

# ЛЮБОСЛОВИЕ

ГОДИШНО СПИСАНИЕ ЗА ХУМАНИТАРИСТИКА

БРОЙ 25

ТЕМА НА БРОЯ

БИОГРАФИИ, ДНЕВНИЦИ, ПИСМА  
BIOGRAPHIES, DIARIES, LETTERS



Университетско издателство  
Епископ Константин Преславски  
2025

## ЛЮБОСЛОВИЕ

Издание на Факултета по хуманитарни науки  
Шуменски университет „Епископ Константин Преславски“

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ISSN 1314-6033

Броят се публикува с финансовата подкрепа на Фонд „Научни изследвания“,  
проект № КП-06 НП6/23 от 4.12.2024 г.

Фонд „Научни изследвания“ не носи отговорност за съдържанието на  
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Journal of the Faculty of Humanities

*Konstantin Preslavsky* University of Shumen

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**ISSN 1314-6033**

The issue is published with the financial support of the Bulgarian Science Fund, project - КП-06 НП6/23 – 4.12.2024.

The Bulgarian Science Fund bears no responsibility for the content of the materials.



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# СЪДЪРЖАНИЕ

## БИОГРАФИЯ И БИОФИКЦИЯ

<i>Alexandre Gefen</i>	The Genre of Names: Biofiction in Contemporary French Literature	9
<i>Alexandru Popa</i>	Mythen und Taten des Theseus. Ein Versuch seine Mythen und sein Leben miteinander zu verknüpfen	24

## КЛАСИЧЕСКО НАСЛЕДСТВО

<i>Марсел Швоб</i>	„Въображаеми животи“ (превод от англ. език Светлана Неделчева)	40
--------------------	--	----

## САМОМОДЕЛИРАНЕ НА АЗ-А: АВТОБИОГРАФИЯ, АВТОФИКЦИЯ И САМОРЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦИЯ

<i>Николай Аретов</i>	Две гневни книжки от средата на XIX век: „Прескорбно оправдание Еманоила Васкидовича“ (1846) и „Истинний глас на България..“ (1853) на Анастас Гранитски	51
<i>N. Berrin Aksoy Sofiya Ostrovska</i>	A Chronotopic Study of Women's War Experience as Reflected in the Works by S. Alekseyevich, an Anonymous Author, and I. Grekova	69
<i>Maria Irod</i>	Relational Self-Representations of Queer Lives and Political Oppression in Romanian Life Writing	80

## ДНЕВНИЦИ, МЕМОАРИ И КУЛТУРНА ПАМЕТ

<i>Sevdzhihan A. Eyubova</i>	The Diary as a Space for Personal Transformation	100
<i>Стефан Минков</i>	Един епизод от биографията на Мадам дьо Стал	114
<i>Rayna Rosenova</i>	Romancing the Self: Mary Robinson's <i>Memoirs</i> and the Sentimental Tradition	129
<i>Rebecca Gigli</i>	Genre Characteristics, Functions and Transformations in 19th-Century Russian Women's Diary Writing: The Diaries of A. P. Kern (1800–1879) and E. A. Stakensneider (1836–1897)	143

<i>Dana Badulescu</i>	Time, Memory, Illness and Death in the Diary Writing of Two Romanian Diarists	157
-----------------------	---	-----

#### ЕПИСТОЛАРНО НАСЛЕДСТВО И КОМУНИКАЦИЯ

<i>Kiril Mladenov</i>	Answering the King. Context and Tone of Communication in Neo-Assyrian Letters	172
-----------------------	---	-----

<i>Melinda Botalić Edina Nurikić</i>	The Image of a Woman in the Epistolary Story “Ağlayan Kadınlar” – Kolajı İçin Taslak by the Turkish Author Erendiz Atasü	185
--	--	-----

<i>Oleksandr Kapranov</i>	Chair’s Letter: Analysing Discourse Markers in BP’s Annual Reports	193
---------------------------	--	-----

#### ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОТО: БИОГРАФИЧНИ И ЕПИСТОЛАРНИ ГЛАСОВЕ

<i>Силвия Александрова</i>	Революционер и дипломат – Джоу Ънлай и оформянето на китайската външна политика	210
--------------------------------	---	-----

<i>Дияна Боева</i>	Чешкият мотив за свободата в писмата и документите на Георги Марков	224
--------------------	---	-----

#### ДОКУМЕНТ И ПАМЕТ

<i>Галина Петкова</i>	„... я Вам отговорила вместо Бояна...“: (не)состоявшаяся переписка между Иваном Буниным и Бояном Пеневым (София, 1920 г.)	238
-----------------------	---	-----

#### АКАДЕМИЧЕН ПРЕГЛЕД

<i>Edward Donaghue</i>	Liminality and its Epistolary Projections in Canadian Fiction	264
------------------------	---	-----

<i>Antony Hoyte-West</i>	Arminius Vambéry: A multifaceted portrait	269
--------------------------	---	-----

# CONTENTS

## BIOGRAPHY AND BIOFICTION

- |                        |   |    |
|------------------------|---|----|
| <i>Alexandre Gefen</i> | The Genre of Names: Biofiction in Contemporary French Literature      | 9  |
| <i>Alexandru Popa</i>  | Myths and Deeds of Theseus. An Attempt to Link his Myths and his Life | 24 |

## CLASSICAL HERITAGE

- |                      |   |    |
|----------------------|---|----|
| <i>Marcel Schwob</i> | <i>Imaginary Lives</i> (trans. from English by Svetlana Nedelcheva) | 40 |
|----------------------|---|----|

## SELF-MODELING: AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AUTOFICTION AND SELF-REPRESENTATION

- |   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| <i>Nikolay Aretov</i>                             | Two Angry Booklets from the Mid-nineteenth Century: “Preskorbnoe Opravdanie Emanoila Vaskidovicha” (1846) and “Istinnyi Glas na Bulgaria...” (1853) by Anastas Granitsky | 51 |
| <i>N. Berrin Aksoy</i><br><i>Sofiya Ostrovska</i> | A Chronotopic Study of Women’s War Experience as Reflected in the Works by S. Alekseyevich, an Anonymous Author, and I. Grekova  | 69 |
| <i>Maria Irod</i>                                 | Relational Self-Representations of Queer Lives and Political Oppression in Romanian Life Writing   | 80 |

