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LE CRI DE PHILOCTÈTE CHEZ WINCKELMANN, LESSING ET HERDER

Tatiana Ana FLUIERARU¹

Abstract: *A comparison made by Winckelmann allows Lessing to set forth his ideas on the tragedy of Philoctetes by Sophocles. Herder joins in the polemic, defending Winckelmann and stating that the hero does not shout. Philoctetes becomes the pretext for developing some theories on the representation of pain in painting and sculpture, in literature, on stage through the actor's performance.*

Key words: *Philoctetes, XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries, Winckelmann, Lessing, Herder.*

Des poètes, avant Winckelmann, avaient étudié les tragédies des Grecs pour les adapter à nos théâtres. On connaissait des érudits qu'on pouvait consulter comme des livres ; mais personne ne s'était fait pour ainsi dire un païen pour pénétrer l'antiquité. (Mme de Staël)
La pitié, bien que naturelle au cœur de l'homme, resterait éternellement inactive sans l'imagination qui la met en jeu. Comment nous laissons-nous émouvoir à la pitié ? En nous transportant hors de nous-mêmes ; en nous identifiant avec l'être souffrant. (J.-J. Rousseau)

Winckelmann associe Laocoon et Philoctète dans son premier ouvrage, *Pensées sur l'imitation des œuvres grecques en peinture et en sculpture*, 1755/1756. La comparaison qui tient en trois lignes suscite une longue prise de position de Lessing dans son *Laocoon*, 1766, suivie d'une mise au point de Herder dans ses *Silves critiques*, 1769. D'autres personnalités ne manqueront pas de formuler un point de vue se rangeant du côté de Winckelmann ou du côté de Lessing. Par ailleurs, cette dispute sur la représentation de la douleur a incité les artistes contemporains à s'intéresser à Philoctète et le grand nombre de peintures et sculptures ayant pour sujet des épisodes de son histoire à Lemnos en ce dernier tiers du XVIIIe siècle en est une preuve irréfutable. Mieux encore, la diversité des solutions techniques et stylistiques des artistes ayant pris Philoctète pour sujet sont autant de réponses aux réflexions sur la représentation des héros antiques ou sur la représentation de la douleur et exemplifient des tendances esthétiques diverses.

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1. Une comparaison trompeuse de Winckelmann

Dans ses *Pensées sur l'imitation des œuvres grecques* Winckelmann synthétisait sa vision de l'art grec et, partant, l'idéal esthétique du néoclassicisme dans une formule saisissante, « eine edle Einfalt, und eine stille Größe » - « une noble simplicité et une grandeur tranquille » - : « De même qu'en son fond la mer demeure toujours calme, si furieuse qu'en soit la surface, de même l'expression des effigies grecques, quelle que soit la passion qui les agite, fait paraître une âme grande et toujours égale »¹. Winckelmann choisit pour illustrer cet idéal esthétique Laocoon dont « la douleur émerge de tous les muscles et de tous les tendons », mais qui retient le cri épouvantable qui résonne dans le texte de Virgile :

[La douleur ressentie par Laocoon] ne fait pas retentir le formidable cri que sa lèvre module dans le chant de Virgile : l'ouverture de la bouche ne le permet pas. C'est bien plutôt un râle de gêne et de suffocation [...] La douleur du corps et la grandeur d'âme tiennent entre elles balance égale dans toute l'architecture de la statue. Laocoon souffre, mais il souffre comme, chez Sophocle, Philoctète : sa détresse pénètre jusque dans notre âme, mais nous voudrions pouvoir la supporter comme ce grand homme la supporte.²

La dernière phrase de Winckelmann a prêté à confusion, car on connaît les cris, les plaintes et les sanglots prolongés que pousse Philoctète dans la tragédie de Sophocle, ses *ἄ ἄ ἄ ἄ* éclatant jusqu'à occuper tout un vers, *ἀπαπαπαῖ παπᾶ παπᾶ παπᾶ παπαῖ* (*Phil.*, 732, 739, 745-756). Pourtant, l'association de ces deux personnages n'est ni contradictoire, ni incohérente - associant Laocoon au Philoctète de Sophocle qui hurle et se roule sur scène Winckelmann voulait faire comprendre que la douleur du premier était aussi poignante que celle du second, qu'il la supportait avec « une noble simplicité et une grandeur tranquille » et que la sculpture était aussi émouvante que le spectacle qu'offrait celui-ci sur scène³.

Envoûtés par le verbe polémique de Lessing, on pourrait penser que Winckelmann ne savait pas comment souffre Philoctète, qu'il ne savait pas qu'un auteur de théâtre et un artiste disposent de moyens différents pour rendre les différentes passions, dont la douleur, ce qui est faux. Mieux encore, au moins à partir de 1760 quand paraît sa *Description des pierres gravées du feu Baron de Stosch*, Winckelmann sait précisément comment est représenté Philoctète par les artistes antiques. Quand il associera de nouveau Laocoon et Philoctète ses références et la signification de son message seront claires. Ainsi, dans la section *De l'expression des Figures Héroïques* de son *Histoire de l'art chez les Anciens* de

¹ Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst*, Dresden und Leipzig, 1756, p. 21 ; Winckelmann, *Pensées sur l'imitation des œuvres grecques en peinture et en sculpture*, trad. Laure Cahen-Maurel, Paris, Allia, 2005, p. 38.

² Idem, pp. 38-39. Pour le père Brumoy, « Philoctète seul avec le Chœur & livré à lui-même, montre un cœur agité comme les flots de la mer. » - Brumoy, *Théâtre des Grecs*, t. I, Paris, Cussac, 1730, p. 303.

³ Selon une autre théorie Winckelmann aurait imaginé Philoctète au moment où il se tait, entre deux attaques de sa maladie (*Soph.*, *Phil.*, 730-731 et 742-746).

1764, Winckelmann se propose d'examiner « deux des plus beaux monuments de l'antiquité, dont l'un est l'image de la terreur de la mort [Niobé et ses filles], & l'autre de la douleur poussée au dernier degré [Laocoon] » :

Laocoon est l'image de la douleur la plus vive & la plus sensible qui puisse agir sur les muscles, les nerfs & les veines. [...] Mais au milieu de ces douleurs terribles on remarque la force de l'ame d'un grand homme qui lutte contre ses maux, qui réprime l'éclat de la douleur, qui en étouffe la voix [...] De même les Artistes discrets & sages préféreront toujours de représenter Philoctète selon les principes de la philosophie, plutôt que selon le portrait que le Poëte en a tracé dans ces vers :

Quod ejulatu, questu, gemitu, fremitibus.

Resonando mutum, flebiles voces refert. Ennius ap. Cic. *de Fin.* L. 2. c. 29¹

Dans ce passage Winckelmann réfère à une sculpture, Laocoon, à la manière dont les artistes antiques représentaient Philoctète et à la manière dont le héros est présenté dans la tragédie d'Accius. Dans l'édition de 1766 de l'*Histoire de l'Art* l'auteur, quel qu'il soit, renvoie explicitement aux documents iconographiques représentant Philoctète énumérés dans un autre ouvrage de Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti* (« wie die Figuren dieses Helden in Marmor und geschnittenen Steinen, welche ich in meinen *Alten Denkmalen* bekannt gemacht habe, erweisen »)².

Ce passage éclaire parfaitement la signification de la phrase dans laquelle les deux héros antiques étaient associés dans les *Pensées* : l'artiste et le poète disposent de moyens d'expression différents ; le poète antique pouvait faire crier Philoctète, mais l'artiste antique le représente en conformité avec les principes de la philosophie, ce qui revient à lui faire supporter les douleurs avec la noble simplicité et la grandeur tranquille attribuées à Laocoon.

Notons par ailleurs que Winckelmann utilise Philoctète dans son combat contre ce qu'il considérait comme des dérives esthétiques des artistes contemporains - contre lesquels il brandissait l'anathème de ce que les Anciens nommaient *parenthyrsis* (*parenthyrsos*)³. L'historien de l'art s'efface ici devant le critique d'art : le texte érudit faisant l'éloge de l'héritage antique se change en

¹ Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'art chez les anciens*, t. I, Amsterdam, E. Van Harrevelt, 1766, p. 289. Le texte en allemand : « Auch den Philoctetes, *Quod ejulatu, questu, gemitu, fremitibus/Resonando multum, flebiles voces refert* (Ennius ap. Cic. *de Fin.* L. 2. c. 29) werden die weisen Künstler mehr nach den Grundsätzen der Weisheit, als nach dem Bilde der Dichter, vorgestellt haben. » - Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, t. I, Dresden, 1764, p. 170.

² Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, Wien, 1776, p. 327. Sur le parcours parfois sinueux de l'édition de l'œuvre de Winckelmann, notamment de son *Histoire de l'Art*, v. Élisabeth Décultot, *op. cit.*, et Pascal Griener, *L'esthétique de la traduction : Winckelmann, les langues et l'histoire de l'art (1755-1784)*, Genève, Droz, 1998.

³ « Toute action ou pose des statues grecques qui, au lieu d'être représentée avec ce caractère de sagesse, l'était avec trop de feu et d'impétuosité, péchait par ce que les artistes antiques nommaient *parenthyrsis*. » - Winckelmann, *Pensées*, p. 39. V. Anne Lagny, « Les frontières de la peinture et de la poésie », in *Art et philosophie*, Lyon, ENS Editions, 1998, p. 42, n. 17.

manifeste esthétique, avertissant contre les excès d'un art exécuté avec franchise¹. Dans ses *Pensées*, Winckelmann invoquait Laocoon seul pour illustrer l'idéal antique qu'il opposait au *parenthyrsis*². Dans *Monumenti* à Laocoon était associé Philoctète, bien entendu le Philoctète représenté selon « les principes de la philosophie » :

La figura di Filottete ci manifesta il dolore del morso del serpente nel piè destro, col tenerlo alzato ch'ella fa, quasi non attentisi posarlo in terra ; e il dolore come veggiamo nella celebre statua di Laocoonte, sembra anche quì sentirsi da Filottete sino nelle dita del piede. Chi credesse agli artefici moderni, soliti di ricopiare in fra le altre questa stessa attitudine nelle lor opere, per dare ad esse quel risalto ch' e' chiaman contrasto, e propongono per una delle regole della composizione, supporrebbe che ciò si fusse usato anche presso gli antichi pel medesimo fine ; ma costoro non eran sì ozioso e malvagli.³

Le même artefact évoqué ci-dessus, le bas-relief de la Villa Albani, est mentionné dans la deuxième édition de l'*Histoire de l'art (De l'expression dans la plupart des ouvrages des artistes modernes)* où l'auteur (re)définit ce même concept :

Dans les figures antiques tranquilles, on ne trouve pas non plus cette grace des modernes, enseignée par les maîtres à danser, & consistant à ne laisser reposer le pied tiré en arrière que sur les doigts ; position qui n'est usitée chez les anciens, que quand les figures sont en marche ou en course, mais jamais quand elles sont en repos. Lorsque Philoctète, sur le bas-relief que j'ai publié dans mes *Monuments de l'Antiquité*, tient le pied droit dans cette position, c'est que l'artiste a voulu exprimer la douleur du héros, causée par la morsure du serpent ; douleur qui ne lui permet pas de marcher sur ce pied.⁴

Le concept de *parenthyrsis* rapproche en quelque sorte Winckelmann et Lessing, tous les deux refusant l'art baroque. Lessing doute que le concept de *parenthyrsis* puisse être utilisé en peinture : pour lui, « en peinture, le pathos poussé au plus haut degré, serait toujours du *parenthyrsis*, quelque justifié qu'il pût être par les circonstances où se trouve le personnage ». Par contre, « dans l'éloquence et dans la poésie [littérature], il y a un pathos qui peut être porté aussi loin que possible

¹ J. J. Winckelmann, *Pensées*, p. 40.

² « Chez Laocoon, la souffrance représentée seule aurait été *parenthyrsis*. C'est pourquoi l'artiste, pour unir la noblesse de l'âme au caractère, a donné à son personnage une pose qui le faisait rester au plus près du repos dans une douleur si grande. » - Winckelmann, *Pensées*, pp. 40-41. Winckelmann s'attarde sur le mot et son étymologie dans son *Histoire de l'art* considérant que « la vraie signification du mot ΠΑΡΕΝΘΥΡΣΙΣ n'a pas été rendue par les commentateurs de Longin » - Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'art*, t. II, p. 107.

³ Winckelmann, *Monumenti antichi inediti*, éd. cit., p. 161.

⁴ J. J. Winckelmann, *Histoire de l'art chez les Anciens*, t. II - nouvelle édition, revue et corrigée, traduite de l'allemand par M. Huber, Paris, Barrois l'aîné, 1789, p. 109. Il s'agit de l'édition posthume de l'*Histoire*, publiée en allemand en 1776, car la première édition était parue avant *Monumenti*.

sans devenir du *parenthyrse* »¹. On ne s'attendait pas à un autre jugement de la part d'un admirateur du *Philoctète* de Sophocle.

2. Lessing, Philoctète et le nouveau pathos

Dans la polémique qu'il engage avec Winckelmann Lessing octroie une place assez importante à Philoctète que l'autre ne mentionnait qu'une seule fois. Comme un escamoteur, grâce à une question faussement naïve, Lessing réussit à faire oublier que lui et Winckelmann examinaient des domaines distincts de l'art (Herder dans ses *Silves critiques* dira que Winckelmann est un maître de l'art grec et Lessing un critique et arbitre littéraire et surtout un poète) et que leurs deux ouvrages avaient des objectifs différents : dans ses *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* Winckelmann s'intéresse tout d'abord à l'art antique, alors que dans *Laokoön oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* Lessing se rebelle contre l'horatien *ut pictura poesis*.

Lessing utilise Philoctète - le personnage et les tragédies de Sophocle et de Chateaubrun - pour réhabiliter le cri et autres expressions naturelles prohibées au théâtre et, d'autre part, pour argumenter en faveur d'un renouveau du théâtre, libéré des règles imposées notamment par le classicisme français, fondé sur une nouvelle sensibilité.

Un nouveau pathos. Lessing admet, comme Winckelmann, « que sur le visage du Laocoon la douleur ne se montre pas avec la violence à laquelle on devait s'attendre », mais il se demande faussement naïf, reprenant en écho la phrase de Winckelmann : « 'Laocoon souffre comme le Philoctète de Sophocle.' Comment souffre celui-ci ? »². Pour répondre à cette question, Lessing, qui pense que « crier est l'expression naturelle de la douleur corporelle », se livre à une étude anthropologique qui devrait montrer que l'attitude envers la manifestation de la douleur physique varie selon les époques et chez les différents peuples, qu'on pourrait résumer de la sorte : les auteurs grecs à commencer par Homère n'hésitent pas à présenter les héros et les dieux poussant des cris de douleurs ; « les Grecs civilisés peuvent seuls, en même temps, pleurer et être braves » ; à la différence des héros grecs, les « anciens héros du Nord » devaient « dévorer toutes les douleurs, voir venir le coup de la mort sans détourner les yeux, mourir en souriant sous les morsures des vipères, ne pleurer ni sur ses fautes ni sur la perte de son ami le plus cher » ; « nous autres Européens, fils plus délicats d'un monde plus raffiné », nous avons hérité de cette attitude de nos ancêtres, les héros du nord³.

¹ Lessing, *Laocoon ou des Limites de la peinture et de la poésie*, traduction française par A. Courtin, Paris, Hachette, 1887, p. 230.

² Idem, p. 7. Lessing mentionne la parution de l'*Histoire de l'Art de Winckelmann*, où la comparaison Laocoon-Philoctète est éclaircie, et déclare : « Je ne risquerai pas un pas de plus avant d'avoir lu cet ouvrage. » – idem, p. 206. Mais il était probablement trop tard pour refaire la première partie de *Laocoon*.

³ Lessing, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-10.

Remarquant que seules « la politesse et les convenances [des modernes] défendent les cris et les larmes », Lessing peut, d'une part, corriger Winckelmann, qui pense que ce qui empêche l'artiste de représenter un Grec en train de pousser des cris est le besoin d'exprimer la grandeur d'âme, et, d'autre part, avancer dans le domaine qui lui tient à cœur, l'avènement d'une nouvelle sensibilité. En matière de théâtre, il est amené à constater que, à la différence des Grecs, les modernes, notamment les Français, « ces maîtres en fait de convenances », ont imposé de telles conventions qu' « un Philoctète qui gémit, un Hercule qui crie seraient aujourd'hui les personnages les plus risibles et les plus insoutenables sur la scène »¹. Et Lessing d'arrêter sur un nouveau ressort dramatique, la pitié (*Mitleid*)² :

Tout ce qui est stoïque est antithéâtral, et notre pitié est toujours en proportion de la souffrance que laisse voir le personnage qui nous intéresse³. Si nous le voyons supporter son malheur avec grandeur d'âme, cette grandeur d'âme éveillera [...] notre admiration [qui] est un sentiment froid dont l'ébahissement passif exclut toute autre passion plus chaleureuse comme toute idée bien sensible.⁴

Ce Philoctète pathétique, déjà interprété comme tel par Diderot, rend bien compte de ce nouveau théâtre envisagé par Lessing, fondé sur « la vérité et l'expression »⁵ (rejet des « mesquines bienséances », refus d'une « contrainte mécanique », d'une « froide étiquette »⁶), suscitant la pitié chez le spectateur.

Dans la *Dramaturgie de Hambourg* Lessing cite Mendelssohn, qui définissait la pitié comme étant « un sentiment complexe, qui se compose de l'amour qu'on a pour une personne et du chagrin qu'inspire son malheur ». Parmi les exemples donnés par Mendelssohn il y a aussi Philoctète, qui impressionne autrement qu'Électre pleurant sur l'urne de son frère « car les tortures que cet homme vertueux endure sont présentes et l'atteignent sous nos yeux »⁷. Se glisse ici une valeur morale inspirée par le spectacle du malheur de Philoctète qui offre l'image du « désespoir sous sa forme la plus terrible ». Or, selon Lessing, « aucune pitié n'est plus forte, aucune n'attendrit l'âme autant que celle qui s'allie à l'image du désespoir »⁸ et qui, du même coup, remplit une fonction cathartique :

¹ Idem, pp. 11-12.

