in the nineteenth century, and the Hindu reformers who aped them, “have not succeeded in ending the institution, only demeaning and criminalizing it”. Signs are posted: “Dedicating your daughter is uncivilized behaviour”.

In the descriptive passages, the book is rather old-fashioned, driven by a taste for the exotic and the picturesque, somewhat reminiscent of the memoirs of Raj adventurers such as William Crooke or Sir Richard Carnac Temple; not since Kipling has anyone evoked village India so movingly. Dalrymple can conjure up a lush or parched landscape with a single sentence: “Kingfishers watch silently from the telegraph wires”. “Flotillas of ducks quack and stretch their wings.” “Goats picked wearily through dusty stubble.” He also has a gift for evoking India through comparison with England: “At times the road seemed to pass through a long dark wooden tunnel, with the roots rising above and to either side of the road, like flying

buttresses flanking the long nave of a gothic cathedral”. “Round his waist was a wide grass busk, as if an Elizabethan couturier had somehow been marooned on some forgotten jungle island and been forced to reproduce the fashions of the Virgin Queen’s court from local materials.” And he has an ear for vivid phrases from the people he interviews: “At least my mind no longer goes off like a yak that has escaped its herder”. Dalrymple delights in the oft-satirized flowery metaphors that Tantrics use, such as “the full moon at the new moon” (sex with menstruating women), “drinking nectar from the moon” (ingesting a drink compounded of semen, blood and bodily fluids), “close the mouth of the snake and boil the milk of bliss” (make love without ejaculating), and “make the frog dance before the serpent” (I’ll leave you to figure that one out for yourselves); they speak of using Tantric sex as a “booster rocket” to drive the mind out of the gravitational pull of everyday life.

The contrast between the colourful religious festivals and rituals and the bitterness of individual lives is stark indeed. Has religion been a balm to their wounds, or is it one of the wounds? This is not a question that Dalrymple cares to ask. He is determined to “keep the narrator firmly in the shadows, so bringing the lives of the people I have met to the fore”. Very occasionally, he lets us catch a glimpse of him, as when Rani Bai remarks of a client, “He was very hefty, very fat. Much fatter even than you”. I wish that the author had stepped out of the shadows a bit more. It is in any case disingenuous of him to think of himself as invisible, as no anthropologist since Malinowski would be so naive as to do; though he never explicitly editorializes, his biases are evident not only in the stories that he chooses to tell, but in the quotations that he chooses to include. If the book leaves the reader with an overwhelming sense of sadness, it is because Dalrymple chose to tell sad stories. As he himself admits in the introduction, he made the decision to root many of the stories “in the darker and less romantic sides of modern Indian life”. To some extent, his selections reify the old Orientalist cliché of South Asian renunciation as pessimism, as a flight from life only because the particular life in question is unliveable, rather than because (as the renunciatory religions themselves argue) life itself is inherently tragic.

But the people in this book often depict religion as balm rather than wound. The women who left their families and found love and community in these bands of religious ecstasies tell why they renounced their homes. Mataji, who came from a well-to-do and loving Jain family, just happened to meet a holy man one day: “I was very impressed and started thinking. It didn’t take long before I decided I wanted to be like him... I was only sad that I had already wasted so much of my

life". Lal Peri "was an illiterate, simple and trusting woman, who saw the divine and miraculous everywhere"; after her years of oppression and flight, she started to associate with wandering Sufis and began to think that she might become one herself. As for Kanai, the death of his father, brother and sister drove him "mad with grief". Unable to remain in the village, he remembered a Baul guru whom he had met. There was, moreover, another consideration: "I was always very religious, but it wasn't just that: it seemed a practical decision too. A blind man cannot be a farmer, but he can be a singer". Manisha did not want to sleep with her husband; her mother-in-law disliked her and kept saying: "What are you crying for?". When she was forced to move into her husband's bedroom, she was possessed by the Goddess, and had a fit for the first time. For years she kept going into trances; her husband beat her; "It seemed that the more angry and violent my husband became, the more often I went into a state of trance". She ran away from him and slept in the temple, and from that day, her trances became less frequent. It doesn't take a psychoanalyst to connect the dots here.