## DIARIES, MEMOIRS, AND CULTURAL MEMORY

- |                              |   |     |
|------------------------------|---|-----|
| <i>Sevdzhihan A. Eyubova</i> | The Diary as a Space for Personal Transformation  | 100 |
| <i>Stefan Minkov</i>         | An Episode from Madame de Staël’s Biography   | 114 |
| <i>Rayna Rosenova</i>        | Romancing the Self: Mary Robinson’s <i>Memoirs</i> and the Sentimental Tradition  | 129 |
| <i>Rebecca Gigli</i>         | Genre Characteristics, Functions and Transformations in 19th-Century Russian Women’s Diary Writing: The Diaries of A. P. Kern (1800–1879) and E. A. Stakenschneider (1836–1897) | 143 |

<i>Dana Badulescu</i>	Time, Memory, Illness and Death in the Diary Writing of Two Romanian Diarists	157
-----------------------	---	-----

#### **EPISTOLARY HERITAGE AND COMMUNICATION**

<i>Kiril Mladenov</i>	Answering the King. Context and Tone of Communication in Neo-Assyrian Letters	172
-----------------------	---	-----

<i>Melinda Botalić</i> <i>Edina Nurikić</i>	The Image of a Woman in the Epistolary Story “Ağlayan Kadınlar”- Kolajı İçin Taslak by the Turkish Author Erendiz Atasü	185
--	---	-----

<i>Oleksandr Kapranov</i>	Chair’s Letter: Analysing Discourse Markers in BP’s Annual Reports	193
---------------------------	--	-----

#### **THE POLITICAL DIMENSION: BIOGRAPHICAL AND EPISTOLARY VOICES**

<i>Silviya Aleksandrova</i>	Revolutionary and Diplomat – Zhou Enlai and the Shaping of Chinese Foreign Policy	210
-----------------------------	---	-----

<i>Diyana Boeva</i>	The Czech Motif for Freedom in Georgi Markov’s Letters and Documents	224
---------------------	--	-----

#### **DOCUMENTS AND MEMORY**

<i>Galina Petkova</i>	“... I Answered You instead of Boyan...”: The (Failed) Correspondence between Ivan Bunin and Boyan Penev (Sofia, 1920)	238
-----------------------	--	-----

#### **ACADEMIC REVIEW**

<i>Edward Donaghue</i>	Liminality and its Epistolary Projections in Canadian Fiction	264
------------------------	---	-----

<i>Antony Hoyte-West</i>	Arminius Vambéry: A Multifaceted Portrait	269
--------------------------	---	-----



**THE GENRE OF NAMES:  
BIOFICTION IN CONTEMPORARY FRENCH LITERATURE<sup>1</sup>**

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/UXHW8543>

“In the chamber where images are formed, a star appears every time a name extinguishes”

(G. Macé, “Le Singe et le miroir”<sup>3</sup>)

**Abstract:** *This article looks at the genre of biofiction, or “imaginary life” as it is more commonly known in French, reflecting on its origins and considering its cultural meanings through examples drawn from French literary production in the early 21st century. It tries to highlight how biofiction redefines the boundaries of biography and fiction, creating a genre that emphasizes individuality, memory, and cultural reflection. Focusing on the genre’s rise as a preferred mode of storytelling in recent decades, the article traces its roots to a broader cultural and aesthetic shift emphasizing subjective narratives and the interplay of memory, identity, and imagination. Drawing from notable works by authors such as Pascal Quignard and Pierre Michon, biofiction is examined as a transformative space where the boundaries between biography, autobiography, and fiction dissolve.*

*Through its reconfiguration of narrative structures, biofiction challenges the dichotomy between fiction and referential truth, creating hybrid texts that engage readers in reflective and empathetic encounters. The article discusses key characteristics of biofiction, including its reliance on fragmented storytelling, the manipulation of historical and fictional discourse, and its potential as a medium for emotional and intellectual engagement. Ultimately, biofiction is positioned as a vital literary form that responds to modernity’s fragmented identity and reclaims the narrative power of individual lives, underscoring the enduring interplay between literature, memory, and the self. It appears as a key element in the literary landscape of postmodernity.*

**Key words:** *biofiction, contemporary French literature, imaginary life, identity, memory, cultural reflection*

1 This article is accessible in French in HAL Open Science, HAL Id: hal-01624197, <https://hal.science/hal-01624197v1>

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**Article history:** Received: 12 March 2025; Reviewed: 30 April 2025; Revised: 9 May 2025; Accepted: 12 May 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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3 “Le singe et le miroir”, *Le Singe et le miroir* in *Bois dormant et autres poèmes en prose*, Gallimard, collection “Poésie”, 2002, p. 183.

The production of “biofictions<sup>4</sup>”, i.e. literary fictions in biographical form (the life of an imaginary character or the imaginary life of a real character), is a significant phenomenon in literary and cultural history<sup>5</sup>. From C. Garcin’s *Vidas* to P. Mertens’s *Éblouissements* and Pascal Quignard’s *Petits Traités*, these biofictions seem to have become the preferred literary expression of a culture tormented by the contradictory impulses of thinking about difference and the duty to remember, and are symptomatic of the major trends in literary aesthetics at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a “return of the subject<sup>6</sup>”, but a subject that would only give itself a narrative identity, a new intimacy based on the outside observation of everyday life of culturally different entities, a “postmodern” taste for the manipulation of knowledge and ontological games.

These biofictions are explicitly perceived by the writers as a strong generic postulation, which implies both a reconfiguration of the territory of the modern novel and a revision of literary history: “this book is part of a tradition, an extension of a literary genre that has already given us parallel, imaginary, brief and even minuscule lives”, G. Macé forcefully claimed in 1991 in connection with his *Vies antérieures*<sup>7</sup>

This very old genre [life] has secretly survived its secularization as a novel, narrative or short story. For modern writers have also written about lives, clearly announcing this intention in their titles, sometimes in a traditional way (the *Vie de Rancé*), but more often nostalgic or parodic, or in any case, referential: Schwob’s *Vies Imaginaires*, Ramuz’s *Vie de Samuel Belet*, G. Stein’s *Trois vies, or even Une vie*<sup>8</sup>;

continues P. Michon, delineating an area of literary history never studied as such, but clearly organized by the heuristic attraction and poetic specificity of the major genre of biography. The rapid editorial institutionalization of the genre and its trivialization as a simple generic label accentuate this visibility in cultural history to the point of caricature: the “L’un et l’autre” collection published by Gallimard offers “lives, but as memory invents them, as the imagination recreates them”, while the term *life* (preferably in the plural), which was still archaic twenty years ago, is now used to cover a wide range of “biographoid”<sup>9</sup> forms, from pure autofiction to conventional biography, including the historical novel<sup>10</sup>.