² Pour le concept de *Mitleid* chez Lessing, v. l'étude de Sotera Fornaro dans J. G. Herder, *Filottete*, Venosa, 2006, pp. 29-36. V. aussi D. Dumouchel, « Le problème de Du Bos et l'affect compatissant [...] », in *Les discours de la sympathie : enquête sur une notion de l'âge classique à la modernité*, Québec, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007, pp. 473-496.

³ Lessing ironisait une fois de plus Winckelmann dans la phrase précédente renvoyant à la tragédie perdue de Sophocle, *Laocoon* : « Pourtant je suis convaincu qu'il n'aura pas fait Laocoon plus stoïque que Philoctète ou Hercule. » - Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 11.

⁴ Idem.

⁵ Idem, p. 23.

⁶ Lessing, introduction à *Theater des Herrn Diderot*, cité d'après Roland Mortier, *Diderot en Allemagne, 1750-1870*, Genève, Slatkine, 1986, p. 59.

⁷ Lessing, *Dramaturgie de Hambourg*, Paris, Didier et Cie, 1869, p. 347.

⁸ Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 36.

L'homme le plus apitoyé est le meilleur des hommes, celui qui est le mieux disposé à toutes les vertus sociales, à toutes les formes de magnanimité. Ce qui nous rend compatissants nous rend meilleurs et plus vertueux, et la tragédie, qui a le premier effet, possède en même temps le second – ou plus précisément, elle ne nous rend plus compatissants que pour nous rendre plus vertueux.¹

Philoctète sert doublement le projet dramatique de Lessing : non seulement il lui fournit des arguments en faveur du drame dont il rêve, y compris en faveur d'une certaine vision de l'héroïsme dont se nourrit son *Philotas*, mais en plus il lui fournit par l'intermédiaire de Diderot et par le mauvais exemple de Chateaubrun des arguments contre le théâtre français que ses concitoyens aimaient tant².

Par-delà beau et laid. Selon Lessing, Laocoon doit avoir la bouche fermée et ne pas crier, parce que le cri « donne au visage un aspect repoussant », parce que la douleur, « dans toute sa violence, arrivant à la contorsion, ne pouvait s'allier avec [la beauté] ». Autrement dit, comme l'avait remarqué Winckelmann, le corps et le visage de Laocoon ne sont pas marqués de la même manière par la douleur. La cause n'est pas la nécessité de montrer la grandeur d'âme du personnage, mais la nécessité de « représenter le plus haut degré de beauté avec la donnée accidentelle de la douleur physique » ; si l'artiste représente le personnage la bouche ouverte, le résultat est « une image hideuse, monstrueuse, dont on est disposé à détourner le regard, parce que la vue de la douleur excite la répugnance, sans que la beauté de l'objet souffrant puisse transformer cette répugnance en un doux sentiment de compassion ». Et Lessing trouve un argument en faveur de sa théorie chez les Anciens justement : il peut jubiler en affirmant que Pythagore de Rhegium a su modérer l'expression de la douleur de son Philoctète, si bien que la statue communique « sa douleur au spectateur, effet qu'eût empêché le moindre trait hideux » !³

Lessing est ensuite amené à constater que toutes les formes de « poésie » ne sont pas régies par les mêmes lois, que l'impression produite par le récit ou la description du cri est différente de celle produite par le cri lui-même. Virgile peut donc faire crier son Laocoon, l'effet est moins fort puisqu'il s'agit d'un son que nous croyons entendre, alors que le cri dans une tragédie est bien réel : nous voyons et entendons Philoctète crier et « plus l'acteur approche de la nature, plus nos yeux et nos oreilles doivent être péniblement affectés, car il est incontestable que dans la

¹ Cité d'après D. Dumouchel, *op. cit.*, p. 482. V. Fornaro dans Herder, *Filottete*, p. 32.

² Lessing « s'en prend moins, au fond, au théâtre classique français lui-même qu'à son prestige excessif en Allemagne, au rôle étouffant qu'il joue dans la vie intellectuelle de son pays, maintenue dans un état de sujétion par l'orientation étrangère des petites cours dont l'ambition suprême est de singer Versailles » - Roland Mortier, *op. cit.*, p. 59. V. Élisabeth Décultot, « Le *Laocoon* de Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. De l'imagination comme fondement d'une nouvelle méthode critique », in *Les Études philosophiques*, 2/2003 (n° 65), pp. 197-212.

³ Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 20-22.

nature ils le sont, lorsque nous percevons des signes de douleur si violents et si retentissants »¹.

En choisissant de montrer Philoctète et Hercule et Laocoon gémissant, pleurant, criant et mugissant, Sophocle paraît avoir offensé les yeux et les oreilles du spectateur, violant « une bienséance fondée sur la nature même de nos sentiments » - car il y en qui pensent que « la douleur physique n'est pas généralement susceptible d'éveiller la même compassion que les autres maux »². Arrivé à ce point de sa démonstration, l'auteur juge bon d'exposer ses opinions sur le *Philoctète* de Sophocle, « sujet sur lequel Lessing quelques années plus tôt (en 1759-1760) avait entamé un grand traité »³.

Remarque. Winckelmann et Lessing ne connaissaient Laocoon au moment où ils rédigeaient les *Pensées* et *Laocoon* autrement que par des reproductions⁴. On peut être d'accord avec Lessing lorsqu'il écrit que « l'ouverture toute grande de la bouche est, en peinture, une tache, en sculpture, un enfoncement [...], sans parler de l'aspect repoussant qu'elle donne au reste du visage qu'elle fait grimacer et rend méconnaissable »⁵. Mais les trois personnages du groupe de Laocoon ont la bouche ouverte, comme la tête de Philoctète qui se trouve dans les collections du Musée de l'Ermitage ayant appartenu à Giampetro Campana, une copie romaine du IIe siècle d'un original grec beaucoup plus ancien (Musée de l'Ermitage, buste en marbre de 31 cm de haut, no d'inventaire 199).

L'examen de la pièce. Lessing pensait comme Diderot, que « la vraie tragédie est encore à trouver, et [...] avec leurs défauts les anciens en étaient peut-être plus voisins que nous »⁶. Il est probablement prêt à s'exclamer comme son maître français : « La vérité ! La nature ! Les Anciens ! Sophocle ! Philoctète ! »⁷, ajoutant « La pitié ! » L'examen de la tragédie de Sophocle apparaît donc comme une pièce fondamentale dans l'argumentation de ses thèses, la réhabilitation du cri et des autres expressions naturelles prohibées sur scène et la nécessité de réformer le théâtre.

C'est pourquoi il commence sa démonstration en quatre points par ce qui lui apparaît comme l'élément le plus important de la tragédie, l'art de Sophocle de « fortifier et étendre l'idée de la douleur physique » afin d' « exciter la compassion à un haut degré »⁸. Pour y arriver Sophocle choisit une plaie que le spectateur peut

¹ Idem, p. 30.

² Idem. Allusion à une phrase d'Adam Smith, citée par la suite : « Tous les sentiments et toutes les passions, dit-il, qui ne peuvent inspirer que peu de sympathie aux autres deviennent choquantes lorsqu'on les exprime trop vivement. » - idem, p. 37.

³ Wilfried Barner, « Le Laocoon de Lessing : déduction et induction », in *Revue germanique internationale*, no 19, 2003, p. 139.

⁴ Remarque d'Anne Lagny, « Les frontières de la peinture et de la poésie. Le *Laokoon* de Lessing (1766) », p. 41, n. 1.

⁵ Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 21.

⁶ Diderot, *Le Paradoxe sur le comédien*.

⁷ Diderot, *Second entretien sur le Fils naturel*.

⁸ Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 31-32.

voir, provoquée par « un poison plus que naturel [...] incessamment en action »¹ - un châtement divin en fait, ce qui explique la durée et l'intensité de la douleur qui terrasse Philoctète. Mais Sophocle va plus loin et procède à un cumul de maux, « incapables aussi, par eux-mêmes, d'émouvoir profondément, mais qui reçoivent de cette alliance une teinte aussi mélancolique que celle qu'ils reflètent, par contre, sur la douleur physique » : à la douleur physique il ajoute « la privation complète de toute société humaine, la faim et toutes les incommodités de la vie auxquelles cette privation nous expose sous un ciel rude »². Philoctète incarne ainsi « le désespoir sous sa forme la plus terrible » et son drame atteint le climax au moment « où nous le voyons privé même de son arc, du seul moyen de soutenir sa misérable vie »³.

Le goût pour la polémique pousse Lessing à signaler qu'il était en désaccord avec certaines opinions d'un Anglais⁴ - « un homme [...] chez lequel on ne peut soupçonner une fausse délicatesse », dira Lessing, qui ne peut s'empêcher d'ironiser les Français - qui déclarait que « rien n'est plus malséant ni plus indigne d'un homme que de ne pouvoir supporter avec patience la douleur même la plus vive, que de pleurer et de crier »⁵. Lessing réplique que, d'une part, Philoctète suscite plusieurs émotions chez le spectateur et que, d'autre part, l'admiration, « sentiment froid », n'est pas l'unique ressort dramatique :

Chez les anciens Grecs, la grandeur morale consistait en un amour constant pour ses amis comme en une haine immuable pour ses ennemis. Cette grandeur se retrouve chez Philoctète au milieu de son martyre. Sa douleur n'a pas desséché ses yeux de telle sorte qu'il ne puisse accorder quelques larmes au sort de ses vieux amis. Sa douleur ne l'a pas tellement brisé que, pour s'y soustraire, il puisse pardonner à ses ennemis et consentir à servir leurs vues intéressées.⁶

Remarquons que Lessing, évoquant Adam Smith, ne renvoie pas à un autre passage de la *Théorie des sentiments moraux*, où l'auteur réfère directement à Philoctète et dans lequel il expose justement la théorie du cumul des maux, la pluralité des émotions suscitées chez les spectateurs :

In some of the Greek tragedies there is an attempt to excite compassion, by the representation of the agonies of bodily pain. Philoctetes cries out and faints from the extremity of his sufferings. Hippolytus and Hercules are both introduced as expiring under the severest tortures, which, it seems, even the fortitude of Hercules was incapable of supporting. It is not the sore foot, but the solitude of Philoctetes which affects us, and diffuses over that charming tragedy, that romantic wildness, which is so agreeable to the

¹ Idem, p. 31.

² Idem, p. 32.

³ Idem, p. 36.

⁴ Gregory Moore remarque qu'Adam Smith auquel renvoie Lessing et que mentionne aussi Herder était Écossais - J. G. Herder, *Selected Writings on Aesthetics*, traduction et édition de Gregory Moore, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2006, p. 394.

⁵ Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 38.

⁶ Idem, p. 39.

imagination. The agonies of Hercules and Hippolytus are interesting only because we foresee that death is to be the consequence. If those heroes were to recover, we should think the representation of their sufferings perfectly ridiculous. What tragedy would that be of which the distress consisted in a choleric. Yet no pain is more exquisite.¹

Lessing s'en prend ensuite à un des inspirateurs de Smith, Cicéron, coupable d'avoir une image fragmentaire de Philoctète : « il entend seulement, chez Sophocle, Philoctète se plaindre et crier, et il ne remarque pas sa conduite, d'autre part, si ferme ». Coupable aussi de ne pas distinguer entre réalité et convention théâtrale : les soldats et les gladiateurs ne doivent pas montrer leur souffrance, mais le propre du comédien est justement de « montrer des sentiments, [de] témoigner de la douleur et [de] laisser agir en eux la nature toute nue »². Et, après quelques tâtonnements – blâme des tragédies de Sénèque et opinions sur la relation théâtre-spectacle de gladiateurs à Rome –, Lessing livre une admirable caractérisation de Philoctète :

Les plaintes sont d'un homme, mais les actes, d'un héros. Leur ensemble forme le héros humain qui n'est ni amolli ni endurci, mais qui paraît tantôt l'un, tantôt l'autre, selon que la nature, les principes ou le devoir le sollicitent. C'est le type le plus élevé que la sagesse puisse créer et l'art imiter.³

Un Philoctète moins pitoyable aurait d'ailleurs appauvri la tragédie, changeant la dynamique des relations entre les trois personnages et notamment celles de Philoctète et Néoptolème⁴ et aurait nui à l'évolution du fils d'Achille :

Philoctète, maître de sa douleur, eût maintenu Néoptolème dans sa dissimulation. Philoctète, que sa douleur rend incapable de toute dissimulation, quelque grandement nécessaire qu'elle lui paraisse pour ne pas faire repentir trop tôt son futur compagnon de voyage de sa promesse de l'emmener avec lui, Philoctète, qui est tout nature, ramène Néoptolème à sa nature. Ce retour est excellent et d'autant plus émouvant qu'il est causé par la nature humaine toute nue.⁵

Ce Philoctète « tout nature » est, selon Lessing, supérieur à Hercule qui est un demi-dieu et comme tel « a honte que sa partie mortelle ait dominé sa partie immortelle au point de le faire pleurer et gémir comme une femme »⁶.

En vrai auteur de théâtre, Lessing se demande comment doivent réagir les autres acteurs pendant les accès de douleur de Philoctète. La réponse à cette question se retrouverait, selon lui, dans le texte de Sophocle qui « a intéressé au

¹ Adam Smith, *The Theory of moral Sentiments*, London, Millar, Kincaid, Bell, 1761, p. 43.

² Idem, p. 40.

³ Idem, p. 41.

⁴ Cette remarque se retrouve chez Brumoy : la crise de Philoctète serait « un moïen pour augmenter le trouble, & pour reculer le dénouement ; moïen d'autant plus sûr qu'il semble renverser l'espoir de Philoctete, & qu'il donne lieu au repentir de Neoptoleme. Car la situation suivante, où paroît tout l'embarras de celui-cy en dépend, & c'est sa pitié qui réveille sa vertu. » - Brumoy, *Le Théâtre des Grecs*, t. I, p. 303.

⁵ Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 42.

⁶ Idem, p. 43.

sort de Philoctète ceux qui l'entourent, de telle sorte que l'impression produite sur eux par ses cris n'est pas la seule chose qui les occupe ». À la fin de l'examen de *Philoctète* Lessing s'interroge sur la capacité des comédiens de « reproduire jusqu'à l'illusion les cris et les convulsions de la douleur ». L'examen du *Philoctète* de Sophocle se clôt sur sa réponse assez énigmatique :

Si je trouvais que nos acteurs n'en fussent pas capables, il faudrait encore savoir si un Garrick ne l'eût pas été. Et quand même cela lui eût été, à lui-même, impossible, je persisterais encore à me figurer que, chez les anciens, la déclamation et l'art de fabriquer les masques tragiques étaient poussés à une perfection dont nous n'avons aujourd'hui aucune idée.

Le goût pour la spéculation de Lessing fait que souvent son argumentation soit si vertigineuse qu'il n'arrive pas à combler les brèches qu'il a ouvertes. Lors de son examen de *Philoctète* ces brèches non comblées sont une comparaison du héros avec Robinson et les renvois au *Philoctète* de Chateaubrun. Lessing rapproche probablement pour la première fois Philoctète et Robinson en raison de leur solitude sur une île, mais montre aussi ce qui les distingue : alors que Philoctète cumule les maux au point de devenir l'image du désespoir, Robinson ne suscite pas la pitié, parce qu'il est en bonne santé, fort et en plus industrieux¹.

Chateaubrun est pour Lessing l'ennemi à abattre, doublement détestable, d'abord en tant que représentant du (mauvais) théâtre français et, ensuite, en tant qu'auteur d'une mauvaise adaptation de la tragédie de Sophocle. L'auteur français est incapable de comprendre les particularités du personnage et altère inévitablement la tragédie : son Philoctète souffre d'une blessure banale, qui n'a aucune raison de ne pas guérir ; Philoctète n'est plus seul, il vit avec sa fille et sa gouvernante ; l'intrigue de ce nouveau *Philoctète* se réduit à une seule question : Néoptolème pourra ou non épouser la fille de Philoctète ?

Le Grec nous torture avec cette horrible inquiétude de savoir si le pauvre Philoctète va rester sans son arc sur l'île déserte et y périr misérablement. Le Français sait un chemin bien plus sûr pour arriver à notre cœur ; il nous fait craindre que le fils d'Achille ne soit obligé de s'en aller sans sa princesse. Les critiques parisiens appelèrent cela triompher des anciens, et l'un d'eux proposa de nommer la pièce de Chateaubrun la *Difficulté vaincue*.²

Pour Lessing ce titre résume tous les défauts de cette parodie qu'est la pièce de Chateaubrun, et du mauvais théâtre français³. Pourtant, Lessing aurait trouvé des arguments en faveur de sa thèse rapporté justement à Philoctète chez un autre Français :

Il est des tableaux dont l'imagination est émûe, & dont les yeux seroient blessés : mais le vice est dans le choix de l'objet, non dans la force de l'expression. Tout ce qui seroit beau en peinture doit être beau sur le théâtre. Et que ne peut-on y voir exprimer le desespoir de la sœur de Didon,

¹ Idem, pp. 32-33.

² Idem, pp. 36-37.