The positive effects of certain religious traditions are also in evidence. Very poor, and very pious, women see the devadasi system as "providing a way out of poverty while gaining access to the blessings of the gods, the two things that the poor most desperately crave". Unlike other women, a devadasi can inherit her father's property. Tashi remarked: "In the monastery I was happier than I had ever been. In my life as a herdsman, I had to worry about the wolves, and my yaks, and to look after my grandparents – life was full of anxieties. But as a monk you only have to practise your prayers and meditation, and to hope and work for Enlightenment". It was in the monastery, too, that Tashi learnt to read the Tibetan alphabet. As for caste, Hari Das claimed that, during the season when the god possessed him in nightly performances, "Though we are all Dalits even the most bigoted and casteist Namboodiri Brahmins worship us, and queue up to touch our feet". The stories enacted in the theyyam, too, often tell of a member of the lower castes who "transgresses accepted caste restrictions and is unjustly punished with rape (in the case of women) or death (in the case of men, and sometimes women too), and then is deified by the gods aghast at the injustices perpetrated by the Brahmins and other ruling castes". The Brahmins attending the performance are said to be discomfited "and seek to reform their behaviour". Hari Das admits that after the performance season, for the rest of the year, "no one here would even greet me or invite me to share a cup of tea with them... . They may pay respect to a theyyam artist like me during the theyyam itself, but outside it they are still as casteist as ever". Yet he sees the theyyam as a weapon of resistance against an unjust social system, instilling self-

confidence in the younger generation of Dalits and inspiring them to seek an education.

One of the unexpected benefits of Tantric religion is its comfortable domesticity. As Dalrymple remarks, “For all the talk of what might elsewhere be considered black magic, in the daylight at least, the cremation ground that surrounded Ma’s little hut made an oddly domestic scene... an oddly villagey and almost cosy feel”. The Goddess receives, in addition to the more usual offerings of coconuts, white silk Benares saris, incense sticks, bananas and bottles of whisky. Sitting around the fire as the corpses burn, people sip tea, play cards and listen to cricket matches on the radio, “as casual, eager, relaxed and at ease as their British equivalents would be on Guy Fawkes night”. Some of them work at oiling the skulls that they use in their rituals and painting them red, to keep them from going mouldy in the monsoon. A Bollywood director, who is the local Bihar Communist MP, comes here with a sacrificial goat when he wants to find out what the election results will be. By the end of the chapter, the reader begins to feel that there is nothing weird at all about drinking warm blood or decorating your home with skulls.

Manisha Ma’s children became quite used to her trances; “they thought all mothers were like this”. Even after she abandoned them (“I missed my children, of course – the youngest was only four, and none of them were old enough to understand. Often I would weep”), her devotees filled the place in her heart that her children had occupied. Other Tantrics have other problems with their children; one of them refused to cooperate with Dalrymple because his two sons were now ophthalmologists in New Jersey. “They had firmly forbidden him from giving any more interviews about what he did in case rumours of the family dabbling in Black Magic damaged their profitable East Coast practice.”

The embourgeoisement of some Tantric orders was in part a survival response to two challenges to Tantra which arose in the nineteenth century: Hindu reformers, many of whom began to appear in Bengal in reaction to British missionaries, attacked not only the devadasis, but also the Tantrics. At the same time, the rise of devotional (bhakti) sects worshipping Krishna and Rama threatened to eclipse Goddess cults and blood sacrifices. The solution, simple but brilliant, was to incorporate bhakti into Tantra. As Manisha Ma put it, “I am beginning to think that Tantra only really works properly when it is coupled with intense devotion, with bhakti... . What you need is to find a balance between bhakti and tantra. With the two of them together, with both love and sacrifice, I believe you are on the right path”.

Dalrymple steps out of the shadows to praise this world. He speaks of “living in a mystical anarchy in a great open air lunatic asylum for the divinely mad” and describes the asylum:

There is a palpable sense of community among the vulnerable outcasts, lunatics and misfits who have come to live there, and those who might be locked up, chained, sedated, hidden, mocked or shunned elsewhere are here venerated and respected as enlightened lunatics full of crazy wisdom. In return they look after one another and appear to tolerate one another’s eccentricities. It is a place where even the most damaged and marginal can find intimacy and community.

And he ends the book with an upbeat passage which could have come straight out of A. A. Milne: “‘We have a song about this. You would like to hear it?’ ‘Very much,’ I said”. After they have finished their song, Kanai says, “It makes us so happy that we don’t remember what sadness is”. This is religion with a happy face.