4 The expression is by A. Buisine (see “Biofictions” (*Revue des Sciences Humaines*, “Le Biographique”, no. 224, 1991, pp. 7-13).

5 See in particular D. Viart (*Le Roman français au XXe siècle*, Hachette supérieur, “Les fondamentaux”, 1999) and D. Rabaté (*Le roman français depuis 1900*, PUF, “Que sais-je” series, 1998).

6 This is the explanation proposed by C. Arnaud (“Le retour de la biographie: d’un tabou à l’autre”, *Le Débat*, no. 54, March-April 1989, pp. 40-47).

7 Back cover of *Vies antérieures* (Gallimard, 1991); G. Macé has confirmed that he is the author of this text.

8 Interview with C. Hordé, *Le Français aujourd’hui*, no. 87, September 1989, p. 75.

9 The term comes from D. Madélnat (“Biographie et roman, je t’aime, je te hais” (*RSH*, no. 224, 1991-4, “Le biographique”, p. 244).

10 One example among a hundred: a recent biography of Leni Riefenstahl is entitled *Five Lives of Leni Riefenstahl* and offers five approaches to the personality of the film director, scuba diver, etc. (I. Walk, Taschen, 2000). Funnily enough, the book includes a chapter entitled “biography” (which is in fact an extended chronology), as if the five lives were not enough or belonged to another type of discourse.

If biofiction fills an empty slot in the generic checkerboard, situated at the crossroads of the two hyper-genres or meta-genres of fiction and biographical narrative, and is easily described in terms of reference theory<sup>11</sup> (as a biography free from all liabilities), the question of the precise status of texts absent, at least until Marcel Schwob's *Vies Imaginaires* (1895), from all generic architectures remains problematic, and, in my view, inseparable from a reflection on the very notion of genre and the extension to be given to the fictional field. In order to resist the temptation of a typological renunciation<sup>12</sup> and a nominalistic retreat according to B. Croce, who sees contemporary biofiction as nothing more than idiosyncratic forms symptomatic of the splintering of narrative literary genres in the contemporary field (and in particular of the irremediable blurring in "biography" and the enunciative distinction between autobiography and biography), a double cartography: an external mapping of the genre, at the crossroads of fiction and historical discourse, and an overview of its internal polarities, i.e. its poetics and possible meanings.

### **Biography, autobiography, biofiction: a referred genre**

As an anthropomorphic form of narrative, based on the fundamental units of the temporality of human life and the individual, biography is intuitively perceived as an *a priori* category of discursive knowledge. This functionalist vision explains the theoretical casualness<sup>13</sup> with which its place in the spectrum of symbolic productions was considered: the genre of life is not – or is no longer, or is not yet – immediately literary, but functions in relation to an autonomous and external epistemological system, which is, at least in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, perceived primarily as belonging to the human sciences and not to the aesthetic sphere.

The genre of life writing is thus an inseparable micro-system opposing the "serious" biography and fictional biography, dividing up reciprocal and sometimes contradictory attributions (D. Madelénat speaks of a conflict between fiction and referential narrative): as such, it varies with the history of our conceptions of fiction<sup>14</sup>. If there is continuity, it lies in the use of the biographical, in a long tradition of employing the biographical genre or the label

11 See D. Cohn's analysis in *Le Propre de la fiction* (Seuil, coll. "Poétique", 2001), which I attempt to comment on in "Le chat jaune de l'Abbé Séguin ou la question du statut épistémologique de la biographie" in *Frontières de la fiction, actes du colloque "Fabula"*, prefaced by T. Pavel and presented by A. Gefen and René Audet, November 2001, *Modernités*, no. 17, co-publication "Nota Bene" / Presses Universitaires de Bordeaux.

12 D. Viart speaks of "taxonomic impotence" ("Dis-moi qui te hante", *Revue des Sciences Humaines*, "Paradoxe du biographique", no. 263, 2002, p. 25).

13 Perceived as an instrument for transmitting collective memory rather than as an aesthetic object, and defined infinitely more simply than, say, a tragedy or a sonnet, biography is thus dispensed with the need for fussy codification. As J.-M. Schaeffer points out, recalling Hegel's assertion that only literature possesses genres, the rigorous division of textual species is inseparable from thinking about the specificity of the literary (*Qu'est-ce qu'un genre littéraire?*, Seuil, collection "Poétique", 1989, p. 8-9) within other semiotic systems, artistic and non-artistic.

14 A. Fowler uses the term "metastable" (*Kinds of Literature, an Introduction to the Theory of Genres and Modes*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 47).

“life” by writers – from *Vie inestimable du Grant Gargantua, père de Pantagruel* by Rabelais to *La Princesse de Clèves*, from medieval saints’ lives – whose later forms were, incidentally, at the origin of the short story genre in the Renaissance – to the romantic hagiographies (let us remember that Balzac’s *Louis Lambert* and Chateaubriand’s *Vie de Rancé* are both “lives”): the combinations of memorial, legendary, metaphysical with what would later be called aesthetic are numerous.

If, before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *imaginary lives* were perceived as foreign to the distinction between historiography and Belles Lettres, and were not thought of in terms of reference, they gradually took on the role of counter-power during the positivist century, sometimes gratingly opposing the ambitions of historical biography<sup>15</sup>. While the paradigm of scholarly biography was firmly established in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the 20<sup>th</sup> the boundaries began to blur, with emergence in modern times of biographies by “diction” (G. Genette), or the “second-degree” (D. Combe) texts *read* as fictional biographies, no matter how they came into existence, in an intellectual climate where critical reflexivity leads to the denunciation of the literary features of serious historiography. The fictional echoes of these weighty epistemological questions can be found in novels staging the instability of the biographical pact (such as Nabokov’s masterpiece *Pale Fire* or, in the French domain, the marvelous fiction works of J.-B. Puech) or decoys such as W. Hidelshimer’s *Marbot*, which aims to imitate a real biography through a “formal mimesis” (according to the term proposed by Michał Głowiński) rendering the text undecidable to those who cannot rely on external criteria to point out the perfectly imaginary identity of the character depicted.