³ Idem, p. 43.

tel qu'il est peint dans l'Énéide ! [...] Les Athéniens plus sensibles et aussi polis que nous, voyoient sans dégoût Philoctète pansant sa blessure, & Pilade essuyant l'écume des levres de son ami étendu sur le sable.¹

3. Philoctète dans la silve herdérienne

À la différence de Winckelmann, qui mentionne Philoctète dans une seule phrase de ses *Pensées*, Lessing attache plus d'importance au personnage dans son *Laocoon* – chapitres I à IV, 37 pages sur 235. Dans une section de sa première *Silve critique* (I, 2-5) Herder suit pas à pas les déductions et les détours que fait Lessing dans les chapitres I à IV de son *Laocoon* : il invoque Winckelmann - qu'il confirme -, mentionne l'acte trois de la tragédie de Sophocle, fait des remarques sur les manifestations de la douleur physique et procède à l'examen de la tragédie de Sophocle (*Silve I*, 2 et 5). Il se tient si près du texte de Lessing dans cette partie consacrée à Philoctète qu'il ne manque pas d'évoquer Garrick, un Garrick grec ayant la capacité de peser la quantité de douleur et de courage, de sentiment humain et d'âme héroïque (*Silve I*, 2), Robinson et même Chateaubrun (dont les héros amoureux sont loin de la Nature - *Silve I*, 4).

La section 2 de la première *Silve* commence comme le premier chapitre de *Laocoon*, par une citation de Winckelmann, le même passage cité par Lessing et qui finit par la comparaison incriminée, « Laocoon souffre, mais il souffre comme, chez Sophocle, Philoctète. ». Herder avoue qu'il voit le héros souffrir tel que l'avait décrit Winckelmann : Philoctète lutte contre une souffrance qui s'empare de lui, essaie de la combattre avec des gémissements et, quand il n'en peut plus, il ne laisse sortir que des sons entrecoupés, étouffés, et cache le reste dans son grande âme.

Pour vérifier ses impressions et démontrer que Lessing a fait une comparaison erronée qui l'a conduit à une conclusion erronée, il invite à une lecture de la tragédie de Sophocle, en demandant qu'on la lise comme si on assistait à sa représentation. Il analyse l'acte trois (l'épisode 2) de la tragédie et réussit le pari de ne pas faire crier Philoctète, de le montrer en train de contenir sa peine, dissimulant sa souffrance si bien que Néoptolème entend à peine son profond $\tilde{\alpha} \tilde{\alpha} \tilde{\alpha}$ (*Phil.*, 732). À la différence de Mars qui, blessé dans le combat, hurle comme dix mille hommes ou bœufs et inspire la terreur (*Il.*, V, 859-863), Philoctète, qui souffre en silence, inspire la compassion. Finalement la douleur lui arrache quelques lamentations² et il demande qu'on lui coupe le pied. Mais tout ce que Sophocle lui fait prononcer ce sont des balbutiements, ses soupirs étouffés, des gémissements profonds, des onomatopées. La troisième attaque est la plus forte et Sophocle lui fait faire tout ce qu'on peut imaginer pour ne pas le laisser crier : rêver, gémir, supplier, se mettre en colère, perdre son souffle, s'endormir. Comme Sophocle veille à ce que le cri ne

¹ *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, t. IV (CONS-DIZ), Paris, 1754, p. 684.

² « Des gémissements et des soupirs », disait Herder, là où il fallait plutôt lire « des cris et des sanglots », remarque Sotera Fornaro, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

devienne pas la tonalité principale de la tragédie, Herder se demande où sont les cris, les lamentations, les malédictions sauvages qui remplissent le camp et empêchent les sacrifices et les cérémonies sacrées, qui résonnent aussi violemment dans la solitude de Lemnos. Et Herder de répondre : ils sont sur le théâtre, mais dans le récit d'Ulysse qui veut ainsi justifier l'abandon du héros.

Lessing avait démontré que le troisième acte de la tragédie n'était plus court que les autres que sur le papier, car sur scène « les exclamations plaintives, les gémissements, les cris saccadés *ἂ, ἂ, φεῖ, ἀτταται, ἂ μοι, μοι !* les lignes entières remplies de *παπᾶ, παπᾶ* [...] qui devaient être déclamées avec des temps et des pauses [...] ont fait durer cet acte à peu près aussi longtemps que les autres »¹. Par contre, selon Herder les cris ne peuvent que contracter l'acte ; ce sont toutes ces hésitations, tous ces soupirs et ces silences, l'intervention du chœur, le sommeil de Philoctète qui rendent cet acte aussi long que les autres.

Herder pense, comme Lessing, que le cri est l'expression naturelle de la douleur physique, remarquant pourtant que chaque type et espèce d'art a ses propres limites dans sa représentation. Lessing, en disciple de Rousseau, pouvait considérer la douleur comme un ressort dramatique éveillant la pitié, mais selon Herder la représentation de la douleur physique suscite dans le corps du spectateur une souffrance comparable, une souffrance physique, et ne peut donc constituer l'idée principale d'une tragédie, mais tout au plus d'une pantomime.

Herder est contrarié par la vision de l'héroïsme exposée par Lessing - des héros grecs qui pleurent quand ils sont blessés -, notamment par cette assertion qu'il cite dans son essai :

Autant, en d'autres circonstances, les héros d'Homère sont élevés par lui au-dessus de la nature humaine, autant ils y restent constamment fidèles par le sentiment des douleurs et des insultes, quand il s'agit d'exprimer ce sentiment par des cris, par des larmes ou des injures.²

Sans commenter ce passage (on comprend pourtant que, même si les exemples sont tirés des textes épiques, les conclusions s'appliquent à Philoctète aussi), Herder commence une nouvelle section de son interprétation, rappelant que Lessing avait consacré un long chapitre à l'examen du *Philoctète* de Sophocle, élaboré sur une fausse prémisse : il avait fait du cri la tonalité principale de l'expression de sa douleur et, partant, le moyen principal de susciter la compassion, la sympathie du public. Pire encore, Lessing avait analysé le cri uniquement comme une sorte d'accessoire dramatique, défendant en tant que dramaturge les choix de l'auteur,

¹ Lessing, *Laocoon*, pp. 7-8. Ces remarques sont inspirées par le père Brumoy, mentionné par Lessing dans une note : « Cet Acte est fort court. Mais les Anciens ne s'embarrassoient pas de faire les Actes égaux. Les deux Scenes qui le composent ont plus de jeu de Théâtre & d'action que de mots. Les Grecs donnoient beaucoup au spectacle & à la representation. L'accès imprevû qui saisit Philoctete est un obstacle qui recule la conclusion, & d'ailleurs la Scene est terminée par un Intermede du Chœur, tandis que Philoctete repose : en voilà assés pour juger que c'est un Acte complet, suivant l'idée des Grecs. Au reste rien n'est plus heureusement imaginé que cet obstacle qui détruit le stratagème d'Ulysse, dont le succès faisoit croire que tout étoit terminé. » - Brumoy, *Théâtre des Grecs*, t. I, p. 268, note a.

² Lessing, *Laocoon*, p. 8.

alors que, selon Herder, il valait mieux se laisser envahir par les impressions comme un spectateur grec assistant à la représentation de la tragédie. Herder oblige le lecteur à écouter la tragédie, à tendre l'oreille et à entendre jusqu'aux silences. Comme plus tard dans sa cantate inspirée du *Philoctète* de Sophocle, il utilise fréquemment les phrases interrogatives et exclamatives, parsème le texte de phrases inachevées ou préfère mettre à leur fin un tiret à la place du point, comme si l'action se prolongeait encore sur la scène devant laquelle il avait prié le lecteur de s'imaginer qu'il s'était installé.

Les positions esthétiques différentes des deux auteurs, la manière dans laquelle ils entendent les rapports nature/culture expliquent leurs lectures divergentes du *Philoctète* de Sophocle. Si pour Lessing susciter la pitié est un ressort important du théâtre antique comme du théâtre réformé auquel il rêvait, pour Herder il en est autrement : selon lui, l'idée principale d'une tragédie ne peut être la douleur physique, spectacle éprouvant, qui ne procure aucun plaisir. Représenter Philoctète se lamentant et criant fait souffrir le spectateur qui y voit un animal de son espèce en agonie, ne procure aucun plaisir et fait oublier toute illusion artistique. Et plus l'acteur est capable de rendre cette souffrance physique, plus les sensations qu'éprouvent le spectateur sont désagréables.

Sophocle présente un homme abandonné, souffrant, misérable, qui a été trahi, un Robinson dont on nous a montré la grotte piteuse, un homme en détresse qui est en train d'être une nouvelle fois trompé. L'auteur prépare soigneusement l'apparition du protagoniste dont il doit montrer la souffrance pour justifier ses années de misère, pour montrer que son état ne s'est pas amélioré pendant les neuf ans passés à Lemnos. Il essaie d'habituer le spectateur à la manifestation de la douleur physique avant qu'on ne la voie sur scène par le discours de Néoptolème et les interventions du chœur, par des récits qui la rendent tolérable. Et quand Philoctète apparaît, le spectateur voit un héros souffrant, mais fier, qui contient sa douleur et qui parvient à conquérir le cœur du spectateur. Le chœur prépare le spectateur à assister à la crise de Philoctète – Sophocle préfère une crise et non une agonie qui traîne en longueur, couvrant plusieurs actes – qui est placée au milieu de la tragédie, mais, après cette scène éprouvante, Philoctète ne souffre plus. Winckelmann a donc raison de comparer Laocoon à Philoctète dès lors que celui-ci ne passe pas tout son temps à crier.

Herder peut être content d'avoir démontré l'inconsistance des thèses de Lessing : le cri provoqué par la douleur physique ne caractérise pas le héros homérique, crier ne peut être l'action principale par laquelle Philoctète suscite la sympathie, la douleur physique ne peut être l'idée principale d'un drame, lui rappelant la beauté naturelle que doit avoir une pièce de théâtre (« So hat das Schauspiel gewiß seine eigne schöne Natur gleichsam, und genaue Grenzen zwischen andern Dichtarten. »).

L'intérêt pour Philoctète de Herder ne faiblit pas : ses réflexions sur le cri comme expression de la douleur nourriront son étude sur l'origine du langage et son amour pour le héros et la tragédie de Sophocle l'amènera à composer une cantate dans laquelle s'égrènent les mots et les silences.

*

Ceux qui réagissent les premiers après la parution du *Laocoon* de Lessing sont « naturellement les lecteurs professionnels qui se plongent avec une curiosité impatiente dans les *exempla* de Lessing : le groupe sculpté du *Laocoon*, le *Laocoon* de Virgile, le *Philoctète* de Sophocle ou encore le *Gladiateur Borghese* - tels Herder, Garve, Riedel, et bien sûr aussi Klotz et d'autres encore »¹. Quant à ceux qui entendent Philoctète soupirer ou crier, les deux camps se dessinent encore plus nettement après la prise de position de Herder. Ainsi, H. W. von Gerstenberg se range en 1769 du côté de Winckelmann et de Herder, considérant que, même si Philoctète pousse des cris terribles, l'expression de la souffrance n'était pas essentielle dans la tragédie ; c'est sa force intérieure du personnage qui le rend semblable au Laocoon sculpté, les deux ayant de grandes âmes à la différence du Laocoon de Virgile². Goethe, malgré sa grande admiration pour Winckelmann, ne croit pas que Philoctète étouffait ses cris, comme l'affirmait Herder (lettre à Oeser du 14 février 1769). Schiller se range du côté de Lessing, justifiant de la sorte sa position :

Les héros sont accessibles, ni plus ni moins que les autres, à tout ce que souffre l'humanité ; et ce qui en fait des héros, c'est précisément qu'ils ressentent fortement et profondément la souffrance, sans que la souffrance pourtant les surmonte. Ils aiment la vie avec autant d'ardeur que nous autres ; mais ce sentiment ne les domine pas tellement qu'ils ne puissent sacrifier leur existence, quand les devoirs de l'honneur ou de l'humanité le réclament. Philoctète remplit la scène grecque de ses plaintes ; l'Hercule furieux lui-même ne comprime pas sa douleur. [...] Jamais le Grec ne met sa gloire à être insensible ou indifférent à la souffrance, mais bien à la *supporter* en la ressentant tout entière. (*Du pathétique*, 1793)³

Plus tard, Auguste Schlegel choisit finalement de se ranger du côté de Winckelmann et de Herder :

Lessing et Herder ont tour à tour attaqué et défendu le sentiment de Winckelmann sur la souffrance physique de Philoctète, et sur la manière dont elle est exprimée. Leurs remarques à ce sujet sont belles et frappantes, mais je ne puis m'empêcher de me ranger à l'avis de Winckelmann et de son défenseur Herder, qui soutiennent que Philoctète, ainsi que Laocoon, montre la fermeté d'un héros dont l'âme ne succombe pas à la douleur.⁴

La thèse de la représentation différente d'un même personnage, Philoctète en l'occurrence, par un auteur de théâtre et un artiste se retrouve chez John Gillies :

The rocks of Lemnos resound with the cries of Philoctetes [...] Nothing can be more opposite to the conduct of Grecian artists. They likewise have

¹ Wilfried Barner, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

² Blair Hoxby, *What Was Tragedy?: Theory and the Early Modern Canon*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, p. 159 ; H. C. Hatfield, *Winckelmann and his German critics, 1755-1781: a prelude to the classical age*, New York, King's Crown Press, 1943, p. 86.

³ Schiller, *Œuvres*, t. VIII – *Esthétique de Schiller*, Paris, Hachette, 1862, p. 122.

⁴ A. W. Schlegel, *Cours de littérature dramatique*, t. 1, Paris, Cherbuliez et Cie, 1836, p. 214.

represented Philoctetes ; but, instead of effeminate tears and lamentations, have given him patient, concentrated woe of a suffering hero.¹

Si les auteurs allemands conservent un ton polémique, en France Winckelmann triomphe : les Français connaissent ses deux comparaisons Laocoon-Philoctète et la seconde, celle de l'*Histoire de l'art*, est souvent citée dans toutes sortes d'encyclopédies : Winckelmann « remarque aussi que les poètes représentent Philoctète faisant retentir Lemnos de cris & de sanglots ; mais que les artistes nous l'offre dans l'état d'une douleur concentrée, tel qu'on le voit dans les marbres & sur les pierres gravées. »² D'ailleurs Winckelmann était bien connu et apprécié en France et avait été cité à plusieurs reprises dans l'*Encyclopédie française* ; ses écrits aurait même converti Diderot au néo-classicisme, le persuadant de remplacer « le modèle de la souffrance vive, Philoctète, par celui de la souffrance digne, Laocoon »³.

Mme de Staël s'intéresse aussi bien à Winckelmann qu'à Lessing : celui-ci a écrit un livre remarquable, *Laocoon*, mais « l'homme qui fit une véritable révolution en Allemagne dans la manière de considérer les arts, et par les arts la littérature, c'est Winckelmann » (*De l'Allemagne*, I, 6). Dans son roman *Corinne* résonnent les échos des débats autour de la représentation de la douleur amorcés par les *Pensées* de Winckelmann : ainsi, « Philoctète est peut-être le seul sujet tragique dans lequel les maux physiques puissent être admis » et cela parce que, à la différence des « sujets chrétiens en peinture [offrant] l'image du sang, des blessures, des supplices, bien que le plus noble enthousiasme ait animé les victimes », Sophocle raconte une histoire complexe et symbolique :

Mais de combien de circonstances poétiques ces maux cruels ne sont-ils pas entourés ! Ce sont les flèches d'Hercule qui les ont causés : le fils d'Esculape doit les guérir ; enfin cette blessure se confond presque avec le ressentiment moral qu'elle fait naître dans celui qui en est atteint, et ne peut exciter aucune impression de dégoût. (Mme de Staël, *Corinne*, VIII, 3)

Le débat continue pour quelques décennies encore, avant que Schopenhauer ne s'exclame : « Man könnte nicht aus Marmor einen schreienden Laokoön hervorbringen. »

¹ John Gillies, *The History of Ancient Greece, its Colonies and Conquests*, t. 2, Dublin, Burnett, Colles, Moncrieffe, 1786, p. 16.

² Antoine Mongez, *Encyclopédie méthodique – Beaux-Arts*, t. I, Paris, Panckoucke, 1788, p. 616 ; Antoine Mongez, *Encyclopédie méthodique. Antiquités, mythologie, diplomatique des chartres et chronologie*, t. 4, Paris, chez Panckoucke, 1792, p. 691.

³ France Maréchal, *La culture de Diderot*, Paris, H. Champion, 1999, p. 344.

THE IMPACT OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY IN THE COMMUNITY

Agnes ERICH¹

Abstract: *The public library plays a vital role in the communities it serves, being the main institution providing information and documentation services under various forms and in different contexts. Thus, it contributes to the users' personal development through formal education, life-long learning, after-school activities, information culture, leisure time activities or access to information. Another aspect covered by the public library is related to social cohesion, the area of the institution becoming a meeting place and a community development center. Cultural identity and local identity are problems with a significant impact on the community, so they need to be publicized by the public library by means of imagination and creativity, so as to increase the interest of the public for cultural activities. All these demonstrate that a public library plays a special social role in the community, and the services offered by it foster the accomplishment of this role.*

Keywords: *public library, community, cultural services, personal development, education.*

Introduction

The public library, according to the Romanian Law of Libraries² [1], is an encyclopaedic library put in the service of a local community, which ensures equal access to information and documentary sources, furthering lifelong learning and the development of the users' personality, regardless of their social or economic status, their age, gender, political bias, religion or nationality. At present, in the context of an obvious informational explosion, the public library has to redefine its mission and tasks to give a positive answer to the increasingly various demands of its users. Just as in any activity domain, holding and obtaining relevant and updated information has a positive influence on the decisions adopted at any institutional level, information being considered a very important resource, along with the classical ones: labor, nature, capital. The impact of the new information and communication technologies has led to the creation of modern services, requiring hi-tech equipments, access to the Internet and qualified personnel.

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² *Legea bibliotecilor*, no. 334 / 31 May 2002.