But the uglier face of religion, religion as wound rather than balm, is visible too. Other Hindus persecute both the Tantrics and “poor, widowed, and socially marginalized women, who are accused of practicing witchcraft and ‘eating the livers’ of villagers, particularly when some calamity befalls a community; indeed they are still occasionally put to death, like the witches of Reformation Europe and North America”. Mataji underwent two ceremonies in which the hairs on her head were pulled out one by one, a process that she chose instead of having her head shaved. “The whole ritual took nearly four hours, and was very painful. I tried not to, but I couldn’t help crying.” Her only friend died of TB and malaria, in great pain. Though the sect are not allowed to use Western medicine, they finally took her to a hospital for an MRI scan, but “One doctor said that if we had come earlier they could have helped, but we had left it much too late”. Lal Peri eventually ran into the Wahhabis, Muslim reformists who opposed the Sufi movement; they blew up the shrines, silenced the music, and persecuted the women, blaming Sufi liberalism on friendly contact with Hindus, which they viewed as pollution.

This last factor is the source of the greatest suffering caused by religion: inter-religious hatred. Dalrymple raises, but does not answer, a very good question: “Why does one individual embrace armed resistance as a sacred calling, while another devoutly practices ahimsa, or non-violence?”. Tashi is the only one of the Dalrymple Nine who engaged in armed resistance himself, when he fought in the Indian army against the Chinese. He tries hard, but in vain, to justify his actions: “They would make us drink rum and whisky so that we would do these things

without hesitation and not worry about the moral consequences of our actions. Every day I saw corpses... . War is far worse than you ever imagine it to be. It is the last thing a Buddhist should be involved in”.

Communist and Buddhist ideas about liberation are rather different; when the Red Colonel told the Tibetans that he had come to liberate them, “the abbot replied that he could not liberate us, as the Lord Buddha had showed us that it was up to each man to liberate himself”. Yet Tashi bends over backwards to justify his violence in religious terms. He notes a number of precedents, great figures, both divine and human, in the Tibetan tradition, who performed “acts of great violence in order to protect Buddhism and defeat its enemies, both human and demonic”.

A more interesting argument is Tashi’s evocation of Buddhist scriptures which say “that in certain circumstances it can be right to kill a person, if your intention is to stop that person from committing a serious sin. You can choose to take upon yourself the bad karma of a violent act in order to save that person from a much worse sin”. Buddhists believe that one person can give another his good karma (or his accumulated merit) or take another’s bad karma upon himself. (Some Hindu ascetics in the medieval period worked the system selfishly, in reverse: they went so far as to trick people into treating them unfairly, in order to steal their good karma.) Therefore, by killing people before they can kill you, you are actually doing them a favour: you get the bad marks that will give you a bad rebirth and they go to a better rebirth than they would have had if you had let them kill you. In addition, Tashi says, “I have prayed for the souls of the men I have killed, and asked that they have good rebirth. But still I worry”. And with good reason. “If anything I prayed more in the army than I did as a monk”, he insists. “But within my heart, I knew I was going against ahimsa.”

For Tashi, at least, religion was not the solution to the problem of violence. But for many of the others, it was. The relationship between Hinduism and Islam in India has long ricocheted between love and extraordinary syncretism on the one hand, and hatred and terrible violence on the other. Lal Peri, who later suffered from the violence, grew up in a time of peace, when “it seemed as if the Hindus and Muslims were like brothers and sisters... . There was a mosque and a temple not far from each other, and if people wanted something, they would usually go to both”. This situation still obtains in parts of India today, despite widespread communal tensions and frequent outbursts of hostility. In particular, peace is preserved in many fringe religious groups, including the Tantric gatherings and Lal Peri’s shrine, “where for once you saw religion acting to bring people together, not to divide them... a balm on South Asia’s festering religious wounds. The shrine provided its

often damaged and vulnerable devotees shelter and a refuge from the divisions and horrors of the world outside”.