This crisis specific to modernity still has aesthetic repercussions in the contemporary field, but with fiction once again tending to be perceived as a legitimate mode of discourse about the world, a form of productive knowledge, the opposition with the referential or at least verifiable discourses of history is diminishing. The dichotomy between biofiction and biography thus eases to the point of seeming to dissolve into a vast generic fragmentation and total formal eclecticism, the causes and consequences of which have often been studied<sup>16</sup>. The individualism characteristic of our times seems to influence our perception of generic classifications, as the opposition between referential and fictional discourse, biography and autobiography, biographical fragment and biological integrity, narrative and discourse changes. This new mobility leads to the rereading and retrospective regrouping of imaginary lives (such as, for example, the republication of Racan’s *Vie de Malherbe*, a masterpiece that seemed to have fallen into an unfathomable abyss), and to the re-evaluation of the reputations of their authors (we know of the recent resurrection of Marcel Schwob as a major writer).

<sup>15</sup> I develop this idea in “Vie imaginaire et poétique du roman au XIXe siècle: La notice biographique de Louis Lambert”, *Littérature*, no. 128, December 2002.

<sup>16</sup> See in particular *L'éclatement des genres au XXe siècle*, proceedings of the Paris III Sorbonne-Nouvelle symposium, texts compiled by M. Dambre and M. Gosselin-Noat, Presses Universitaires de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, April 2001.

D. Viard has well noted<sup>17</sup> the extremely pervasive use of the term “life” in narratives that have nothing specifically biographical about them, where they play a role in modulating assertive discourse: generic labels are obviously manipulated from the outside and used as fictional operators. But the reactivation of the biographical implies in the most interesting authors (P. Quignard, P. Mertens, G. Macé, P. Michon in particular) a much stronger generic activity than a simple play on the category of names: the third-person, chronological account of the life of a single character is a particularly restrictive formal constraint – and therefore terribly attractive by its very specificity – Fortuny’s mantle of modern narration. Biofiction cannot therefore be confused with the free, inorganic writing of the individual (as proposed, for example, by Roland Barthes’s *La Chambre Claire*), nor with the traditional biographical novel, which freely adopts the form of a chronological narrative about a single character, without adhering to the austerity of register and theme proper to the biographical genre. The mere fact of narrating, in literature, an existence for its own sake, also implies taking into account a heavy intertextual heritage: even if it does not entail stable and prescriptive formal or enunciative traits, it implements, directly or indirectly through the means of intertext, generic effects, i.e., procedures specific to the narrative rhetoric of biography, indissolubly linked by an attraction-repulsion effect<sup>18</sup> with the counter-model and counter-genre<sup>19</sup> constituted by the historiographical genre of serious biography within the system.

The point is that biography is not merely, I believe, a generic commonplace, but also, like the essay<sup>20</sup>, a refuge for the novel. N. Frye has proposed that literary genres are represented as an “imaginary stock exchange”, i.e. a repertoire, a restricted stock of active genres, to the extent that the organization of genres can be described according to a hydrostatic model: the total substance is constant, but the arrangement varies. In terms of aesthetic choices, the decline of the realist novel is to some extent compensated for by the popularity of fictional biography. According to A. Fowler, a genre theorist from whom I borrow these analyses at least in part: the unavailability of the tragic led Montaigne to explore the subject of human individuality using minor, “extra-canonical” forms (it had led Th. Carlyle to a mixture of treatise, biography and epic). Here, it is the traditional novelistic form – due to the discrediting of the traditional rhetoric of narrative, understood since Barthes as fascism – that has led to the exploratory use of biography as a substitute for the traditional novel.

So it is not a “biography without biography”, to use the title of an article by F. Gaillard<sup>21</sup>, nor capturing the material which determines the choice of reading horizon, but rather a “biography without the biographical”, playing on the reader’s

17 „Dis-moi qui te hante“, *art. cit.* passim.

18 See D. Madélat: “Biographie et roman, je t’aime, je te hais”, *R.S.H.*, no. 224, pp. 235-247).

19 On the hypothesis, derived from Russian formalism, of the binomial functioning of generic micro-structures, see A. Fowler, *Kinds of literature*, *op. cit.*, chp. 6.

20 See M. Macé, “Barthes romanesque” in *Barthes, au lieu du roman*, texts collected and presented by M. Macé and A. Gefen, Nota Bene-Desjonquères, 2002.

21 “Barthes, le biographique sans la biographie”, *R.S.H.*, no. 224, 4th quarter 1991.

cultural knowledge, capable of filling in the silences of a fragmented narrative and restoring a complete discursive trace, is what contemporary biofiction offers us: seemingly anomic, biofiction inevitably reinscribes itself in a precise horizon of generic expectation. Triggered by a title or an explicit reading contract entered into by the narrator, by the reactivation of *topoi* of biographical narrative (the heralding childhood, the pivotal event, etc.), or simply by a particular attention to the details of lived experience combined with the narrative's focus on a single object, biofiction invites us to take the measure of a destiny based on a few "biographemes".

The very brief life of Quignard, taken from *Petits traités*<sup>22</sup> will be my example. As we shall see, the biographical reading is triggered by the linear organization of the chronology, the emphasis on the classical *topos* of death as a meaningful moment<sup>23</sup> and, correspondingly within the moralist tradition, the dying man's last words:

Mr Hamon knitted on his donkey to keep his hands busy. This was when he visited his patients in the countryside. He was Racine's teacher. He wrote twelve little treatises, including one on solitude, in which he compares the century to the shade cast by chestnut trees on earth, and solitude to sunlight in August.

He ate nothing but dog's bread, chewing upright and moistening his big lips with little water. He died on February 22, 1687, aged sixty-nine, whispering in agony:

"Silence, Jesus Maria, silence! Sponsus et sponsa! Silence! Silence!"

Then he chanted only the word silence.

Then it engulfed him.