Be they traditional or modern, the services provided by a library have a strong impact on the personal development of the individual, having significant consequences on the formal training, life long learning, information culture skills development or access to public information. Being a meeting place, libraries also assume the role of multifunctional cultural centers and community development centers, community groups being helped to have equitable access to information. They contribute to the growth of these community groups in aspects related to local culture and identity, which have a strong impact on their sense of belonging to the community. Another significant aspect is that, at present, an increasing number of libraries provide information services on health or on the business environment specific to the local firms. There is an indirect connection between the use of public libraries and social inclusion, through the development of the skills related to the information domain, the real space becoming a meeting and leisure space.¹

The impact of the public library on personal development

Concerning the personal development domain, here the role of the library is the most visible because the immediate results are easiest to identify. Here we include, in the first place, aspects regarding the relation with the learning process. By the activities it proposes to the young public, such as *Ora de poveste* (Story Time), *Lecturi publice* (Public Reading), *Recunoașteți personajul* (Guess the Character) etc. the intention is to develop the reading skills and the skills related to a correct use of the language with the young, in general, and especially with children. All these involve training and relaxation techniques, personal understanding, and emphasize the importance of reading in the participants' life and the importance of the public library in supporting this activity.

At present, one can hear increasingly often about the importance of the information culture skills, which are skills that the professional personnel in any library should be able to impart to its users. The users, in their turn, will be capable to recognize a certain information need, to pinpoint information sources, to view information with a critical eye, to manage to integrate it into their general knowledge and to use it effectively to carry out the activity they have in mind. The aim of the information culture is to provide each individual with the general knowledge allowing him to use information, to employ various skills in a context requiring information resources. All these skills acquired by a library user lead to an increased motivation for learning, an increased self-trust, but also to the gaining of an informational independence. Yet, one cannot attain special results without high-quality information sources, without an adequate environment and without well-trained personnel. At the same time, efficient partnerships are needed between libraries, schools, and health institutions, in order to mediate and facilitate the learning process.

¹ Farkas G. Meredith. *Social Software in Libraries*. Medford; New Jersey: Information Today, 2007.

The direct and indirect impact is noticeable in the access to the labor market because the library can provide data on the labor force, and information on the GDP/GNP. Libraries need to advertize their access to electronic information, they need to know how to present the services they are providing. At the same time, the gathering of unofficial economic data, supported by questionnaires addressed to the users can lead to the initiation of entrepreneurship services and of services with added value for the local companies, trade chambers etc. In this way, the unemployed can find a job using the library resources, due to the skills obtained following an information literacy course. We should remember that some companies are attracted to a certain location due to certain factors, such as: the facilities provided by the local library; the existence of a qualified labor force (which, itself, can be influenced by the use of the library resources). The research in public libraries has combined qualitative and quantitative methods to evaluate the impact of the library's activity in the community, and during the last few years, a series of studies has been carried out on the dimensions and nature of the services provided, especially in terms of social and community development.

The activities organized by the library have a major impact in relation to the social goals of the authorities, bringing benefits to the community. These can be direct, in the sense of: an increase in the number of active users; the development of the collections, so as to cover an array as large as possible of the users' reading and research options; the investment in the modernization of the library areas and also in the provision of services, as diverse and attractive as possible, able to attract an important number of users. Among the indirect benefits we should mention the contribution to education, to understanding democracy, to finding a job or to participating in the cultural life etc., the library being a living and active institution of the community. At the same time, we need to take into account the potential users as well, those for whom the library has the value of an "emergency room", as they know that if they need a piece of information, they will surely find it there whenever they need it. No wonder that, under these circumstances, people ought to be aware that they can go to the public library when they have a personal problem of any nature: administrative, public, sanitary, educational or related to the spending of their holidays etc. It is sure that the public library of the future will focus more on the citizens' information needs, but, for this to become possible, the authorities of the central administration ought to provide consistent funds for technological development and the development of intersectorial projects, elaborating at the same time regional information management strategies. The information produced in public administration is extremely important for the citizens. For this reason, one of the main tasks of public libraries is making this information accesible to everyone, which includes redefining the principle of basic information and determining the conditions in which it can be accesible to the users.

Concerning the cultural impact, it is noticeable in terms of the increase of the quality of life. For instance, reading and literacy classes can contribute to supporting the development of the children's reading skills, but also to the adults' continuing education. Economically inactive people are offered leisure activities,

such as information and socialization opportunities. We are aware that a public library is a very valuable service and losing it would have a negative impact on literacy, intellectual development, on one's imagination and education level. For this reason, all the efforts should focus on the development of this public service, which is so useful for the community.

The most convincing proof of the library's impact is in the domain of personal development, as the immediate results are easier to identify and less difficult to determine in point of causality. These results are expressed in terms of personal satisfaction, acquisition of new skills, trying new experiences, increased trust and self-respect, creativity development, cultural awareness, improved communication skills through language development etc.

The provision of specific services in public libraries

The public library has taken important steps during the last years towards services and activities differing very much from the way the institution was envisioned in the past, and significant efforts of opening toward an increasingly diverse public have been made. It is true that people talk increasingly often about a *disneylization* of the library, about its decline as a public space to the benefit of entertainment and under the influence of the marketing principles of the private sector. The problem should not be perceived in this way, but as an opportunity opening in a context of increasing competition in the informational environment.

The creation of a new library service requires an analysis of the needs of the community it serves based on sociological studies so as to avoid the wrong use of the financial and human resources available at a certain moment for the respective institution. Based on these studies, one can draw certain conclusions leading to information on the profile of the community, possible partners of the library, users' demands etc. Any newly created service needs to be monitored and evaluated in order to assess its sustainability, analyzing its impact on its users, the results obtained during a certain period of time, the efficiency of its activities etc.

The access to ICT in libraries has been very much appreciated by all the categories of beneficiaries, as it results from the numerous studies carried out on the perception regarding this public institution, only 1 % of the people interviewed considering them useless. The new technologies support a large array of activities, from individual study to finding a job and building and maintaining social networks using the internet.

Classical or modern music auditions, accompanied by book presentations or art albums represent another service provided by the art or multimedia sections of the libraries. The beneficiaries of these activities are people trained in this sense and who come with propositions of specific events or users who want to find out as much as possible about a certain composer, artist or who would like to get acquainted with the respective domain. Usually, these activities are carried out in partnership with artists, painters, musicians, music or drawing teachers who can provide important and new information concerning the aspects presented.

Watching movies accompanied by the presentation of the book, when the film is adapted after a book, by the presentation of the author or of the respective epoch are programmes that have enjoyed a real success and have led to an increased interest in reading among the young public.

Public reading is meant to increase the interest in reading among young users especially because at present reading has lost ground if we compare it to the offers of the online environment (especially the virtual one). For contemporary society, in which diversity, culture and an adequate language still represent social values, reading still represents so far the most adequate way of attaining these desiderata.

The organization of courses for users depending on their demands is a relatively new service in Romanian libraries. Libraries offer the community members areas where they continue to learn, developing their basic activities, necessary for the participation to the social, cultural and economic life of the community. This supposes the development of one's general knowledge, the study of languages, the development of reading skills, the development of one's technological skills etc. By the activities organized in different ways for various categories of users, libraries stimulate ideas, discussions, the culture of dialogue and implicitly creativity. In Romania, by the Biblionet project, the perspective on public libraries has changed and a consequence of it was the training of an impressive number of librarians as trainers, whose result has been the holding of various courses in an organized environment.

The development of activities based on volunteering has grown increasingly intense lately, as very many library activities can be organized using volunteers. They need to be recruited, trained and coordinated in agreement to Law no. 78/2014 regulating volunteering activity in Romania.

The technological evolution has permitted the public libraries to develop a series of special services for visually impaired people. In this sense, the libraries have acquired Daisy (Digital Accessible Information System) books through the Foundation *Cartea Călătoare* (Travelling Book), consisting in the reproduction of the content of a document from a printed format into a digital format, accessible to blind and visually impaired people.

The services focused on target groups are gathering an increasing number of supporters in libraries, which have grown aware that it is more efficient to address a certain target public and create services adapted to its needs, rather than act in a general sense. For instance, by the Biblionet program, national partnerships have been implemented, such as that between the Payments and Intervention Agency for Agriculture (A.P.I.A.) and local libraries, the target group being farmers, who can use the IT equipments from public libraries to apply online for subventions, financial support for the agricultural land they possess.¹ Another target group considered is that of the unemployed, who are helped to find a work place through the services provided by the library.

¹ *Servicii pentru comunitate in bibliotecile publice din Romania*. Brăila: Proilavia, 2013, p. 46.

Conclusions

At present, all the decision factors need to be aware that the public library is an institution of strategic importance, being the most important civil service meant to store and disseminate information in a community. Investing in a public library is maintaining a civilizing institution with a great impact on the cultivation and information of a people. The local and national authorities need to elaborate a strategy in the domain of libraries and information services in agreement to the international norms concerning this aspect.

In this sense, a library and information management unit should be created in the central administration, with qualified and sufficient personnel to meet the needs of the knowledge society. A library is an institution enriching the lives of many people, enriching their chances in life, improving their educational opportunities and the chances of finding a job, promoting social cohesion, all these being community landmarks that reinforce the identity of the population. A special contribution of the public libraries is the creation of social capital as they assure social inclusion¹, and bring people together, promoting tolerance and understanding for cultural diversity.

Libraries represent a link between community and governance, and a connection materialized on different levels of responsibilities, and, by offering governmental information and contents, they also promote a friendlier face of governance. For many users, libraries are or will be in the near future the first point of contact with e-governance. With the appearance of an increasingly larger volume of governmental information and services, libraries are becoming the most important place where people can access services, with librarians that can provide the necessary assistance in order to use them.

¹ *Open to all? The Public Library and Social Exclusion* [online] Available at: <http://eprints.rclis.org/6283/1/lic084.pdf> [Accessed on 7 April 2014].

PRINTING ACTIVITY IN TÂRGOVIȘTE DURING CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU'S AGE

Agnes ERICH¹

***Abstract:** Constantin Brâncoveanu is one of the greatest Romanian rulers. On his father's side he descended from Matei Basarab – ruler of Wallachia – and on his mother's side he was the grandson of Șerban Cantacuzino – ruler of Wallachia, as well. Constantin Brâncoveanu's reign was an age of cultural and artistic blooming, when books were printed in different languages, many churches and monasteries were built, schools were founded, and numerous Orthodox Churches – which were then under Ottoman rule – were materially supported. This age actually represented the acme of the old Romanian culture in Muntenia. During his reign, numerous works were printed, with the purpose of highlighting as much as possible the different religious or public information of his time; thus, liturgical, educational or popular books were printed. During his reign, there were five printing press in Wallachia, namely: Bucharest, Snagov, Buzău, Râmnic, Târgoviște. In the old princely town of Târgoviște, 57 years after the appearance of the last works printed by this town's first printing press, a new printing shop was to be founded here, editing important religious as well as other works.*

Key words: Constantin Brâncoveanu, Târgoviște, printing history, printing art, printing press.

Introduction

Constantin Brâncoveanu is one of the greatest Romanian rulers. On his father's side he was the descendant of Matei Basarab – ruler of Wallachia – and on his mother's side he was the grandson of Șerban Cantacuzino – ruler of Wallachia as well. At the beginning of his reign, Wallachia was going through hard times because of a long war between the Turks and the Austrians; yet, the new ruler demonstrated a special diplomacy, as he knew how to maintain friendly relationships with all, so that his country may not be robbed and ravaged by foreign armies. Those peaceful times were favourable to the spiritual creations marking the age of this ruler.

His reign represented an age of maximal cultural and artistic flourishing, when books were printed in different languages, numerous churches and monasteries were built, schools were founded, and many Orthodox Churches - then under Ottoman rule - were materially supported. It represented “the highest peak of the old Romanian culture in Muntenia”.² [1] The ode to his coat of arms highlights all the aspects recommending Constantin Brâncoveanu as a humanist prince. Thus,

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² N. Cartoian. *Istoria literaturii române vechi*. București: Fundația “Regele Mihai I”, 1945, p. 35.

in the lines written under the royal coat of arms, in the work named *Capitole îndemnătoare* (*Counselling Chapters*), Bucharest, 1691, Hrisant Notara described him as: “the greatest of all princes, a bright light visible up to the end of the world”.¹

Printing Activity in Târgoviște during Constantin Brâncoveanu's Reign

During the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu, a huge number of works was printed, with the aim of covering an increasingly comprehensive range of information from the religious or public domains of his time; thus, liturgical, educational or popular books were printed. The important role played by the ruler in issuing those books is highlighted by the forewords or titles of the works, where it is stated that many of them were printed “through the will”, “through the decision” or “at the expense” of the voivode.

During his reign, five printing presses operated in Wallachia: Bucharest, Snagov, Buzău, Râmnic, Târgoviște. 57 years after the publication of the last works printed by its first printing press², a new printing shop was founded in the old Romanian princely town of Târgoviște. That printing shop, founded by Antim Ivireanul, started its activity in 1709, with printing equipment from Râmnic.

During the reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu, **14 works** were printed in Târgoviște, namely: **9 books in Romanian**: *Învățătura bisericescă* (Catechism) - in 1710; *Psaltire* (Psalm Book) - in 1710; *Octoih* (Canticles Book) - in 1712; *Liturghie* (Liturgy Book) - in 1713; *Molitvelnic* (Prayer Book) in 1713; *Pilde Filosofesti* (Philosophic Examples) - in 1713; *Rugăciuni în toate zilele săptămânii* (Prayers for All the Days of the Week) - in 1712; *Alexandria* (The Life of Alexander the Great) - in 1713; **4 books in Greek**: *Serviciul bisericesc* (The Divine Service) - in 1709; *Panoplia Dogmatică* (Dogmatic Guide) – in 1710; *Slujba Sfintei Ecaterina și Proschinitarul Sfântului Munte* (Service of Saint Catherine and The Prayer Book of the Holy Mountain) - in 1710; *Maxime Filosofice* (Philosophical Maxims) - in 1713 and **a trilingual book in Slavonic, Romanian and Greek**, *Catavasier* (Orthodox Rite Book) - in 1713.

The first book printed in Târgoviște by the Metropolitan Antim at Târgoviște was issued in August 1709, in Greek; its name was *Serviciul Bisericesc*³, and it contained different liturgies, printed “during the most pious, bright and intelligent ruler, graceful Lord Constantin Basarab Voevod Brâncoveanu, ...”. In its foreword, it is mentioned that the printing work was carried out on the expense of the Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, and the correction was done by the churchman Mitrofan Gregoras. The work was issued in folio, had 973 pages in red and black printing arranged in two columns. Its title was surrounded by a flowered frame, with Jesus Christ (up) and Virgin Mary (down) were represented in an inset. On the

¹ Ioan Bianu; Nerva Hodoș. *Bibliografia românească veche*. Tom I. București: Stabilimentul Grafic I.V. Socec, 1903, p. 326.

² 1652 - *Îndreptarea legii; Târnosanie*.

³ Ioan Bianu; Nerva Hodoș. *op. cit.*, I, pp. 480-481.

back of the title page one can find the coat of arms of Wallachia, along with 10 poem lines addressed to the ruler.

The next book in Romanian printed in the printing shop of Târgoviște was an *Evhologhion/Molitvelnic* (Book of Prayers), realized between 1708 and 1712, in Cyrillic letters and containing 569 pages in quarto. The printing is black and red, with numerous xylographs representing frontispieces, florets and initial letters and printing composition ornaments.¹ This issue was different from the other popular Books of Payers printed up to that time.

In May 1710, the well-known *Panoplia dogmatică* (Dogmatic Means)², written by Alexie Comnen, is printed, in Greek, containing the writings of the Holy Fathers, “arranged in complete order and harmony, by Eftimie Zigaden”, providing explanations on the Bogomil Doctrine. It was issued with the blessing of the “holy and learned Metropolitan of Dristra, His Holiness Atanasie”, and was printed in folio, counting 188 numbered pages. The title is surrounded by a flowered frame, and on the back page there is the coat of arms of Wallachia, and the initials of Constantin Brâncoveanu. Among the marginal pages, one can also find a letter from Atanasie to Ștefan Brâncoveanu, some laudation lines, signed by the name of Antonie, epigrams and a prologue written by Alexe Comnen.

In September 1710, the book *Slujba Sfintei Ecaterina și Proschinitarul Sfântului Munte* is printed, in Greek, containing the divine service of Saint Catherine and the Book of Prayers of the Holy Mountain Sinai.³ The work was carried out by “Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, in the Metropolitan Church of Târgoviște”, under the guidance of the priestmonk Mitrofan Gregoraș of Dodona, printed in quarto, in red and black. The title page is bordered by an architectural outline, and on the back page there is the coat of arms of Wallachia, the heraldic bird – namely a raven carrying a cross in its bill – with open wings, and the sun and the moon, on its left and right, respectively, in xylograph. All of them are placed under the royal crown.

In November 1710, a book in Romanian by Metropolitan Antim was printed in the printing shop of Târgoviște and edited by Gheorghe Radovici, namely *Învățătura bisericească* (Catechism), containing 45 sheets in 8° format, printed in black and red. On the back of the title page there is an engraving – Deisis – an icon representing Jesus Christ sitting on His judgement throne, with Virgin Mary and Saint John the Baptist standing in the background, the former on His right and the latter on His left.

Also in 1710, a *Psaltire*⁴ is printed (no original copies of it can be found in Romania anymore; the only Book of Psalms available of this edition is a photocopy of the one owned by The National Russian Library). The printing is in a 4^o format, and on the back of the title page, King David is represented sitting on his throne,

¹ Emil Vârtosu; Ion Vârtosu. *Așezămintele brâncovenești. O sută de ani de la înființare*, București, 1938, p. 258.

² Ioan Bianu; Nerva Hodoș. *op. cit.*, I, pp. 482-483; IV, 160, p. 223.

³ Ibidem, I, pp. 481-482; IV, pp. 222-223.

⁴ Ibidem, IV, p. 37.

holding his lyre in his hand. The printer who made great efforts to accomplish this work was Gheorghe Radovici.

In 1712, the same Radovici issues an *Octoih* (Book of Religious Hymns)¹ of 464 pages, in Romanian, in a 4^o format, printed in black and red. In the foreword, it is mentioned that the work has been “translated from Greek and Slavonic into our Romanian language.” The title is framed by a printing composition with flowers, and on the back of the title page the lines dedicated to the coat of arms of Wallachia can be read.