This aspect of the book gives an answer to Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins and those who would condemn all religions for the sake of the fanatical fringe, who assume that anyone who believes in anything theologically heavier than Santa Claus is a jihadist. If you believe that anyone is mad to believe in anything at all, the people in this book are surely among the maddest. But they have found a world of peace and love to live in, and they don't kill anyone. Some are full of joy, though many of them also mention, in passing, their enduring unhappiness, and end up saying, well, life is like that; there is always sadness. Why did these people choose peaceful, if often painful and/or anti-social, ways of life instead of striking back at the society that made them miserable? The writer in the shadows does not ask, but he skilfully points us where he wants us to go. Here is religion at its most extreme, and often ugliest, but also religion responding to human life at its most extreme, and ugliest, and responding in a way that the walking wounded of the material world find healing.

Mikael Aktor and Robert Deliège (Eds.), *From Stigma to Assertion. Untouchability, Identity and Politics in Early and Modern India*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2010, 232 pp., ISBN: 978-87-635-0775-2.

**Reviewed by Mihaela GLIGOR
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When India adopted its constitution in 1950, Untouchability was officially banned. However, discrimination against Dalits remained so pervasive that in 1955 the government passed the legislation known as the Protection of Civil Rights Act, followed by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Prevention of Atrocities Act in 1989. More than 170 million people in India are still considered *Untouchable*, i.e. impure, less than humans.

Hindus believe a person is born into one of the four castes based on karma (and blood purity); on how he or she lived their past lives. Those born as Brahmins are priests and teachers; Kshatriyas are soldiers and rulers; Vaisyas are traders and merchants; and Sudras are laborers. Within the four castes, there are thousands of sub-castes, defined by profession, region, dialect, and other factors. Untouchables are literally outcastes; a fifth group that is so unworthy it does not fall within the caste system. Although based on religious principles practiced for some 1.500 years, the system persists today for economic as much as religious reasons.

Someone can refer to the Untouchables as Depressed Classes, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Local names for the “untouchable communities” vary in different parts of India. Mahatma Gandhi called them Harijans or children of God. Now they are called Dalits, which means broken people.

The essays in this book engage in critical discussions of the Hindu caste system and put the colonial and post-colonial notion of Untouchability in a wider temporal perspective, covering pre-colonial textual material as well as present-day debates over Dalit rights and identity. The editors, Mikael Aktor, Associate Professor of History of Religion at the University of Southern Denmark and Robert Deliège, Professor of Social Anthropology at ACLA Unité d’anthropologie culturelle et du langage, Université catholique de Louvain, Belgium, reunite eight

very important and well-written materials, in order to question the problem of untouchability, identity and politics in early and modern India.

As Mikael Aktor mentions in his Preface, “the ambition of this collection is not to encompass the total area of this vast and complicated subject. Rather, these contributions address different issues, each important in its own way for an understanding of the manner in which Dalits today have become what they are”. The “evolution” of these people – named in the articles reunited here “Untouchables”, “Scheduled Castes” or “Dalits” – and the critical review of this problem constitute the main subject of the eight extensive analyses signed by reputed scholars in the field.

Following Robert Delière’s Introduction, who tries to respond to the question “Is there still untouchability in India?”, the next three articles, signed (in order) by Mikael Aktor, Eleanor Zelliot and Jocelyn Clarke analyze different historical aspects of the problem, starting from Aktor’s talking about “Untouchability in Brahminical law books. Ritual and Economic Control” to Zelliot’s “The Bhakti Saints”, an analysis about “the early voices of untouchability”, or the fate of those Untouchables who, as Untouchables, influenced their religious outlook. She talks about Ravidas, best known of the Untouchables Saint-poets, and mentions his songs, from which one can learn that “anyone who is devout and pure rises above cast” (p. 92). From here to the famous modern Dalit, Dr. Ambedkar, is just a small step and we are introduced to this subject by Jocelyn Clarke’s article, “Untouchability and the Indian nationalist movement”. Her conclusion is important because we can trace in it the importance of education: “the greatest contribution of both Gandhi and Ambedkar has been what Freire calls ‘conscientization’, education of a type which enables the learners to understand critically their own situation of oppression and to take control of their lives” (pp. 114-115).

The book continues with an article about “Dalit theology and the politics of untouchability among the Indian Christian churches”, written by Andrew Wyatt. In this he insists on ethnicity (in today’s world) as common frame for the movements articulated by Dalits. In his opinion, “Dalit is a label that warns of progressive or subversive designs and does not fit easily into the traditionally respectable vocabulary of Indian Christian theology. The term is associated with the brash polemic of a radical political movement” (p. 127).