Unlike scattered biographemes, which constitute certain forms of testimony, the biographical narrative implements a hypertrophied version of what V. Jouve has called the character-effect<sup>24</sup> and what we might call the biography-effect (which is how I define the difference between biography and biographical and not what Mireille Calle-Gruber calls the biography-effect<sup>25</sup>): the constitution of a nominal fictional universe, an autonomous and portable personal world, set at a distance from the narrator, shaped by the mere power of a proper name and organizing the narrative from both a narratological and semiotic point of view.

This example can be used as a starting point for a number of remarks aimed at identifying the common generic features of biofiction:

- What modern *imaginary lives* have in common is that they unfold in a paratactic mode, rejecting any teleological causality. In the article "Vies" in *Le Propre du langage, voyage au pays des noms communs*, J.-C. Bailly evokes narratives "free from any edifying will [...] Each organized according to its territory or its flight, according to its cadence and its step [...] The game at once sovereign and

22 Pascal Quignard, XIX<sup>e</sup> Traité: "Traité de M. Hamon", *Petits Traités*, tome V, Maeght Editeur, 1986, pp. 107-108.

23 Montaigne, for example, saw discourse as the "commented register of various deaths" (*Essais*, I, p. 20).

24 Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1997, p. 221.

25 Ibid.

disoriented, a disjunction without conflict”. This kind of writing is authorized by the highly constrained way in which the narrative is organized, since it is chronological and bounded, at least at the end: biography plays the role of a frame (J.C. Bailly speaks of the “contour formed by the finite succession [of] moments”) which, by its very rigidity, allows for the amplification of details.

- An egalitarian genre, seemingly indifferent to its subjects and descriptive content, *life* nonetheless continues to draw on a vast thematic heritage, which it rearranges as it sees appropriate. Quignard deliberately chooses to paint a minor character and plays with the juxtaposition of insignificant *realia* and major historical facts. A broader overview would certainly demonstrate that imaginary lives fit into canonical groupings and pre-constructed categories: M. Foucault’s innovative “vies de hommes infâmes” (lives of infamous men) refer to the old tradition of the lives of criminals, while the lives of authors supposedly invented by the collaboration of J.-B. Puech under his pseudonym B. Jordanne, belong to an immemorial genre marked by many lives of Homer<sup>26</sup> and biographies of imaginary troubadours<sup>27</sup>. Like P. Michon, who chose to write about the postman Roulin rather than Van Gogh, Mr. Hamon’s life takes the place of the impossible life of Racine, a kind of counter-life or escort-life.

- The question of the biographer’s and narrator’s subjective involvement in the narrative calls for another remark: however modern it may seem in its reflexivity, the staging of this figure is as old as the genre of biography itself. There are numerous instances of blurring between a memoir, a biography and an autobiography, providing the contemporary novel with infinite possibilities for changing voices (characters taking the floor, fictional memoirs<sup>28</sup>, etc.). Those that speak as much of the devouring of the other as much as of the revenge of the prey: “A thousand dead lives, which were either ancient or fictitious, have been substituted for his life”<sup>29</sup> writes Quignard of the biographer. By portraying a complex identity and a troubled mimetic process, contemporary literature makes explicit the issue of the exhibition – or concealment – of the enunciative voice in the narrative, as well as that of the reciprocal construction of narrator, author and their subjects, which reflects this especially through metaphors of palingenesis (rebirth) and metempsychosis (soul transmigration). The most notable example is Macé’s *Vies antérieures*, which, following in the footsteps of T. de Quincey, G. de Nerval and C. Baudelaire, defines the poet as one who can slip into the body of another<sup>30</sup>, a sort of Bovaryism and it could be perceived as “alienating oneself from oneself”<sup>31</sup>.

26 See *Fictions d’auteur, Le discours biographique sur l’auteur de l’Antiquité à nos jours*, collected by Sandrine Dubel and Sophie Rabau, Paris, H. Champion, 2001.

27 See J.-C. Huchet, “Le réalisme biographique dans les *Vidas* et les *Razos* occitanes” in *Roman, réalité, réalismes*, P.U.F., 1989.

28 See Pauline A. H. Hörmann, *La Biographie Comme Genre Littéraire: Mémoires d’Hadrien de Marguerite Yourcenar* Mémoires d’Hadrien (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996). For the author, the work is a didactic fresco à la Plutarch, but above all a projection of the self in a *persona*: “It is not through blood that the true human continuity is established” (Marguerite Yourcenar, cited p. 126).

29 P. Quignard, *Le Lecteur*, Gallimard, 1976, p. 11.

30 See *Dis-moi qui te hante*

31 To borrow a phrase from M. Schwob (“La Terreur et la pitié”, preface to *Cœur double*, reprinted in *Spicilege* (Œuvres de Marcel Schwob, collected and edited by A. Gefen, Les Belles Lettres, 2001, p. 110).

Nevertheless, I don't think it is appropriate to put all the forms of memoir writing under the category autofiction, and to speak of auto-heterobiography or allo-autobiography to depict the rather banal phenomenon of the narrator's autobiographical projection in his or her narrative. Often mixed with autofiction (as in Pierre Michon's masterpiece *Vies minuscules*, where an autobiographical frame orders and comments on the various memorial vignettes visited one by one), biofiction is nonetheless a device for releasing otherness. The dream of transfer and coincidence (in other words, the productivity of the other in the work of self-definition by the enunciator), and the "post-modern" vision of personal identity as open, composite, intersubjective (even intertextual), nonetheless alter what is the fundamental ethos of biography: to give an account of a boundary separating self-consciousness from the body of the other, to tell the incomparable story of a perishable life captured in what is *different* about it: in this sense, biography is always an exceptional and external narrative ("extime" if you like), explained by Schwob's definition: "Art is the opposite of general ideas, describes only the individual, desires only the unique. It does not classify; it downgrades<sup>32</sup>".

- The evocative power of the narrative is indifferent – and sometimes inversely proportional – to the textual volume of life. Hence the lapidary power of brief lives (where the textual material, in its stripped-down, fragmented form, is intended, by a kind of homothety, to mirror the image of tiny beings or the scattered traces of great men, and seeks, through brevity, to express transience). Hence also the frequent narrative structures that place lives in parallel, intending to constitute a sort of community of the dead, through an analogy between the form of the collection and the totality of a given human community (familial, spiritual, etc.): lives are expressed as necessarily plural units (whether the plural is internal or external) and easily arranged into series. They are "lives, as many as you want, as many as they were and as many as they will be, each with its own weight to place on the scales, where in the end a heavier weight will always be opposed to the lighter one, ejecting it: all these narratives about suffering and bad omen that the plural *lives* give rise to", as D. Oster brilliantly puts it<sup>33</sup>.