In 1712, a book named *Rugăciuni în toate zilele săptămânii* (Prayers for All the Days of the Week) is printed. It was “Translated from Greek, and now printed in this way [in Romanian] for the first time, for the spiritual benefit of the Christians”², containing 26 sheets, in an 8^o format, being realized by Gheorghe Radovici. As for the ornaments, the work contained a Deisis (icon of Jesus Christ as emperor on His throne, with the Evangel closed and blessing) and a xylograph representing Virgin Mary sitting on a throne, as well as ornaments and frontispieces.

As we already know, Macarie printed a first *Liturghier* in Târgoviște in 1508. This book has a double significance: it is the first book printed in Romanian, and it is also the first issue of this religious book in Slavonic. In 1570, Deacon Coresi printed the first *Liturghier* in Romanian, an incomplete version. It is Metropolitan Dosoftei who translated and then had the first complete version of the Liturgy Book printed in Romanian (Iași, 1679). In his turn, in order to meet the growing desire of the Romanian Christian servants and believers to hear the religious service in Romanian and to understand it, Metropolitan Antim translated and had a *Liturghie* (Liturgy Book) printed in 1713.³ It is in a 4^o format, containing 210 numbered pages, printed in black and red, with 26 lines per page. On the back of the title page there is the coat of arms of Wallachia and a poem dedicated to its ruler. The printer was Gheorghe Radovici and the illustrators were Ursul Zugravul (who painted the Deisis icon), Dimitrios (St. Basil) and Ioanichie (St. Gregory).

A trilingual work (Slavonic, Romanian, and Greek) is issued in March 1713, namely a *Catavasier* (Book of Hymns). In its foreword, Gheorghe Radovici, the printer, says: “I dedicate this book to the most holy and wise Metropolitan of the whole Hungary-Wallachia, His Holiness Antim, my master and benefactor, whom I entreat to accept this book with a kind heart and a gentle face.”

In the same year, a *Molitvenic* (Prayer Book) is issued⁴ (*Evhologhion*, namely M[o]l[i]tv[e]nic – printed for the second time, according to the Greek pattern), of 496 pages, a 4^o format, printed in black and red by the same Gheorghe Radovici mentioned above. On the back of the title page there is the coat of arms of Wallachia, as well as a lot of frontispieces, adorned florets and initial letters. In the

¹ Ibidem, I, pp. 485-486.

² Daniela Poenaru. *Contribuții la bibliografia românească veche*. Târgoviște: Muzeul Județean Dâmbovița, 1973, p. 14.

³ Ioan Bianu; Nerva Hodoș. *op. cit.*, I, p. 487.

⁴ Ibidem, I, p.551.

preface, there is a word for those who will read it, asking them to forgive the mistakes encountered: “and you, who will read it, rejoice in the Lord and pray for us, and in case you find a mistake, either in meaning or in spelling, gently correct them, and do not blame us, because it is impossible to print a book without mistakes - as it is impossible to see a cloudless sky.”¹

The work *Pilde filosofești*² is translated by Antim for the needs of the schools in Bucharest, and printed under the name of: “Philosophic examples translated from Greek into Romanian, piously dedicated to the most illuminated Ruler of Wallachia, Ioan Constandin Basarab Voevod..., in 1713. The same Gheorghe Radovici is the printer, and the book is a small 8° format with 17 lines per page. The foreword dedicated to the ruler reads: “we have endeavoured and translated this book from Greek into Romanian, at my expense, and we have printed it to the benefit of our motherland.”³

Maxime Filosofice (1713)⁴ is a collection of philosophic adages, translated from Italian into Greek by priest Ioan Avramiu; it contains 59 sheets, in a small 8° format. In addition, there are two forewords, signed by Manu Apostol, of which one is dedicated to the graceful ruler Constantin Basarab Voevod and one to the readers. The purpose of the printing of this work is highlighted as follows: “Since many people considered these philosophic dictums worth printing and useful for everybody, for the very many special pieces of advice they contain, I have also been among those who collaborated – out of love for my people – to the printing and editing of this book, at my expense, for the benefit of our beloved motherland, Greece, so that her education-loving descendants and those who are fond of science and philosophy may benefit from it.”

Alexandria (1713) – the popular novel containing the fantastic adventures of Alexander the Great – seems to have been printed in Târgoviște, as well, as Del Chiaro notes in *Istoria delle moderne rivoluzioni della Valachia* (1718).

Conclusions

As we can see, Constantin Brâncoveanu was not only a great monastery and church founder, but also a supporter of “Romanian culture through writing and printing”⁵, consequently contributing especially to the development of the printing art, to the printing of books for his own motherland or for other places inhabited by Romanians, as he was – according to his words and deeds – a supporter of Orthodoxy all over the world and an outstanding figure in the history of the Romanian people.

¹ Ibidem.

² Ibidem, p. 487.

³ Ibidem, p. 488.

⁴ Ibidem, p.489-491.

⁵ N. Iorga, *Activitatea culturală a lui Constantin Vodă Brâncoveanu și scopurile Academiei Române*, in: ”Analele Academiei Române”, seria II, 1914-1915, p. 161.

GOG DI PAPINI IN CERCA DEL SENSO NEL MONDO

Sînziana Elena STERGHIU¹

Abstract: *In post-war Italian prose (World War I), Papini is perceived as a contradictory and polemic writer. Gog, a volume of short stories that display the adventures of a man in search of the meaning of things, brings back and consolidates the Papinian style and the writer's specific view of the world, Papini taking upon himself the role of a witness narrator or that of a character narrator. Intuition, observation and a profound sense of rendering the human condition explicit to the reader are the exact tools that Papini uses in order to discover and to experiment with man's vulnerable and fragile disposition.*

Key words: *Gog and/of Magog, witness narrator, character narrato.*

Papini è uno scrittore che pur appartenendo da tempo alla storia della letteratura italiana e universale (della prima metà del Novecento), continua a suscitare l'interesse da parte della critica e dei lettori. Dopo *L'uomo finito* (1912), *Stroncature* (1916), *Storia di Cristo* (1921), nel 1931 apparve *Gog*² che alcuni hanno considerato romanzo ed altri, raccolta di saggi. Secondo me il volume non appartiene a nessuna di queste due categorie. Romanzo non lo è in quanto l'aneddotico viene interrotto per ciascuna narrazione, non c'è coerenza nei fatti e nei percorsi epici e neanche tenta di averla. Sono messe una dopo l'altra le pagine di un diario (possiamo chiamarlo anche memoriale di viaggio) che il personaggio eponimo scrive e poi le consegna all'autore. In tutto, 70 piccole storie, autonome in contenuto e personaggi. Papini immagina di aver conosciuto Gog in un manicomio privato. La decisione di pubblicare le pagine se la prende da solo, dato che Gog, il „finto” autore è scomparso e se ne crede che anche egli avrebbe desiderato di darle alla stampa, ma sotto il nome di un autore/lettore. Infatti e in modo evidente, qui c'è uno stratagemma dello scrittore stesso: il testo dev'esser prima letto e valutato da un conoscitore, poi potrà esser pubblicato. Lo stratagemma funziona e rende al testo l'obiettività tipica e necessaria del realismo.

D'altronde, la *Conoscenza con Gog* è una raccolta di date sopra il personaggio: „un mostro su cinquant'anni, tutto vestito di verde chiaro”, alto, calvo, in tutto una figura mostruosa, diavolesca alla quale corrisponde „l'aureola

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² Gog e/di Magog sono presenti in *Genesi, Ezechiele* nominando esseri sovrumani, giganti o demoni che mettono ostacoli agli uomini.

biblica e favolosa di Gog, re di Magog”.¹ Questa discendenza biblica rimane un punto di riferimento per Gog lungo i testi, dal quale ricaverà moltissimi tratti di somiglianza.

Gog, diventato uno degli uomini più ricchi degli Stati Uniti, cioè del pianeta si ritira dagli affari e decide di sfruttare i suoi soldi vagando per il mondo, in un'avventura squisitamente conoscitiva. Al modo suo riconosce che si può permettere di conoscere il mondo e fare dei soldi un devoto ed umile servitore.

[...] sono stato il galeotto del denaro; da qui avanti deve essere il mio servitore. Non voglio aspettare, come i miei simili, d'esser rimbambito per scoprire e godere. Cominciò da quel tempo, per Gog, una vita nuova: di ricerche febbrili, di corse attraverso i continenti, di sorprese, di demenze, di fughe. (*Conoscenza con Gog*, p. 298)

Ne conseguono incontri con personaggi e fatti del tutto imprevedibili, messi in movimento dall'attrazione che ognuno sente per i soldi del magnate americano. Si direbbe proprio che, dinanzi a questa prospettiva, campioni della modernità come Freud, Lenin, G. B. Shaw, Einstein accanto a persone anonime, ma spinte da un sogno irreprensibile, abbiano lo stesso atteggiamento: guadagnare, dar vita a idee fantastiche e nondimeno, pazzesche, che richiedono moltissimi soldi per esser tradotte in pratica e che finalmente possano offrire all'umanità un modello esistenziale diverso, nuovo e sorprendente, coraggioso e innovatorio.

La forza convergente del denaro, per Gog, rappresenta un modo divertente, satirico, cinico anche di svelare nell'uomo la fragilità, la mancanza di un senso serio e profondo del vivere, la parte più mostruosa e malefica, che lo rende sempre più vulnerabile e manipolabile. Visto nella sua integralità, il volume propone un confronto con i miti della modernità, con tutto quello che sul campo dell'arte, della morale, della religione, della scienza e della filosofia, il Novecento andava producendo nell'umanità.

Gog assume un doppio ruolo: sia quello del narratore-testimone nell'ambito di storie altrui, alle quali assiste per poter raccontarle (in *Egolatria*, *Le più nuove città*, *La cattedra di ftiriologia*, *La nostalgia del boia*), sia la parte di una persona che ragiona su se stessa oppure fa un'analisi su un certo argomento importante della sua vita (come per esempio, in *Niente è mio*, *Contro il cielo*). In quest'ultimo, cioè nel ruolo di un narratore-personaggio, l'aneddotico diminuisce e quasi sparisce; al suo posto si collocano osservazioni, opinioni e conclusioni post-agire che mostrano profondità, obiettività e una buona pratica nel trasporre in parole abitudini generali, atteggiamenti umani essenziali, inutilità. Gog diventa così analitico, filosofo, alla limite, paradossale, perdendo il tono satirico e diventando autoironico.

Nel suo primo ruolo di narratore-testimone, Gog esplora la gente, curioso ed inquieto, stravagante fino alla crudeltà e al cinismo, provando ad acquisire una risposta che non arriva. „Cerco segretario poliglotta, filosofo, celibe, paziente, nomade” (*Le idee di Benrubi*, p. 360) per poter sopravvivere all'insonnia, Gog

¹ Giovanni Papini, *Prose morali*, Milano, A. Mondadori, 1959, p. 297. Tutte le citazioni corrispondono a questa edizione.

scopre fra i candidati un numero assai grande di ebrei e decide di prendere a suo servizio il più intelligente di tutti, un certo dottor Benrubi. Ha così la possibilità di conoscere meglio il popolo al quale appartiene il dottore e di fare un ritratto generale e sintetico del popolo al quale appartiene. Il denaro e l'intelligenza sono stati i mezzi di difesa per gli ebrei, anche se „gli ebrei non amano il denaro [...] ci piace troppo parlare” (*Le idee di Benrubi*, p. 361-365). Tutta la storia, europea e non solo, giustifica questa legittima difesa. E ne testimonia con le personalità che hanno vendicato il popolo contro la gente che lo odiava: Heine, Marx, Sigmund Freud, Henri Bergson, Einstein e tanti altri. Le linee di forza di questo ritratto si riuniscono in un'apologia alla quale non si possono rifiutare i tratti della realtà.

Come capitalisti dominiamo i mercati finanziari in un tempo in cui l'economia è tutto o quasi tutto; come pensatori dominiamo i mercati intellettuali [...] despota nel regno della materia, anarchico nel regno dello spirito. [...] Il popolo accusato di aver ucciso un Dio ha voluto uccidere anche gl'idoli dell'intelletto e del sentimento e vi costringe a inginocchiarvi dinanzi all'idolo massimo, l'unico rimasto : il Denaro. (*Le idee di Benrubi*, p. 364)

E una visione decisamente riduttiva e scettica che si affianca ad un gusto del particolare e del paradosso che anima molte pagine. Davanti a Gog, il narratore-testimone, sfilano i tipi più strani, dal professore che vuole insegnare all'università *firiologia*, cioè una disciplina che si occupa a tutto campo dei pidocchi, al cannibale pentito che diventando vecchio, si accontenta solo di legumi e frutta. Un altro personaggio, il dottore Anosh-Uthra (in *Chirurgia morale*) propone a Gog una nuova terapia per le malattie dello spirito, come la pigrizia, la sensualità, l'avarizia o la sfiducia.

Se il terrore della morte vi disturba, se vi opprime l'indigestione della eccessiva cultura ingerita, se l'ambizione politica o sportiva non vi dà pace, rivolgetevi a me. [...] E badate ch'io non opero soltanto le qualità cattive, ciò che i moralisti chiamano „colpa” o gli alienisti „pazzia”. (*Chirurgia morale*, p. 493)

La malattia ha in tutti i casi una causa nell'anima e allora Gog vuole che gli si esterpi l'intera anima considerata infettata. Il chirurgo crede che anche quest'operazione, mai fatta, fosse possibile. Rinunciare all'anima e vivere insensibilmente fa parte della biografia di Gog biblico. E una prolungazione dei dati iniziali che emerge in certe pagine e nasce l'opportunità di incontrare ed interrogare personaggi molto cari a Gog papiniano. Nel voler vivere lontano dalla gente, dal rumore della città, eppure nel mezzo della città dove ha fatto costruire la propria residenza naturale e selvatica, Gog esprime un forte desiderio di sperimentare altri e diversi modi di vivere e pare che abbia bisogno di alcune certezze, di risultati ottenuti da altre persone. Infatti, funziona qui un altro pretesto epico per poter allargare il campo delle sperimentazioni affinché il testo diventasse „un documento singolare e sintomatico: spaventoso, forse, ma di un certo valore per lo studio dell'uomo e del nostro secolo”, come avvertiva in *Conoscenza con Gog (Prose morali*, p. 300).

Quello che avvicina Gog allo scrittore (e non sono poche le pagine ispirate o dedicate a questo „mestiere”) norvegese Knut Hamsun che ha vinto il Nobel per

letteratura, sono la celebrità, il successo, la gloria; di più, „ha sofferto la fame (come me), ha fatto il *tramp* negli Stati Uniti (come me) e sfugge quanto può la compagnia degli uomini (come me).” (*Una visita a Knut Hamsun*, p. 501) Il perché lo spiega lo scrittore stesso:

Esser famosi significa diventare, insieme, vecchi e perseguitati. [...] trasformarsi in un cadavere vivente [...] La gloria è un certificato d'impotenza. E di più una prigione. Siete sottoposto, volete o no, alla sorveglianza speciale. [...] Rifugiarsi nella solitudine non giova. Anche li vi stanano e, se non riescono a saper nulla, inventano. (*Una visita a Knut Hamsun*, p. 502)

In un'altra storia (*La gloria*), Gog che ha incontrato tante personalità scontente per la loro fama, ammette:

Mi piacerebbe diventiar famoso ad un tratto [...] far qualcosa d'enorme e di singolare, che non possa esser dimenticato. [...] Ci vorrebbe un delitto mostruoso e originale, che rimanesse nel ricordo dell'umanità come qualcosa di unico. Non ho scrupoli ma neppur fantasia. Inventare un delitto assolutamente nuovo, dopo tanti secoli che gli uomini si torturano e si massacrano, non è da tutti. Non basta un'intelligenza superiore, l'abbondanza dei denari e una totale spregiudicatezza [...] (*La gloria*, p. 428)

Tutto questo discorso viene fatto per riflettere sopra la storia della civiltà umana che ha conosciuto orrende atrocità. Per Gog tutto questo prende il nome di gloria, dato che la sua prospettiva e quella di un diavolo, spirito rappresentativo del secolo, secondo Papini.

Dall'altro canto, ci sono le pagini in cui incontriamo Gog come narratore-personaggio e le sue riflessioni sopra l'esistenza, il senso della vita, la corrispondenza dell'uomo con la divinità e con i simili, la solitudine, l'alienazione che si produce tra l'uomo e la società. Sono pagini che ricordano *L'uomo finito* per la loro intensa e profonda riflessione ed anche per la loro tristezza indicibile che accompagna la condizione dell'uomo, povero o straricco che sia.

Niente è mio e forse il testo di carattere analitico in cui il malefico Gog perde la voce e si lascia sostituito da Papini, analista e filosofo. Dall'inizio ammette che il giudizio coinvolge e interessa noi tutti: „Il maggior problema dell'uomo, come delle nazioni, è l'indipendenza.” (*Niente è mio*, p. 399) L'esercizio analitico comincia da quest'affermazione e si svolge sulle principali direzioni dell'esistenza umana. La sola proprietà inviolabile dovrebbe essere l'io, ma procedendo ad un'indagine si deve concedere ultimamente che „l'io - è, forse, come tutto il resto, un semplice riflesso, un'allucinazione dell'orgoglio?” (*Niente è mio*, p. 400) L'interrogazione finale viene sostenuta tramite la risposta diretta e concreta di ciascuno di noi. Quanto a Papini, in questo caso un vero saggista, dobbiamo riconoscere il suo ingegno nel condurre e controllare, a passi chiari, l'indagine. Primo passo: „Gli altri partecipano, assenti o presenti, alla nostra vita interiore ed esterna.” (*Niente è mio*, p. 399) Quest'osservazione ci presenta come dipendenti di tutte le persone, conosciute e sconosciute. È un'intera eredità che dobbiamo riconoscere in noi quale esseri ragionevoli. Secondo passo: „Tutto quello che so l'ho imparato dagli altri. E Tutte le cose che mi servono sono opera altrui. Qualunque cosa adopri è opera altrui [...]” (*Niente è mio*, p. 399) La considerazione

richiama un'altra: „Appartengo a una classe, a un popolo, a una razza - non riesco mai ad evadere, per quanto faccia [...]” (*Niente è mio*, p. 400) Alla fine di questo percorso, l'interrogazione di Papini si dissolve nel riconoscere – come il titolo anticipava – *niente è mio*, dimensione essenziale della condizione umana che non dovrebbe generare sofferenza e che, per concludere, conosce una lunghissima estensione nelle pagini della Bibbia dalle quali scende Gog stesso.