“Untouchable identity and its reconstruction” is the subject of the article written by Simon Charsley, who examines first “the extent to which the

Untouchable label has been turned into embraceable identity”, and then seeks for the “continuing heterogeneity of the castes involved” (p. 148).

The volume is completed with two articles that describe particular instances, signed by Kathinka Frøystad, on “Relegitimizing caste discrimination in Uttar Pradesh”, and Marie-Caroline Saglio-Yatzimirsky, about “Caste as a political tool. The case of the Carmakars of Dharavi (Mumbai)”. Poverty and the low level of education are important factors from which both analyses (and conflicts described in them) start. The common idea extracted from these materials is that scheduled castes are able to mobilize and pursue their own interests.

Untouchability – “a key problem of Indian anthropology”, as Robert Deliège mentions in Introduction, closely bound with culture, religion, history and contemporary politics (the most important pre- and post-independence developments in the field) – continues to play an important role in contemporary India. In understanding the problem and searching for solutions, the present volume has its role: it represents a significant contribution to understanding India’s history.

Diana-Viorela Burlacu, *A Pragmatic Approach to Pinteresque Drama*, Cluj-Napoca, Casa Cărții de Știință, 2011, 296 pp., ISBN: 978-973-133-898-9.

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A doctoral thesis based on an impressive bibliography, a valuable contribution to the study of applied linguistics, extended to an interdisciplinary perspective (gender studies, psychology and sociology), *A Pragmatic Approach to Pinteresque Drama* by Diana-Viorela Burlacu interprets critically Pinter's drama and offers a modern approach to a special type of theatre generally acknowledged as "Pinteresque".

Harold Pinter (1930-2008), one of the most performed dramatists of our times and the 2005-Nobel Prize laureate, and seventeen of his most important plays – *The Room* (1957), *The Birthday Party* (1957), *The Dumb Waiter* (1957), *A Slight Ache* (1958), *The Hothouse* (1958), *The Caretaker* (1959), *A Night Out* (1959), *Night School* (1960), *The Collection* (1961), *The Lover* (1962), *Tea Party* (1964), *The Homecoming* (1964), *The Basement* (1966), *Silence* (1968), *Old Times* (1970), *No Man's Land* (1974), *Betrayal* (1978) – represent the subject of this book. The author's intentions are, first, to draw a pragmatically monographic study on Harold Pinter's plays (1957-1980) and, second, to present an analysis of a drama as a "written discourse". Several plays from this interval are left out [*The Dwarfs* (1960), *Landscape* (1967), *Monologue* (1972), and *Family Voices* (1980)] mainly because they follow "a rather absurd line of communication" and because the author's interest is "the *language* of drama, and not the drama itself, in all its aspects".

The methods used by the author are both micro-structural (deicticals, conventional implicatures, entailments, presuppositions) and macro-structural (speech acts, conversational implicatures, politeness devices and the apparatus of silence). This is, in fact, the most important contribution of the author: an original insight into Pinter's world through the language (and silence) and not by a literary analysis of his plays. Moreover, *A Pragmatic Approach to Pinteresque Drama*

represents the *first* extensive pragmatic study on Pinter, both in a Romanian context and worldwide.

Burlacu's book starts with a brief presentation of semiotics (European and American semiotics), and continues with the birth and the growth stages of pragmatics. Chapter 1, *Semiotics. Pragmatics*, discusses the most influential directions in semiotics, namely Ferdinand de Saussure, Louis Hjelmslev (from a linguistic point of view), Charles S. Peirce (from a logical-philosophical perspective), Charles Morris (from a behaviourist view) and tangentially, Umberto Eco; in other words, European "semiotics" (semiology), represented here by Saussure's and Hjelmslev's dichotomic models, on the one hand, and American semiotics, on the other hand, with Peirce's and Morris's trichotomic models. Embracing some fundamental issues in semiotics and pragmatics, this chapter attempts to provide a coherent chart of the two domains, and thus to prepare the theoretical background of the practical analysis of the selected plays.