- Even if a biography is able, by playing with the order of the narrative, to take into account the context of "a post-Newtonian evolution of the spatio-temporal categories" (I quote D. Oster<sup>34</sup>), what these biographies have in common is that they propose what might be called an emotion of temporality, which is another name for Schwobian "pity", and more precisely, a temporality that would have the two aspectual characteristics of the *passé simple*: to be radically cut off from the present (unlike the *passé composé*), since the "perfect is like a severe edge that slices through the succession of a biographical *haiku*" (I quote D. Oster again about Schwob's *Vies Imaginaires*), and propose (unlike

32 "L'Art de la Biographie", preface to *Vies imaginaires* (1896), reprinted in *Spicilege* (Œuvres de Marcel Schwob, *op. cit.*, p. 1210).

33 D. Oster, *L'Individu littéraire*, Presses Universitaires de France, 1997, p. 123.

34 Preface to *La Lampe de Psychée*, P.O.L, 1992, p. 18.

the *imparfait*) a global aspect, i.e., to give a punctual vision of an action. This tends to transform the analysis of duration as a transformation and learning (which is what traditional biography was before the modern controversies), into a constellation, or a network of rhizomes, whose metaphor is the monad, or, in Barthes's work, the Lucretian metaphor of the atom which constitutes the biographeme, or in another recurring metaphor from G. Macé's work, the stitches of a fabric.

### Poetics and functions of biofiction

If this privileged form of contemporary literature known as the imaginary life cannot be defined by a simple generic paradigm, "the world-effect it produces is constituted by strong generic features (distance, otherness, unity). We know that since J.-M. Schaeffer and A. Fowler, the formal and thematic characterization of genres is easily combined with pragmatic determinations: if we want to map the genre internally, it seems to me more interesting to construct a generic system or a system of "generic modulation"<sup>35</sup> by means of the functional question – where aesthetic issues would be only one dimension among others, since literature in biography rediscovers its transitivity, than to take up referential criteria (such as those proposed by Mireille Calle-Gruber, who, as D. Viart reminds us distinguishes between the "supposed life narrative," the "narrative supposedly about a life," and the "narrative of a supposed life").<sup>36</sup>

#### - Biography as a novel and theater

The first temptation of *imaginary lives* was to intensify the poetic potential of biography and its emotional effectiveness, to use it, following Barthes's concept of it being a "counter-ideology of form"<sup>37</sup>, an open, mosaic text, overturning the classical hermeneutics of the *lives of great men*<sup>38</sup>, in favor of the ostension, subjectivity and the chance of parallels, which brings us to the possibility of a diversity of meaning and its further transmission. Let us think of the two short *lives* of Sade and Fourier<sup>39</sup> written by Barthes, put at the end of the eponymous volume, fragmented into twenty-two and twelve "biographèmes" respectively, which are well representative of the creative decentering of biographical *topoi* proposed by the author of *Degré zéro de l'écriture*:

35 The term comes from J.-M. Schaeffer, who distinguishes between hard constitutive or regulative genericities and hypertextual or analogical genericities.

36 M. Calle-Gruber, "Quand le nouveau roman prend les risques du romanesque", in *Autobiographie et biographie*, Nizet, 1989, p. 188.

37 *Œuvres complètes de Roland Barthes*, édition établie et présentée par Éric Marty, Paris, Seuil, 1993-95 (three volumes), tome III, 1995, p. 318. I attempt to analyze the poetics of the Barthesian biographem in See M. Macé, "Le Jardin d'hiver" in *Barthes, au lieu du roman*, *op. cit.*

38 On the decline of the genre, see M. Fumaroli's article, "Des 'Vies' à la biographie: le crépuscule du Parnasse", *Diogenes*, no. 139, Oct. 1987.

39 Barthes decided not to give a life of Loyola "in accordance with the principles of *biography* alluded to in the preface; I would have lacked the meaningful material" (*ibid.*, p. 1048, Barthes's emphasis).

9° His knowledge: mathematics, experimental sciences, geography, astronomy.

10° His old age: he surrounds himself with cats and flowers.

11° His concierge found him dead, in a frock coat, kneeling among the flowerpots.

12° Fourier had read Sade<sup>40</sup>.

Inserting common expressions in everyday biographies, the disclosure of personal facts, is described by M. Sheringham as the “the details taking over the structure”, it aims to create a kind of theater of memory (the expression comes from J. Roudaud in his beautiful essay on G. Macé<sup>41</sup>), which is not a fixation technique but an art of mobility, a dream of creating a memory that is “light, tactical, mobile”, “a memory that sheds light on life” (M. de Certeau) aimed at making the perishable material of that life available to others, through a mechanism of affective transfer, which evokes the fragments of memory and, of course, R. Barthes’s famous programme:

If I were a writer and dead, how I’d love my life-story to be reduced, by a friendly and casual biographer, to a few details, a few tastes, a few inflections, let’s say “biographèmes” whose distinction and mobility could travel beyond all destiny and come to touch, like Epicurean atoms, some future body, which is to be scattered to the four corners of the earth; a “perforated” life, in short<sup>42</sup>.

Hence poetics that is struck by disorder and availability, based on local effects of the sublime or global effects of the pathetic (since the biographical chronotope has death as its sole horizon), hence a genre that functions as an aesthetic language for certain against all the suspicions that one might have about the levelling up of the narrative and lyricism since the post-war period, since it exploits nothing other than “the tragic potential of the footnote<sup>43</sup>”, hence a biofiction that plays on theatricality, hyperrealism (think of the works by Yann Gaillard<sup>44</sup>), or a fascination (Quignard) beyond the representation of the writing about the other, becoming a form of anti-mimetic writing.