In nessuno dei suoi ruoli, Gog non è un personaggio positivo. Anzi, Papini lo condanna ad essere „simbolo della falsa e bestiale [...] civiltà cosmopolita” (*Conoscenza con Gog*, p. 300), senz'anima e senza ancoraggi morali. Non a caso l'ultima storia del volume, *Il pane della bambina*, descrive l'incontro di Gog, che si finge povero, con una bimba che vive veramente in miseria, ma che non esita a porgergli un pezzo del suo pane nero, con una „istintiva generosità”. Gog viene sfiorato da un dubbio: „Che sia questo il vero cibo dell'uomo? e questa la vera vita?” (*Il pane della bambina*, p. 560) Un finale pieno di significato che condanna la civiltà contemporanea a Papini, ma anche questa dei nostri giorni. Le pagini del miliardario Gog con i loro artefici di fantasia riescono ad evocare in noi un'attualità critica, ma anche l'opzione per un modo migliore che anche Gog sperava. (In quel singolo dialogo del falso autore con l'autore Papini, momento in cui gli ha affidato le pagini per leggerle, Gog dichiarava: „Qui dentro c'è qualche pezzo del vecchio Gog. Ormai è arrivato per me il giorno che spunta più d'un sole e cedo col massimo sconto i cenci della notte.” (*Conoscenza con Gog*, p. 299). In caso contrario, la pazzia di Gog ce la meritiamo tutti.

Nella narrativa del Primo Dopoguerra, Papini è stato considerato a volte come uno scrittore paradossale e polemico, conseguenza anche delle sue conversioni politiche e religiose.¹ *Gog* è forse un'immagine più che rappresentativa di questo continuo cercare sè stesso nel mondo attorno a lui, mondo che, allo stesso tempo, stava segnando un suo percorso nella storia.

¹ Mircea Eliade confessa di aver ben conosciuto Papini, di aver letto tutti i suoi libri e ci offre una spiegazione: „Papini si immedesima tutto in quello che faceva al momento. [...] ha sbagliato, si è furiosamente contraddetto e compromesso. Eppure della sua opera è rimasto più di ogni 'opera' perfettamente delineata, messa a punto e corretta dalla prima all'ultima pagina.” - M. Eliade, *L'isola di Euthanasius. Scritti letterari*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2000, p. 301.

MEANINGS OF THE “TOWER” AND OF THE JOURNEY TOWARDS THE TOWER IN JOHN FOWLES’S *THE EBONY TOWER*

Ioana RAICU¹

Abstract: *A journey is in itself a discovery. Whether it is a discovery of a new place, of a new culture or civilization, of a lost thing or of oneself, this is a matter of who takes the journey, for what purpose, whereto, etc. In novels, journeys are almost always a type of self-discovery. But when it comes to short-stories, journeys always symbolize so much more. In Fowles’s *The Ebony Tower*, a volume of short-stories less known to the reader familiar with Fowles’s writings, one will find it interesting to discover so many new, postmodern perspectives of most of his previous writings. The journey is multi-faceted, the ‘tower’ is multi-faceted, and the discovery is multi-faceted. The present study tries to go through and explain as many real and illusory facets as possible, in an attempt to get to the deepest meanings of the stories and the deepest thoughts and the essence of the ever surprising and distinct Fowlesian characters.*

Key words: *journey, tower, (self)-discovery, reality, illusion.*

“Et par forez longues et lees/Par leus estranges et sauvages/Et passa mainz felons passages/Et maint peril et maint destroit/Tant qu’il vint au santier tot droit” - Chrétien de Troyes, *Yvain*

John Fowles’s *The Ebony Tower* is not just a postmodern short story about the perception of modern art and about the artist’s struggle and nuisances in making himself understood. It is also a story about initiation, and not only the motto of the story (chosen as the motto of this paper, as well) but also a lot of the atmosphere throughout it takes us back to a medieval kind of perception of the mysteries of life. David Williams undertakes a journey to Coëtminais that resembles the old medieval knights’ journeys of initiation into life, journeys that usually led towards a ‘tower’, towards a mystery place, they sometimes never knew where they were heading until they actually got there. We can probably say the same thing about

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David who not only did he know very well the purpose and the destination of his journey, but he was also expected there; however, he himself does not really know what to expect. We get this sense of uncertainty right from the beginning of the story, from David's walk through the forest as a travel through the unknown.

The writer speaks about "a sense of discovery" as if his life had just begun, as if he is just now discovering the meaning of things. We are even offered a sort of anticipation of the events that will follow with the remark "everything conspired to give a pleasant illusion of bachelor freedom" (Fowles 1986: 9), if we think of his relationship with Diana, the Mouse. However, it can be seen not only as an anticipation of the events but also of the denouement of the whole story, as the bachelor freedom is only "a pleasant illusion" (in the end he will choose to go back to his wife and children). Another statement that catches our attention is a postmodernist remark made by the author when referring to this experience in the middle of nature: "No amount of reading and intelligent deduction could supplant the direct experience." (ibidem: 10) So nature, as described in books, as seen in paintings, can never induce the same state of mind and heart as when experienced in person. Fowles's opinions about nature as he described it in *The Tree*, specifically in relation to art, are to be mentioned at this point: "Achieving a relationship with nature is both a science and an art, beyond mere knowledge or mere feeling alone"¹. Fowles is himself a great admirer of nature, in fact he admits that nature is what inspires him in his writing, the key to his fiction: "I have told visiting literary academics that the key to my fiction, for what it is worth, lies in my relationship with nature." (Fowles 1992: 53)

David Williams, a young painter himself, but whose main preoccupation now is being an art critic, undertakes a journey to France, to pay a visit to England's last romantic painter, Henry Breasley, as he is supposed to produce the introductory critical notes on a book about his works. He needs some insight information, so he goes directly to the source. The famous painter is known to hate his country, to have been living in France for the past years and to have quite a temper when it comes to English people and modern art. His publisher had told him that Breasley can be as naïve as a child in many ways and had warned him about not arguing with him on this concern: "Don't argue with him about England and the English, just accept he's a lifelong exile and can't bare to be reminded of what he might have missed." (Fowles 1986: 16) If we were to make an analogy here, we could say that England and the English stand for Breasley's 'ebony tower', the one he tried so hard to escape, "the place you dump everything", while his "lifelong exile", that is France, is his 'ivory tower', the one in which he has locked himself away from the world and from where he passes all his judgments.

At this point we are reminded of the many journeys in the history of literature, journeys towards a tower, or from a tower, journeys made into the unknown, pilgrimages to hidden places, initiation rituals, all having to do with strange places, with the 'great unknown'. One of the first works of the kind that comes to mind is Lord Alfred Tennyson's poem, *The Lady of Shalott*, where a fair

¹ John Fowles, *The Tree*, p. 43

lady is cursed to live between the “four grey walls” of a tower, not ever looking down on the world outside, or else she should die. The beginning of this poem resembles a lot the motto of our story and the beginning of the story, with its walk through nature, through the unknown; nature as the big mystery:

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the world and meet the sky;
And through the field the road run by
To many-tower'd Camelot; (Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*)¹

The journey towards a tower is usually a long journey, full of unpredictable and strange happenings, the road there is in fact the road of a lifetime, an exercise of initiation that leads to the final stage. The tower is the final stage in the pilgrim's life. In Robert Browning's *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*, we come across the same importance of the tower and of the journey towards it, as we generally find this sort of pilgrimage in all medieval stories or in stories and poems about the medieval period:

While to the left, a tall scalped mountain... Duncce,
Dotard, a-dozing at the very nonce,
After a life spent training for the sight!
What in the midst lay but the Tower itself?
The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart
Built of brown stone, without a counterpart
In the whole world. ...

(Robert Browning, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came*)²

The medieval atmosphere is definitely something that can be sensed throughout Fowles's collection of short stories. It is already common for Fowles to overlap periods of time in his works, he seems to be taken by this interpenetration of worlds and this could probably be because he cannot conceive of events in the present happening without an anteriority, without a past that actually leads to those events in the present, or is even responsible for them. None of the present phenomena could have existed without a past one to lead to them. He actually mentions in his *Personal Note on Eliduc* that contemporary writers should not regard medieval stories condescendingly or think of the style in which they were written as naïve or simple, because the fact is that those are the writings that stand at the foundations of all current literature: “One may smile condescendingly at the naiveties and primitive technique of stories such as *Eliduc*; but I do not think any writer of fiction can do so with decency – and for a very simple reason. He is watching his own birth.” (Fowles 1986: 120) And to give just a few examples of Fowles' interpenetration of periods of time in his works, we think mainly to his quasi-Victorian novel, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, where we are presented with a

¹ Lord Alfred Tennyson, *The Lady of Shalott*,
<http://charon.sfsu.edu/TENNYSON/TENNLADY.HTML>

² R. Browning, *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came*,
<http://www.bluejo.demon.co.uk./poetry/poems/rol.htm>

nice and fair representation of that age, the information is accurate and the style very clean, which is probably why this novel situates itself among the most appreciated by critics. *The Maggot* is also an example of bringing to the present the year of 1736, not only by means of atmosphere, documents (*The Gentleman's Magazine*), but also by means of language and style, which is quite an accomplishment. And why not think in these terms of *Mantissa* as well, if we think that Green Miles actually carries conversations with the muses and that myths are cited and the legendary gods of mythology are brought into discussion. If we think he goes way back to mythological times in his overlapping of periods, then we must give him all credit for this courageous initiative.

As for *The Ebony Tower*, the medieval atmosphere is only detectable at the beginning of the story and in Breasley's paintings, not only his own but also the collected ones as well. It is interesting to discover that the painting he was working on at the time Williams arrived at the manoir is also a forest setting (just like the much appreciated *Moon-hunt*), as if he does not yet want to get out of that period, he is not ready yet to give up his tower:

It was a forest setting again, but with a central clearing, much more peopled than usual, less of the sub-aqueous feeling, under a first-class blue, almost a black, that managed to suggest both night and day, both heat and storm,, a looming threat over the human component. (Fowles 1986: 29)

Again, the human component seen as a threat in the middle of pure nature that Breasley wouldn't dream of giving up in favour of 'abstractions'. For him, modern art comes down to abstractions, to lack of emotions, to no personal, human involvement whatsoever. In describing modern art, Breasley uses words like "footsteps of Pythagoras", "abstracts", "obstructs", "that synthetic cubist nonsense", "slide-rule stuff", and finally "betrayal. Greatest betrayal in the history of art." (Fowles 1986: 45) The climax is when he calls it "the ebony tower". He sees nothing good in a type of art that has given up any kind of emotions: "full abstraction represents a flight from human and social responsibility"; "Don't hate, can't love. Can't love, can't paint." When Breasley first mentions the "ebony tower", David does not really understand what he had meant, and asking Diana for an explanation, the answer he gets is "Abstraction. [...] Anything he doesn't like about modern art. That he thinks is obscure because the artist is scared to be clear... you know. Somewhere you dump everything you're too old to dig?" (Fowles 1986: 54) So clarity is again something that modern artists lack, and Breasley puts that on account of their fears. And let us here make another reference to *The Tree*, where Fowles says:

No art is truly teachable in its essence. All the knowledge in the world of its techniques can provide in itself no more than imitations or replicas of previous art. What is irreplaceable in any object of art is never, in the final analysis, its technique or craft, but the personality of the artist, the expression of his or her unique and individual feeling." (Fowles 1992: 46)

Apart from the meaning of the word "tower" and the meaning of the expression "ebony tower", when referring to the journey towards the tower, we should probably mention the fact that the place's name, Coëtminais, was not randomly

chosen either. At some point, through David's voice, the author explains that "Coët- meant wood or forest: -*minais*, of the monks. The surrounding forest had once been abbatial land." (Fowles 1986: 43) So, young David Williams' travel is in fact a journey of initiation to a place of retreat, of isolation, of meditation and of spirituality. Further on, when having the "little *déjeuner sur l'herbe*", the feeling is that initiation continues, and that it again takes place in the middle of nature, which could be seen as an attempt from Breasley's part to show David how much he is missing by ignoring nature in his art. The old man explains and appreciates the medieval "sudden preoccupation with love and adventure and the magical, the importance of the once endless forest – of which the actual one they were walking in, Paimpont now, but the Brocéliande of the *lais* of Chrétien de Troyes, was an example..." It is interesting to discover how Fowles actually mentions Chrétien de Troyes's *lais* in his story, as if to somehow explain the motto. The forest and its mysteries fascinates Breasley in such away that he identifies himself with it in David's perception: "Like the forest itself, the old man had its antique mysteries." (Fowles 1986: 59)

If we think of Williams' travel to Coëtminais in terms of existentialism, we can accept the existential character of the story if we relate it to the "general mystery" that is insinuated not only in this story, but in the entire collection. James Acheson, for instance, thinks that "*The Ebony Tower* contains the first signs of Fowles's waning interest in existentialism, as though in anticipation of some statements he was to make only a few years after the collection was published. 'I now think of existentialism as a kind of literary metaphor, a wish fulfilment', he told Cristopher Bigsby in 1982. 'I long ago began to doubt whether it had any true philosophical value in many of its assertions about freedom.' To Susana Onega, seven years later, he added, 'I ...am [no] longer an existentialist in [either] the social sense, [or] the cultural sense... I am really much more interested, in terms of the modern novel, in what fiction is about.' Yet in 1988 he told Katherine Tarbox that 'Mystery...lies in things and in gaps in the story... I regard all that in books as symbolic of the general mystery in cosmic, existential terms.'¹ So, in the end, he does believe in the general mystery of life, and "nevertheless continued, in the eighties, to accept the existential view that the world is endlessly complex and mysterious." (Acheson 1998: 49) Existentialism in *The Ebony Tower* appears especially in the case of David; he is the one who suddenly finds himself in a situation where he is to choose between becoming more authentic and the responsibility to friends and family. A possible relationship with Diana would turn him into a real artist and a much more authentic person in terms of emotions and doing what one feels like doing. While his sense of responsibility does not allow him to give up his family. Fowles told an interviewer in 1981 that if Williams had chosen Diana, he "might have become a better artist, but he would have betrayed his moral being. I'm pointing out that being an artist is an appallingly selfish business; the story is really about the problems, the agonies of being an artist."² In

¹ James Acheson, *John Fowles*, pp. 48-9

² John Fowles quoted in James Acheson, *John Fowles*, p. 50

the end, the same James Acheson concludes that in *The Ebony Tower*, Fowles “suggests that existentialism fails to deal satisfactorily with the question of how to choose between the individual’s need to become more authentic on the one hand, and his or her responsibility to family and friends on the other.” (Acheson 1998: 51)

The relation between *The Ebony Tower* and *Eliduc* (the following short story in the volume) that critics have tackled stands in the romance story. David’s journey to Coëtminais where he meets Diana and gradually falls in love with her is seen as Eliduc’s journey, this time in the exact opposite direction, from Brittany to England, where he falls in love with a king’s daughter even though, just like Williams, he is married and has a wife waiting for him back home. The resemblance stands in this and, of course, in the setting and the atmosphere given by the forest of Coëtminais. The critic Peter Conradi emphasized this resemblance between the two stories:

The source of mood, theme and setting in *The Ebony Tower* had been that medieval romance of which *Eliduc* is one example, [...] Williams’ predecessor Eliduc is a medieval knight who makes Williams’s journey in reverse, travelling from Brittany to England, after swearing fidelity to the wife he leaves behind. (Conradi 1982: 82)

The exact same thing happens to David Williams the moment he discovers the beautiful forest of Coëtminais and he lets himself fall under the spell of the place: “The speed with which both the estate and Diana have David equally in thrall is masterfully done. The magic of Coëtminais is explicitly connected with Celtic romance [...]” (Conradi 1982: 81)

To conclude, for now, the discussion about the ‘tower’ and the journey towards the tower, we may say that they represent something that each of us comes across at some point in life, but in this particular case, in Fowles’s story, they are paradoxically presented from two different perspectives, a postmodernist and a medieval one, and what is extraordinary about the way in which they are presented is how they intermingle, how the past and the future can not only coexist in perfect harmony, but they interpenetrate (as we are already used to this phenomenon in Fowles’s writings) in a way that makes you wonder whether there really is any difference between the ways in which we look at the past, present and future, and whether there is anyone who can actually delimit between these periods in terms of what they leave behind. There is, most likely, a ‘special understanding’ between periods of time that makes all things and events resemble.

Coëtminais partakes, in the typical discontinuity of romance, of the character of a pre-socialized and a-historical womb, a place from which the past can transmit its special understanding to the future. (Conradi 1982: 80)

And, if nothing else, then the author’s own words at the end of the story, come to suggest how the reflections of periods and worlds into one another are meant to make the character see things differently and rediscover himself:

Coët had been a mirror, and the existence he was returning to sat mercilessly reflected and dissected in its surface... and how shabby it now looked, how insipid and anodyne, how safe.” (Fowles 1986: 109)

Whether the journey is a real or an illusory one, whether the discovery is a final one or it sends to another, whether the 'tower' is an 'ivory' or an 'ebony' one, whether people, places and time are distinct or they intertwine or they even get confounded, all these are aspects that a deeper analysis may attempt to bring to light, but, at the same time, they are all aspects that can, at times, be perceived as relative, to the point that it might render our efforts to understand somehow inextricable and pointless. But they are not. Because every journey is a discovery in itself, it is a mirror, whether accurate or distorting.