The analysis continues with theoretical considerations, yet illustrated with personal examples or taken from Harold Pinter's plays, on micro- and macro-pragmatics. It explains meaning and its difference from significance, as well as the relevance of context (the larger and the immediate context) and Émile Benveniste's delineation *histoire – discourse*, since the way people talk is strictly conditioned by the extra-linguistic and linguistic contexts. The sub-chapter on macro-pragmatics starts with a general perspective on the omnipresent process of communication, on language and its communicational functions, as the key-elements of any human society. Then, it narrows down to the structure of the exchange and the characteristics of conversations (adjacency pairs, conversational turns/moves and transition relevance places), as opposed to conversational activities, all preliminaries to the concrete analysis of the dialogues in the Pinteresque plays.

The second chapter, *The New World Order of Pinteresque Drama*, revolves around the realm of fiction versus the tangible reality, discussing the fact that literature, in general, and the literary discourse, in particular, is widely regarded as a non-serious, counterfactual domain.

The book continues with the difference between drama and play, which lies in the fact that the first is literature, thus written text, whereas the second is a show, usually performed on a stage. Even if the focus of the entire book is on the first, the author's intention is not to postulate the superiority of the text over the play performed on the stage, but to show their complementarity and the impossibility to separate them completely.

Chapter 3, *The Basement ... of Inferencing*, resumes the theoretical issues of the first chapter, namely deixis, presuppositions, conventional and conversational implicatures, extensively discussed in concrete examples from Pinter's plays. Chapter 4, *The Land of Dumb Voices, keeps silent* only apparently, since it has a lot to say about the eloquent silence present in our discourses. This chapter underlines the fact that there is a need for words, as well as for silence, the examples from Pinter's plays being actually "dramatic representations of silence as a presence". Words can be luring by their multiple meanings, while silence can be polysemantic, too. In fact, uttering and speechlessness initiate extensive inferencing, they echo other utterances and non-utterances, and they interfere at all times. Chapter 5, *God's District*, considers the status of speech acts in fiction and focuses on that aspect of language concerned with "doing" rather than "saying". Chapter 6, *Request Stop*, presents a detailed analysis of politeness devices, applied to some Pinteresque plays, while the conclusions are suggestively named *That's All*. At this point, a relevant observation should be made, thus emphasizing another original aspect of the book – all the chapter titles (excepting the first), resuming identical or combined titles from Pinter's plays, sketches or prose, are carefully chosen to represent the topic of the respective sections.

Diana-Viorela Burlacu's book attempts to erase the artificial division between literature, seen as a compilation of "frozen texts", and reality, the area of "live discourses". In Pinter's opinion, "what happens in [his] plays could happen anywhere, at any time, in any place, although the events may seem unfamiliar at first glance." The language of the seventeen Pinteresque plays "*shows* rather than *tells*" what relation exists among interlocutors (superiority, equality or inferiority), and consequently, how polite they are (the use of honorifics or addressing terms, the formulation of requests); what their intentions are (asking, accusing, criticising, praising); how correctly they speak (the use of words, grammar); how intelligent they are (the use of ideas, irony, puns) or what their level of education is (the choice of registers, style).

The cover of the book is worthwhile presenting, too: against the background of a theatre screen, it pictures four Pinteresque themes: the room (symbol of a closed space); the intrusion into personal space; the empty chair, representing loneliness, and the water (also a metaphor for alcohol). At the same time, the bibliography used by the author shows an extensive expertise on the subject.

By all these, *A Pragmatic Approach to Pinteresque Drama* provides, ultimately, not only a new scholarly approach, but also a fine methodological model for assessing the work of other classic playwrights.

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She is the co-author of *Antonime, sinonime, analogii. Vocabular minimal al limbii române - cu traducere în limba engleză (Antonyms, Synonyms, Analogies. Minimal Vocabulary of Romanian Language – with English Translation)* – to be published at Saeculum I.O. Publishing House, Bucharest. As part of collaborative translation projects, she has also contributed to the bilingual edition of Dorin Almășan’s *Ideea de sport în sculptură. The Idea of Sports in Sculpture* (Grinta Publishing House, 2007), and is currently translating the poetry volume *Zodia Lupilor. The Star Sign of the Wolves*, written by Sânziana Batiște. Since 2008, she has been teaching courses of Romanian as a foreign language within the Department of Romanian Language, Culture and Civilisation at Babeş-Bolyai University.

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