#### - Biography as anthropology and inquiry

In this battle of opposites, where the literature uses the biographical for what it is not (to rob it of the novelistic and the tragic), literature recovers functions – ministries – that are archaic to biographical discourse, but which have become foreign to literature defined as a simple aesthetic project: the narrative demonstration of difference, awareness of the epistemological and

40 *Ibid.* p. 1173. Note the presence of the cat, often associated in Barthes’s work with the theme of time and a privileged index of fictionality: see, of course, Abbé Séguins yellow cat (“La Voyageuse de nuit”, preface to Chateaubriand’s *Vie de Rancé*, text reprinted in *Nouveaux Essais critiques*, O. C., tome II, pp. 1365-1367).

41 “Un matin de mémoire”, afterword to *Bois dormant et autres poèmes en prose*, Gallimard, collection “Poésie”, 2002, p. 204.

42 Sade, Fourier, *Loyola*, *Œuvres complètes de Roland Barthes*, op. cit. p. 1045.

43 In the words of A. Grafton (“Les Origines tragiques de l’érudition : une histoire de la note en bas de page”, Seuil, 1998).

44 *Choix des morts illustres*, Paris, U.G.E., 1987 (includes *Vies des morts illustres*, *Mémoires des morts illustres*, *Gloire des morts illustres*, *Chronique des morts illustres*).

cognitive stakes of biography. A double metaphor for the biographer: as an ethnologist and detective.

The ethnological biographer aims to reintroduce otherness into the common. Reactivated by M. Foucault and his dream of building a counter-history of the world, of redeeming the *minores*, rehabilitating the casualties of history, servants, Judases and models, the project is an old one. Thomas Carlyle (who proposed registers of an “innumerable number of obscure lives<sup>45</sup>”), J. Aubrey or even Sainte-Beuve, proposing to erect statues “to the great men who did not shine, to the lovers who did not love<sup>46</sup>”, only preceded the way in which contemporary writers came to take an interest in the past (P. Quignard’s Rome, P. Michon’s barbarians, etc.). They play with an effect of defamiliarization by exploiting the strangeness that seemingly ordinary History can provide when laid bare by erudition, philology, and archaeology, disciplines that A. Nadaud and G. Macé have taught us to see as forms of fiction.

This anthropological biographer is combined with the investigative biographer, a figure no doubt better known for the countless stagings of the I-mediator or I-witness in contemporary literature, and which I won’t dwell on<sup>47</sup> but will simply note that its horizon is not necessarily the autobiography. This speculative or exploratory biography can take the form of humorous parody or cognitive games on the fragile boundaries of individuality and referential reality, staging less a psychological relationship than a judicial inquiry (I am thinking in particular of the neo-Oulipian biography such as *Vie de L’abominable tisonnier de John McTaggart Ellis Mc Taggart* by Jacques Roubaud): ‘[Certain contemporary authors] invest abstract procedures of knowledge with a novelistic charge [...] Scholarly knowledge, critical reflection, the amateur essay all become forms of intellectual fiction in which the writer stages the adventures of knowledge,’ writes B. Blanckeman<sup>48</sup>.

#### - Biography as mysticism

The coexistence of the profane immortality of signs and sacred eternity of the Word, the collusion of scriptural burial and spiritual survival, goes back to the origins of history and literature. It leads the *imaginary lives* that recover the genre of the proper memoir, which leads the biographical genre to assume a profane or sacred memorial function: haunted by the figure of Lazarus, the biographer is the one who relies on the power of signs and quickly becomes

45 Th. Carlyle, *Biography, in English and other critical essays*, London and Toronto, 1925, p. 65. Quoted by L. Koch (“Esemplari, parrallele, inimitabili, immaginarie”, *Strumenti critici*, May 1986, I, 2, p. 249).

46 *Volupté*, Garnier-Flammarion, 1969, p. 163. Quoted by L. Koch (“Esemplari, parrallele, inimitabili, immaginarie”. *Strumenti critici*, May 1986, I, 2, p. 249).

47 On novels of biographical inquiry, see in particular D. Madelénat, “Un roman de la biographie: Les Hommes de Papier de William Golding”, *La Licorne*, “Le Travail du biographique”, 1988, no. 4.

48 *Les fictions singulières, étude sur le roman français contemporain*, Prétexte, 2002, pp. 148-149.

demiurge (according to a metaphor present in M. Schwob<sup>49</sup>), enchanter (G. Macé), or redeemer (P. Michon). The nominalism of biography, a genre of names, becomes resurrectionist when the despair inherent in an intrinsically tragic narrative becomes a suggestion of meaning. Through the grace of an assumed mysticism in Michon's work, through a poetic "resurrection of the flesh in the light of dreams<sup>50</sup>" in G. Macé's, through the performative violence of the bare word in P. Quignard's, to repeat a life, to "double the realistic illusion" as Michon puts it, beyond any practical purpose, in the aesthetic field, is to radically banish its contingency. And the more life is altered and reduced, and the more minuscule and mediocre the existence, the more the simple naming of the one who has existed will make apparent the irreducible presence of an almost-nothing that engages the biographer's whole being. The poet must, according to an expression borrowed from *Moby Dick*<sup>51</sup>, "draw God into the book":

In lives, [...] the old belief in the arts perhaps takes the place once occupied by God in hagiographies. [...] Roland Barthes noted that anthropology rests on the postulate that "it is profoundly unjust that a man should be born and die without having been spoken of"; anthropology tries to repair this injustice, but literature is not forbidden to do so either. [...] To write about lives is to invent the existence of people who actually existed, who had a civil status, it's to double the illusion of realism [...] And, if in this troubling operation one manages to capture a little truth, perhaps one briefly brings back to life, for the space of two sentences or two words, those vanished existences<sup>52</sup>.

One thinks of the prodigious exchange that closes *Vies minuscules*:

In search of them [the dead], in their conversation which is not silence, I found joy, and perhaps it was theirs too; I nearly came into being many times through their aborted rebirth, and always died with them; I would have liked to write from the height of that vertiginous moment, the terror, to write as a speechless child dies, melting into summer: a very great emotion that can hardly be described. No power will decide that I didn't succeed at all. No power will decide that my emotion in no way broke out in their hearts. [...] May a child always be born in Marsac. May Dufourneau's death be less definitive because Élise remembered or made it up; and may Élises death be lightened by these lines. In my fictional summers, let their winter hesitate. In the ruins of what might have been, in the winged conclave, a house of Cards, they may be<sup>53</sup>.