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SOME CRITICAL APPROACHES TO LEGENDS

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Abstract: *The study deals with several critical approaches to legend of renowned researchers in the field, starting with the Brothers Grimm, whose judgements were of great value in the world of folklore. The two tried to define the legend in opposition to the fairy-tale (or folktale). The distinction was later taken over by other scholars who emphasised features of the two types of oral narratives, related indeed by common motifs but still opposing each other. Arnold van Gennep takes this distinction further. He analyses folktale, legend and myth and defines them taking into account a few criteria regarding the utility of storytelling (why a narrative is told and if it is an object of faith) and contents (the nature of characters, time and place of action). André Jolles speaks about the legend distinguishing between the sacred legend (Legende) and heroic legend (Sage) as belonging to the category of simple forms. The Swedish Carl von Sydow proposes another distinction: between the memorate and the fabulate, i.e. between the personal experience narrative, told in the first person, and an account of someone else's deeds, told in the third person.*

Key-words: *legend, folktale, myth, memorate vs. fabulate, folk belief.*

The legend is perhaps one of the most interesting genres of folklore research. The stuff that legends are made of, whether supernatural, terrifying, strange or comical, is what makes up our daily life. Moreover, there is a growing interest in all these forms of expression, as proved by the public taste for books, TV shows or legend-inspired movies. On the other hand, however, the drawback of legends, at least from a folkloric point of view, is that no one has yet managed to clearly establish what they *are*. Are they narratives in which false facts claim to be true? Do they contain traditional motifs? Does one have to distinguish them from personal experience stories? Does legend have a form, just like fairy tale? It is told in order to be believed or only to amuse? Although many studies have been written in the last century, one cannot say that a full consensus has been reached. As the Romanian ethnologist Silviu Angelescu states, the legend can be *described* rather than *defined* for “it only allows segmental definitions which correspond to its various subtypes” (Angelescu, 2002: 39). Or, as researcher Gillian Bennet put it: “At best, then, the term ‘legend’ is probably a term of convenience which should not be taken too literally; at worst, it may be a misleading simplification” (Bennet, 1991 *apud* Oring, 2008: 128).

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Approaches to legend
Legend, fairy-tale, myth

German brothers Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm were among the first who attempted to define the legend; in *Deutsche Sagen* (1816), they emphasised its features by contrasting it to the fairy tale: “The Märchen is more poetic [and] the legend is more historical; the former exists securely almost in and of itself in its innate blossoming and consummation. The legend, by contrast, is characterized by a lesser variety of colours, yet it represents something special in that it adheres always to that which we all are conscious of and know well, such as a locale and a name that has been secured through history.” (Dégh, 1997: 487) And, further on, in *Deutsche Mythologie* (1835): “Looser, less fettered than legend, the fairy-tale lacks that local habitation, which hampers the legend, but makes it the more homelike. The fairy-tale flies, the legend walks, knocks at your door; the one can draw freely out of the fullness of poetry, the other has almost the authority of history” (Dégh, 1972: 72).

Or, as Max Lüthi concluded, everything the tale is, the legend is not (Dégh, 1997: 487). The fairy-tale makes use of reality in an ironic manner, the legend tries to reconstruct it in a credible way. While folktale considers man himself, legend considers what happens to man (Lüthi, 1966 *apud* Tangherlini, 1990: 372-373). *Märchen* embodies the world of the self whereas the legend represents the harshness of the social and natural world which is external to the self. A reality full of obstacles, difficulties, tribulations that must be overcome, a world dominated by fears, anxieties and suspicions which can be faced by means of religious belief; hence, the notion of *belief* associated to this genre. The fairy-tale is fiction, a fantastic reflection of reality that the narrator consciously builds, forges, while the legend seeks to render the real events of personal experience. The fairy-tale is pure fantasy, meant to entertain and delight the audience, the legend is information, answering important, existential questions.

It is to Arnold van Gennep that we owe one of the clearest distinctions among fairy-tale, legend and myth. *Myth*, van Gennep states in *La formation des legends*, belongs to an ideological system and is frequently accompanied by rites. It is “the object of faith” (van Gennep, 1997: 42), establishing a view of the universe, of man, of society. Characters (deities), time and place of action keep their distance from the world of man. Mythical time precedes the history of man. Therefore, myth “might be, in fact, a legend localized in regions and times placed outside of the human touch, with divine characters” (van Gennep, 1997: 39). *Fairy-tale*, “the simple tale”, is only meant to entertain and is not an object of faith, as it is perceived as fiction: the tale is that story which contains miracles, whose place of action is not delimited and characters are not individualised, which would answer an *infantile* view of the Universe and would present an absolute *moral indifference* (van Gennep, 1997: 39). *Legend* is an authentic, historical story which narrates exceptional real deeds. Thus, it is an object of faith with individualised characters, localised and dated action: “In the legend, the place is indicated with precision, the characters are determined individuals, their deeds have a basis which seems to be historical and they possess heroic features”. And, further on, “by legend, we shall

understand a localised, individualised story and an object of faith, and by myth, a legend related to the supernatural world which is translated into deeds by rites” (van Gennep, 1997: 43). The French folklorist acknowledged the importance of context in defining the legend: “Nowadays, the question arises: when, where and how is a certain story told?” (van Gennep, 1997: 208), and also examined the social function and the inner psychological elements of narratives as a means to understand the context of legend formation (van Gennep, 1997: 208-209). Van Gennep distinguished three types of legends: about the natural world, about the supernatural world and historical legends.

In 1930, the Dutch researcher André Jolles postulated the existence of the so-called *simple forms*, which originate in language, forming spontaneously in common contexts of communication, without any human influence, corresponding to Jacob Grimm’s concept of *nature poetry*, forms that extract events from life and recreate them as independent entities (Jolles, 2012: 11-35). Jolles imagines language as labour and such “performers” as the peasant, the hand-worker and the priest, that is, *the producer, the maker and the interpreter*: “The entire work which is fulfilled by the peasant, the hand-worker and the priest fulfils itself once more in language. All that peasants, hand-workers, priests have fulfilled so far belongs to life, blends with life, is renewed in life or is long-lasting through life only. But it is only through language’s own labour that all this acquire new durability in the language itself” (Jolles, 2012: 28). In other words, once the product of labourers enters the language, it is recreated by that language (language recreates what life has produced). According to Jolles, simple forms mediate between language and literary art. Of the nine simple forms postulated by Jolles, namely the religious legend (*Legende*), legend (*Sage*), myth (*Mythos*), riddle, saying, case, memorable, fairy-tale and joke, we shall deal with the first three.

Legende is “a well-defined whole in a certain area of western culture: what I have in mind is the Christian sacred legend, as it has developed within the Catholic Church, starting with the first Christian centuries and that has been preserved to this day” (Jolles, 2012: 36). The term appeared in the 13th century in Bishop Jacopo da Varazzone’s *Legenda sactorum* or *Legenda aurea* and referred to saints’ lives. This religious legend is not interested in the historical representation of life, but in its value as a model of Christian life, a value measured by the saint’s power to perform miracles. In our times, Jolles states, only athletes that set records (i.e. perform miracles not in a medieval sense, but performances which seem inaccessible and impossible) become the subject of legends.

By contrast, *Sage* (“the heroic legend”) refers to an oral tradition and approaches topics related to family, tribe or blood ties, important events, people or places. The heroic legend, the saga, acquired the “significance of a tale that is not historically attested, a significance which is also peculiar to the adjective *legendary*; it straightforwardly designates what is not historically true” (Jolles, 2012: 82). In *The German Dictionary of the Brothers Grimm*, *Sage* also means an orally transmitted narrative about something, an item of news about something; it can either refer to an “approximate” (contemporary) fact, therefore related to what is uncertain, incredible, or to something in the past, designating “a piece of news,

an account about something in the past and especially about something that occurred a long time ago and is passed on from generation to generation” (Jolles, 2012: 83). The German word *Sage*, Jolles points out, is equivalent, in part, to one of the meanings of the English term *saga*, wrongly used to designate a narrative which is believed to be true, which has evolved across centuries and has been transmitted by word of mouth, a historical or heroic legend which is halfway between authentic story and intentional fiction (Jolles, 2012: 86).

Jolles establishes an opposition between the world of legends and that of history. Whatever is significant for *Legende* (the miracles and identification with an exemplary character) is, historically speaking, doubtful, suspicious and ultimately untrue. Similarly, *Sage* differs from authentic history, for, in this case, it is elements related to family, ancestry, blood ties that prevail.

Jolles also noted that in *The German Dictionary of the Brothers Grimm*, *mythos* is equivalent to the legend as both are “unattested accounts” (Jolles, 2012: 120). To Jacob Grimm, myth (“the belief in gods, transmitted from people in an infinite process”) is the territory of all legends. Legends cannot be understood in the absence of a mythical basis; and when history gets lost in the mists of time, legend saves it, but “seizes it, [...] modifies it” (Jolles, 2012: 123). The Greeks had already bereft the concept of *mythos* of any metaphysical and religious connotation, contrasting it with the *logos* (the science based on reason) and the *historia*, so as, in the end, it had come to designate what cannot really exist (Eliade, 1978: 1-2). With Jolles, *mythos* is creation. Through *mythos*, man attempts to understand the world as a whole in all its variety, confronting it, questioning it and receiving answers from it. *Mythos* emerges precisely when the world is created as a result of questioning and answering: “Man asks the world and its appearances to reveal themselves. And he receives an *answer*, that is, he receives a word back, the word of the world meets him. The world and its appearances reveal themselves to him. And it is where the world is forged by man in this manner, by questions and answers, that the form we call *mythos* emerges” (Jolles, 2012: 128).

Myth is creation according to Mircea Eliade as well: myth narrates a *sacred*, hence true, *history*, recounts an event that occurred in the primordial time, the fabulous time of the “beginnings”; myth talks about what *really* happened, “it tells us how something was made, how it started *to be*” by the intervention of supernatural beings (Eliade, 1978: 5-6).

Ovidiu Bârlea treats myth as a subspecies of legend. According to the Romanian folklorist, myths are generally perceived as “legends of ancient peoples, which narrate the deeds of gods and demigods regarding the creation of the world”; he also notes that, in more recent studies, myth merely designates “a sacred history about the deeds of supernatural beings, i.e. true accounts”. In folklore, myth refers to “all narratives about the world preceding that of today, showing the deeds of gods and the origin of all beings and things” (***, 2002: 339-340).

Alan Dundes deals with myth and legend which he distinguishes from the folktale in terms of time. In his study “On the Psychology of Legend” (Dundes, 1971: 23-24), Dundes imagines the axis of real, *true* time, as he calls it, as an hourglass *open at both ends*. He does not include folktale, which is placed

somewhere above or outside true time, as suggested by the opening formula “Once upon a time”. Myth is at the bottom of this hourglass; there is no time before myth. Myth-time is primordial, “the earliest imaginable time”, running upwards as far as the middle of the hourglass, where creation occurs, where man and the world are created in their present form. Legend is set in post-creation time, it is the upper part of the hourglass. “Once Adam and Eve are created (as told in a myth), their historical or pseudo-historical adventures may be in legend form”. And as mythical time has an open-ended *beginning*, legend-time has an open-ended *end*. In other words, the action of myth is completed in the narrative (although its implications persist), while the action of legend may never be completed. We feel closer to legend than to myth that happened a long, long time ago and, similarly, closer to legend than to folktale that never really happened.

Legend, memorate, fabulate

In 1934, the Swedish folklorist Carl W. Von Sydow proposed the *memorate-fabulate* distinction¹. The memorate designates “a narrative of a personal happening, the narrative of a real occurrence, experience, event in which a supernatural element appears” (Eretescu, 2009: 17), therefore, an account from the narrator’s personal experience, intended to validate a belief. In contrast, with the fabulate, the account is not from personal experience; it is a folk narrative which is known within a community and is passed on from one community to another, the *legend* being the most relevant example of it. The fabulate may contain elements that are related to personal experiences, but does not result from them, but from a mental image that originated in such elements (Ellis, 1997: 274). The events narrated by fabulates, von Sydow states, did not happen in the form they are told, but have been refined, shaped by the people’s creative art.

Carl von Sydow admits that, both with memorate and legend, the core may be popular belief, but, traditionally, the two forms are not related. With this taxonomy, the scholar seeks to differentiate memorates, these apparently non-traditional and often spontaneous narratives, from what the folklorists of his time considered to be genuine legends. He insists that the memorate is not a form of legend because it lacks two essential features: it is not traditional (i.e. it is not transmitted by word of mouth because, by definition, it can only be told by the person going through a particular experience) and has no poetic characteristics (i.e. it lacks stylistic qualities or transformations that occur in traditional legends). If a memorate arouses sufficient interest within the community and is retold by other individuals as well, then this non-traditional narrative form may become, in von Sydow’s classification, a memorial legend (*Erinnerungssage*), thus crossing the border towards the fabulate (Sweterlitsch, 1996: 472).

¹ Carl von Sydow introduced the two terms in 1934 in his study *Kategorien der Prosa-Volksdichtung*, re-printed, 14 years later, in *Selected Papers on Folklore*.

The Hungarian-born American researcher Linda Dégh challenged von Sydow's distinction and noted that the "from personal experience" postulate had become in time more flexible, thus memorates had come to refer not only to accounts of first-hand experience, but also of other people's experience if told to the narrator directly (Dégh and Vázsonyi, 1974: 227); hence, *personal experience* is no longer required even if the narrator must personally know the hero of the incident. However, even these permissive definitions proved to be much too narrow. Analysing some studies according to which the chain of memorate transmission should include four members, Dégh wondered what would happen when the legend reached the end of this sequence: "the memorate does not cease to exist but turns into a fabulate" would be the answer. But, at the same time, it is also true that many fabulates become memorates only by a shift of the narrative voice: the narrator who heard the story in the third person turns it into a first person account. A legend preceded by "A friend of a friend told me..." would be less credible, hence the tendency to tell it as a true occurrence. Consequently, during narration, the teller reduces the number of previous transmitters inasmuch as, in the end, what we are left with is an account of a first-hand experience.

The memorate, as an account of a personal experience, a narrative of the teller's deeds, also became an object of study in Romanian folklore, for the mere act of transmitting it by word-of-mouth guaranteed its belonging to the sphere of folklore (Eretescu, 2004: 250). In 1906-1908, Ovid Densușianu, I. Aurel Candrea and Theodor D. Speranția published the first accounts of the peasants' everyday life in *Graiul nostru: texte din toate părțile locuite de români*, thus acknowledging that folklore is not restricted to presenting only imaginary facts or events that had occurred in a distant past. The oral narrative *povestire* "story" (also called *pățanie* "adventure, incident" or *întâmplare* "happening, occurrence") relates a "personal, often unique or remarkable, experience worthy of being memorised and transmitted" (Eretescu, 2004: 250) in which the narrator, "witness and hero of events, gets emotionally involved in the narration, thus giving it a deep subjective aspect" (Angelescu, 2002: 32).

The story is different from the legend, Silviu Angelescu asserts. First of all, because, in terms of the truth, in legends events are felt and presented as uncertain, while stories relate true facts or are told as if they were true. Secondly, because the narrator of the legend is not its hero, therefore he does not assume responsibility for what he reports, whereas in stories the narrator is the hero and witness of the event. Furthermore, the past time of the legend is indefinite, while the past time of the story is personal and the fabulous, which is absent but compensated by the sensational in stories, is a familiar element in legends (Angelescu, 2002: 36-39).

Nevertheless, we cannot but appreciate the fluidity of oral narrative forms and the swiftness with which they *flow* from one species into another every time they are reported over and over again. In the narrator's more or less skilful hands, the memorate easily becomes a fabulate, just as the legend may turn into a memorate.

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FOLKLORE COLLECTION - SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract: *The present article shows how field research for ethnography and folklore needs to be carried out. Field research is nowadays conducted by employing modern means and the researcher is concerned with applying electronic methods and creating databases. In our paper we have presented the results of the research on Romanian spells carried out in Cornova Village in Bessarabia in 1938 by the team led by Dimitrie Gusti. Due to the historical context, the work was no longer published and only later on did the daughter of the Golopenția family, Professor Sanda Golopenția, publish it, after which she created a database in the USA at Brown University. Professor Sanda Golopenția shows that research ought to be a constant preoccupation to find bridges and correlations between anthropology, pragmatics and semiotics, between theoretical reflection, the methodology of field observation and the electronic representation of its results by databases.*

Key words: *folklore, ethnography, field, informers (subjects), databases.*

The discovery and collection of folk creation is not to be done randomly by non-specialists and with unprepared informers.

The Densusianu School strongly and justly criticised the work system used by many folklore collectors, because they lacked proper working methods.

The collector needs to know the whole folk creation process, all the problems raised by the folklore material but he must also be a good psychologist. Of great use is the questionnaire, with which the researcher can set about his task, yet even this questionnaire can be understood in several ways, if the researcher does not have any scientific training. On 11 August 1877, Gh. Chițu, as the Minister of Public Instruction, encouraged the erudites to research our villages scientifically, according to the questionnaire drafted by B. P. Hasdeu in 1877. The problem of the questionnaire occupies a significant place in the specialized literature. It is, in fact, the understanding, by questions and answers, of the content of the folklore domain, by genres and species, and of the issues related to it. Rural life is particularly vast, and the questionnaire is a *vade mecum* of this labyrinth of

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problems, preventing the researcher from getting lost or forgetting certain facets he has to research in the spiritual and material area¹.

Folklore collection begins by proposing a questionnaire, starting from the ones we have.

The researcher needs to know well the environment where folklore is created, both rural and urban. Tocilescu highlighted the difficulties for folklore collectors in his *Materialuri folcloristice* (Folklore Materials). “Indeed, to find it easier to collect the products of the people, a longer period of living with the peasants would be needed; the Romanian peasant, in front of a townsman, is usually rather reserved and lacking in trust and does not open his heart to anyone; it takes a daily contact, a perfect assimilation, a merger with him, for him to talk to a townsman. Then, the collection must not take place on order, but only according to the spontaneous mood of the singer and the story teller, you need to record the peasant, without him knowing that you are making notes and writing after him; it is then that the true muse springs out, unstopped by anyone; otherwise, if you distract his attention from his daily occupations and ask him to tell you a story, the songs and the stories lack that charm of spontaneity, when man, believing himself all alone lets out his longing, sadness or joy.”²

Because he needs to live the realities regarding the peasant life and gain the trust of the individual and of the community, the first researcher was the *village primary school teacher*, one of the few intellectuals living alongside the villagers³.

Anyone who knows folklore creation can accomplish the mission of collector. Beside the numerous primary school teachers who realised good folklore collections like: Al. Vasiliu, Rădulescu-Codin, Pop Reteganul, George Catană, there are also philologists like Ovid Densusianu, I. A. Candrea, Tache Papahagi or Artur Gorovei and Tudor Pamfile, who were magistrates, while Petre Ispirescu was a collector of Romanian fairy tales.

This is why a collector needs to have passion, a thorough education, a good knowledge of the environment yielding folklore and, of course, scientific probity.

Not anyone can be an informant. Not anyone has the talent of singing, of telling stories, of keeping in mind traditions, customs or beliefs.

The collector needs to discover the endowed informants, known quite well in the respective environment.

Some are talented story tellers, others can shout at the round dance (*hora*), while others, ballad singers, are often encountered in Wallachia and Oltenia.

Because folklore creation has an oral trait, one must try the informant's memory by repetition immediate or several days apart.

Variants emerge through oblivion as well. By repetition we can realize how pure the motif or the folklore species recorded are.

¹ The first questionnaires were drafted by: Hasdeu, published in the *Annals of the Romanian Academy*, X, 1877; Densusianu, “Chestionarul despre tradițiunile istorice...”, 1893; Tocilescu, in his Introduction to *Materialuri folcloristice*, 1900.

² Gr. Tocilescu. *Materialuri folcloristice*, p. XVI.

³ Ion Mușlea, “Învățătorii și folclorul“, p. 253.

The more informants we use for the same folklore phenomenon, the more complete, more scientific and closer to reality our information is.

Folklore is a collective phenomenon which does not belong to a single individual, but to a community. Accumulating more information by interrogation, we can reconstitute the whole folklore creation.

The research in the field of folkloric creation needs to be sincere, objective, exact and complete.

The conversation with the informant requires art and psychological artistry. We will pay attention to the informer's language, knowledge and conception about the world, life, traditions, faith, to his artistic sense and interpretation.

Because the folkloric phenomenon is syncretic, i.e. it is at the same time poetry, melody, mimic, dance, it represents an experience lived under multifold aspects, which needs to be reproduced as such.

After recording, the informer's sheet is drafted, including his name, gender, place, age, schooling, the origin of his folkloric phenomenon, if he travelled and where and the date when the recording was realized.

The conversation with the informer is really important. Knowing him well, you can realize if he is a creator or just a talented transmitter. We shall ask him if he likes to read and what books he has, if he inherited the song or if he learnt it, asking him from whom and when. We should try to record the whole repertory he has and grasp his predilections or inclinations. We should also attempt to find out whether the folklore he received circulates in the village or has been brought from some other place, via the occupations he has – shepherd, carrier, farmer etc.

In brief, the researcher should study the folkloric phenomenon in a scientific spirit, in connection with the complexity of the social phenomenon, because it mirrors the whole spiritual life of society on its way towards perfection – according to the works of Traian Herseni, *Teoria monografiei sociologice*, and Ion C. Cazan, *Literatura populară; Îndrumări pentru monografiile sociologice*.

The researcher can observe actions or interactions taking place spontaneously or can trigger actions (interactions) in order to observe them.

We shall reserve the term *subject* for the individuals trained by the researcher in the roles of agent or anti/agent of caused actions / interactions. Usually, the researcher can bring into the position of subject families, relatives, neighbours and even the group as a whole.

Bringing the individuals in the position of subject is achieved by an ad-hoc verbal interaction between the researcher and the individual. The success of this interaction depends on the researcher's interactional capacity and his interlocutor's availability and interest. The interaction consists in a request addressed by the researcher to the individual. The object of this request can be: executing, miming, collaborating to, imagining, describing, evaluating or justifying an interaction.

The forms of this initial interaction during which the researcher tries to explain the aim pursued and get the support of a member of a group under analysis have not been described systematically in the field literature. Some are open, sincere, presenting almost exhaustively the real objectives pursued by the researcher. Others are veiled, indirect, giving only fragments of information, in

order not to influence too obviously the results of the survey. An interesting fact is that the local inhabitant can accept them from the beginning or can resist them, either explicitly, or implicitly¹.

When coherence can only be realized by sacrificing a part of the existing information, the information retained with priority will be that resulted from the observation of the individuals. This option is justified by the fact that, being a product of the interaction with the researcher, “the subject is a modified individual”².

The subject will not be called an informer when, at the request of the researcher, he carries out an action (for example makes a flute, carves a bowl), mimes an action or a non-verbal action component of an interaction (for instance takes some dance steps), or mimes a non-verbal interaction (e.g. mimes the attack, as agent, or the defence, as anti-agent, in a physical combat).

An individual brought by the researcher in the position of subject or informer does, by this, does not stop carrying out a series of actions or participating in a series of interactions spontaneously (as individual). In his observation, the researcher will need to separate the data provided by the subject from those provided by the informer, examine them critically, compare them and get to a correct assembling of them³.

Today, as we have entered the digital era, if we look back, we realize that the first information sources, leaving aside the books and folklore collections, were catalogues and bibliographies. As mankind gathered knowledge, the need for systematization, for increasingly comprehensive and diverse works emerged as well. Thus, the Enlightenment movement produced the Encyclopaedia, practically revolutionizing the world of knowledge and permitting, by an intellectual revolution, the subsequent modernization of Europe.

Each new source of information, each new instrument answered certain psycho-social and cultural needs. The treatises, monographs, encyclopaedic and specialized dictionaries increased in number, while various types of repertoires, guides and catalogues emerged, recording, systematizing the information and disseminating it in the circles interested in it.

Since information circulates faster and faster and proliferates spectacularly, the information sources need to keep up with the dynamics of the production, which makes it necessary to permanently update this information. In contemporary society information is valuable depending on the context, circulation speed and the way it is used⁴.

A significant example is that in June 1998, the Romanian Academy, through the section of Arts, Architecture and Audiovisual media, together with “Constantin Brăiloiu” Institute of Ethnography and Folklore, organised a scientific debate during which ethnographers, museologists, informaticians tried, in their

¹ Sanda Golopenția, *Intermemoria*, p. 12.

² *Ibidem*, p. 13.

³ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

⁴ Doina Banciu, Gheorghe Buluță, Victor Petrescu, *Biblioteca și societatea*, p. 25.

presentations and discussions, to define the impact of the new technology on ethnographic research and folklore¹.

The discussions raised concerns and questions which received an answer or are still waiting for a scientifically validated answer.

Here are some of them:

- Is the Internet a phenomenon that folklorists should study?
- What methods of investigation can we use in the context provided by this informational society? Will there be questionnaires on the Internet? Do researchers put their mark on the way a questionnaire is filled out? Should they adjust to the conditions, to the environment in which they gather information? Can computers help in this procedure or only to actually centralise and process data?
- In what way can the new technologies assist us in professionally organising and exploiting the informational content of objects? Can the Internet provide a solution?

The most debated topic was a controversial one. Distinguished researchers in the field emphasised a fundamental element: the objects, i.e. the costumes, the wedding flag, the pottery and all the others, are filled with emotion and thinking, the emotion and thinking of those who have created them. Can such an arid modern device as the computer, which is familiar only with digital representations of 0 and 1, really present an object in its informational context and treasure it in an environment similar to its existence?

Many of these questions were given an answer when the researchers of the National Centre for Folk Creation presented a CD entitled *Nuntă în Bistrița-Năsăud* "The Wedding in Bistrița-Năsăud". The person who had coordinated the work on this CD managed to convince, through his presentation and arguments, that the new technology does not replace the work, the effort, the emotions of the researcher. The new technology only creates a new way of presenting, organising and accessing the ethnological information, with the music, the sound, the image being approached as a unitary whole; what results is a complex and easy to use information product.

The conferences held by *Constantin Brăiloiu Institute of Ethnography and Folklore* showed that in the informational society, the new technology is more and more present in areas where perhaps those less competent have not expected it to².

The Romanian folklore database is a small one, centred on a severely restricted area of folk creation. Initially designed to function exclusively as an editing tool, it has now developed for its potential to stimulate the research of living, non-autonomous texts, in other words, of texts which preserve a pragmatic connection with their users' life. It is small, for even if it were to later incorporate folkloric creations of high culture, the relevant inventory for each of the distinct corpora would not exceed a few hundred items. It is a centred and oriented database because, even if it were to include many types of documents which do not belong

¹ *Academica*, July, 1998, p. 2.

² Doina Banciu, Gheorghe Buluță, Victor Petrescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

to folk creation, they would always have an auxiliary status that is clearly different from the former ones, which represent its core. This database currently focuses on research because, by subjecting several hundreds of components of the Romanian folkloric creation to a formal, rigorous, homogenous treatment, it might bring forth unexpected structural relationships that have not been previously studied by anthropology, folkloristic or cultural semiotics but whose investigation is of interest for theoretical and methodological reasons.

Such a database was developed by Prof. Sanda Golopenția, Ph.D., starting with 1987, within and with the support of Brown University (USA). It is centred on Romanian magic spells. The technical consultant of the project was Dr. Allen Renear. Each spell or incantation was translated by a team which included Sanda Golopenția for the Romanian language and, for English, Dr. Will Robins, Catherine Sama and Laura D'Angelo (affiliated to the departments of German, Italian and, respectively, French studies from Brown University). Dr. Peg Hausman (Ph. D. in comparative literature at Brown University), the late Robert Austerlitz, professor of linguistics at Columbia University, Marguerite Dorian, Blossom Kirschenbaum, Academic Research Assistant in Brown's Comparative Literature Department and translator, James Augerot, professor of linguistics and Romanian language at the University of Washington and the late professor of Romanic linguistics and Romanian language Charles Carlton from the University of Rochester, all worked as consultants in matters of translation.

At the present stage, *Baza de date a descântecului de dragoste românesc* called, in English, *The Romanian Love Charms Database* and abbreviated RLCD below, contains over 800 documents (files) belonging to four categories:

1. Formulas
2. Techniques
3. Scenarios
4. Dossiers

The formulas, ranging from 2 to 221 verses, correspond to the versified parts, delimited in the informants' speech by "textual" silences. Through the collector's questions, by mentioning magic techniques or specific comments, these silences signal that a text follows or ends. Each Romanian formula corresponds to a document containing its translation into English verse by verse. As formulas are used in ways which remind of the filling of an administrative form in modern life, in other words, as the charmer adjusts, on the spot, a formula pattern to the gender, needs and life of her client, the mentioned formulas frequently include a particular variable which is to be replaced, when the charm is performed, by the client's name and sometimes allow the choice between feminine or masculine attributes consisting, more often than not, in typical clothing elements: headscarf or hat, skirt or trousers for the protagonist who is the client in the text¹.

The techniques range from one sentence to three pages and contain prose directives regarding the nonverbal component of the charm performance. They are delimited by previous or subsequent textual silences, questions of the collector,

¹ Sanda Golopenția, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

comments of informants or the mentioning of a formula. For each of these techniques there is also a document containing its translation into English.¹

By reproducing the delimitations, if any, made by the informant when presenting the structure of the charm scenario to the collectors, it is clear that we risk, both with formulas and with techniques, having documents that are either too short or too long, in which we deal with words, in which formulas or techniques have been regrouped into a single item, for the informant did not signal the end of one and the beginning of another. A close analysis of formulas and techniques is therefore necessary if we want to convert the spontaneous segmentation done by informants into a legitimate formal segmentation².

The Scenario or Dossiers files (a) are superordinate with respect to Formula or Technique-type files; (b) consist mainly of ordered lists; and (c) are mostly written in a formal language.

The Scenario files were required by the decision to grant the status of separate document to each of the parts delimited in the informants' answers when shifting from verse (charm formula) to prose (magic techniques, procedure directives). They contain ordered lists of "names" of formulas and techniques which informants presented as belonging to one and the same charm scenario. As with segmentation, the database was based on ordering elements of charm scenarios during the investigation and by the informants.

The dossier files³ are ordered lists of factual, bibliographical and structural data that were deemed useful either for future research or for a fruitful consultation of the database by other specialists. The structural information was extracted from the set of charm scenarios. As opposed to the natural ordering that is typical of the lists of charm scenario elements, the ordering of lists included in dossiers is strictly conventional.

The database also contains a number of related additional files which include:

- formatting files which map formatting procedures to RLCD components for type-setting;
- markup definition files that specify the syntax for the markup tags used to distinguish, in each file, the different subcomponents of the charms;
- files containing data that were mechanically derived from RLCD main files. These are indexes, word lists, etc.;
- files containing the results of other analyses of the charm corpus contained in the RLCD.

This is only an example of analysis of some Romanian folkloric creations in a scientific database.

Sanda Golopenția used the material preserved from her parents, especially from her mother, for her work on charms in Cornova village, Orhei County in Bessarabia.

¹ Idem, p. 77.

² Ibidem, pp. 77-78.

³ Ibidem, p. 78.

In the summer of 1931, the seventh monographic campaign organised by Dimitrie Gusti brought in the village of Cornova, Orhei county in Bessarabia, a team of 55 young people who were soon to become established specialists in various fields of Romanian culture, sociology, folklore, anthropology, juridical sciences, history, psychology, philosophy, demography, medicine, musicology, architecture, plastic arts, etc. It consisted, among others, of Ernest Bernea, Hary Brauner, Lena Constante, Eugenia Constantinescu, Xenia Costa-Foru, Maria Cotescu, Ștefania Cristescu (mother of Sanda Golopenția), Gheorghe Focșa, Marcella Focșa, Anton Golopenția, D.C. Georgescu, Paula Gusty, Traian Herseni, Dochia Ioanovici, Ion Ionică, Octavian Neamțu, Mircea Manolescu, Domnica I. Păun, Mihai Pop, Victor Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Henri H. Stahl, Petre Ștefănuță, Emil Turdeanu, Mircea Vulcănescu and Ion Zamfirescu, most of them in their early twenties.

Upon return from the field, after a short respite of data processing that lasted four months, the Sociological Department of the Romanian Social Institute¹ organised, from 13 January to 1 June 1932, a number of 19 meetings for the public presentation of the research results.

The A. Golopenția's recollections (1932 and 1988) of the Cronova campaign and those of Stahl (1981) reveal that, during those hot months of July-August in Bessarabia, there was a slow assimilation among intellectuals of various training and with various perspectives, amid a reciprocal assimilation between the academic youth and the Cornova villagers, or between "regățeni" (i.e. the name commonly given to people living in the *Vechiul Regat* "Romanian Old Kingdom"), Transylvanians and Bessarabians. Both students and villagers started to develop a feeling of trust in this momentous mission of Romanian scholarship. Ștefania Cristescu often confessed that, to her, the most beautiful years of her life had been the enriching ones she had spent as part of those monographic campaigns, when goals were generous and clear and achievements seemed conditioned only by the urge to make oneself useful.

External and internal political events successively led to the dissolution of the Romanian Social Institute; to the removal from the domain of Romanian intellectual life of Professor Gusti and the Sociological School of Bucharest; to the detention of many of the School members in political prisons, from which some, such as Hary Brauner, Lena Costante, Traian Herseni, Octavian Neamțu etc. managed to get out after many wasted years and where others, such as Anton Golopenția, Victor Rădulescu-Pogoneanu, Petre Ștefănuță, Mircea Vulcănescu died; to the expatriation of Ion Ionică and Emil Turdeanu; to the forced reorientation toward other domains ("reprofilare") of most of the former "monographists".

The disappearance of the Romanian Social Institute also led to the destruction of its rich sociological archive. A part of the files that were in

¹ The Romanian Social Institute had been created by Dimitrie Gusti in 1921. It continued and expanded the activity of the Association for Science and Social Reform, which Gusti had set up in Iași in 1918. The Romanian Social Institute ceased its existence in 1947.

possession of those who had drafted them or who were using them precisely at that moment were destroyed by the researchers themselves during the rough years marked by police searches, brought about by the establishment of the communist regime. Some files disappeared in other circumstances and only few were saved.

The material on the charms from Cornova was saved from destruction by Ștefania Cristescu-Golopenția. Part of the “Spiritual” dossier of the Cornova campaign, this material consisted almost exclusively of the fieldwork sheets of Ștefania Cristescu, and additionally of a limited number of sheets drafted by Ernest Bernea, Xenia Costa-Foru, Livia Gavăt, Anton Golopenția, Dochia Ioanovici, Ion Ionică, Henri H. Stahl and Emil Turdeanu, which Ștefania Cristescu intended to use in the book she was working on. Thus, Sanda Golopenția had a number of materials available, which, without allowing her to reconstitute her mother’s book, as she had planned, were worth being published as such. This led to the publication in the United States, in 1984, of the posthumous volume Ștefania Cristescu, *Descânțete din Cornova-Basarabia* (Incantations from Cornova-Bessarabia). Sanda Golopenția included in this volume the articles *L’agent magique dans le village de Cronova (Bessarabie)* and *Eléments magiques dans la vie spirituelle des paysans roumains de diverses régions du pays, Practica magică a descântatului de strâns în satul Cornova* and *Frecvența formulei magice în satul Cornova*, which Ștefania Cristescu had dedicated explicitly to the corpus of incantations collected in Cornova.

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