The "I" grants itself the power to make the night "hesitate": narrative instances mingle and link up, fiction brings to light the materiality of characters who are given to us as if they existed, as having been close to the author, like the cousins from the provinces or these "wordless" children quickly forgotten by the city, these anonymous people as we all know them and of which we will

49 A "Vie de Morphiel, démiruge" should have preceded the series of *Vies imaginaires* (see *Œuvres de Marcel Schwob, op. cit.*, p. 110).

50 *Vies antérieures*, Gallimard, coll. "Cahiers du Chemin", 1991, p. 125.

51 Interview with Pierre, *Le Même et l'Autre*, n° 3, May 1992, p. 54.

52 Interview with Tristan Hordé, *Le Français aujourd'hui*, n°87, September 1989, p. 78.

53 *Vies minuscules*, Gallimard, 1984, p. 207.

undoubtedly be a part, but whose names, as George Steiner points out, only the telephone book will preserve forever. The power of redemption is alternately withdrawn from the supreme instance (“no one will decide”), a vivid text that the author is striving for, achieved through the power of the Word, through the liturgy of imperatives. Death is birth and birth is death, the Narrator is God and God is a Narrator, since he has the power to command the verb “to be”.

In this repair of the split lies perhaps the supreme, metaphysical function of a biographical book. It restores the fabric of Being torn into separate monads, orders and soothes the inflation of the existent (that injustice for the many spoken of by Plato), offers other selves between the self and the not-self, fascinating territories, breaks for a moment the spatio-temporal limits that confine us. Fences become porous between here and elsewhere, between the present and a past redeemed by the narrative.

explains D. Madelénat<sup>54</sup>: the “intercessor” biographer redeems the human being, “granting burial to the dead by remembering their names”<sup>55</sup>.

### A wager on language

Returning to literary history, contemporary biofiction shares many of the defining traits of “post-modernity”, as defined by B. Mc Hale<sup>56</sup>: eclecticism or fragmentation of styles, blurring of enunciative and referential levels, reversal or manipulation of established value systems, indeterminacy and openness of the text to manipulation by the reader, instrumentalization of the discourse of knowledge, history, in particular, history within “metafictions”. Stirred by a dialectic of dispersion and obsession with splintering, but haunted by a dream of reunion and palingenesis, biofiction tends to reject the traditional function of literary representation through *mimesis*, modeling and exemplification, and no longer aims directly to provide knowledge about the world, of the general order, the discourse, or even simply an emotion, but to make “the precious essence of the individual” appear again. According to R. Barthes’s concept “a science for every object”: the contemporary novel makes the particular not an object of collective knowledge, shared exemplification, but a singularity that exists through the ontological powers of fictional naming. This trend goes beyond the failure of structuralism and aims for a new *Cratylism*: since it is accepted that there is no such thing as non-discursive knowledge, no such thing as non-narrative identity, since the word operates at the very level of ontological processes, language can have these powers to create fictional worlds, which lose their value when put in comparison to the inherently unstable referential worlds.

Representation is then to be rethought in terms of emotional reassignment, empathy and the local, free and unpredictable manipulation of fragments: a dual

<sup>54</sup> *La Biographie*, P.U.F., 1984, p. 191.

<sup>55</sup> *Vies antérieures*, op. cit. p. 22.

<sup>56</sup> See *Postmodernist fiction*, Routledge, London and New-York, 1987 or L. Hutcheon, *A Poetic of Postmodernism, history, theory, fiction*, Routledge, London and New-York, 1988.

movement of individuation and emotional transfer, of dispersal of the individual and sharing through the text, is at play in contemporary “singular fictions<sup>57</sup>”. Whereas the moment of modernity denied all performative efficacy and heuristic power to the narrative, biofictions take up the challenge of language once again, and recast constitutive duration and collective knowledge in the fiction of the unique: fictional lives – possible lives – offer what J. Roudaut calls, in relation to the works of G. Macé: “a device of resurrection and emancipation<sup>58</sup>”, a mode of survival through writing that is both derisory and sublime: literature.

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<sup>57</sup> Use B. Blanckeman's expression (*Les Fictions singulières*, op. cit.), which attempts to propose alternative classifications to traditional categorizations of the novel.

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MYTHEN UND TATEN DES THESEUS.  
EIN VERSUCH SEINE MYTHEN UND SEIN LEBEN MITEINANDER ZU  
VERKNÜPFEN

Alexandru Popa

MYTHS AND DEEDS OF THESEUS. AN ATTEMPT TO LINK HIS MYTHS  
AND HIS LIFE

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/JZFS7952>

**Abstract:** *Theseus is mentioned in considerations regarding writings and myths in which his name appears. In such considerations the life of Theseus, seem to be referred to, when actions attributed to him are described in some sort of a chronological order. This situation may raise questions about the possibility to construct a biography of Theseus and questions about the acceptability of such a construct. Considerations regarding the myths of Theseus and those regarding the deeds of Theseus should be kept separated. This explicit separation of two kinds of considerations does usually not occur and thus questions may be asked: which is the acceptable meaning of considerations containing statements using 'Theseus'? Should they be used only to refer to traditional tales about Theseus i.e. myths of Theseus? Can they also be used to refer to a chronological chain of events which constitute somehow the life of Theseus? How is a literary text to be considered where the name 'Theseus' occurs? Should it be considered only as a mythological drama based on some myths of Theseus? Can it be considered also as a source for describing a sequence of the life of Theseus? This article seeks to tackle following problems: general mythological and literary research on one side and specific narrative, logical and ontological perspectives are to be put in contrast in order to offer consistent considerations on two separate issues. Firstly, there are considerations on myths about Theseus and mythological writings as sources for the reconstruction of myths of the classical world. Secondly, there are considerations on stories of Theseus as sources for his biography in a non-existent mythical world. These later considerations can justify consistent assertions on Theseus himself. The use within a certain theoretical frame of considerations of this type can be bound together in a biography of the real but non-existent life of Theseus.*

**Key words:** *myths of Theseus, mythological literature, narrative and historical reconstructions, fictional truth, non-existent worlds*

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**Article history:** Received: 12 May 2025; Reviewed: 30 May 2025; Revised: 9 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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‘Theseus’ ist ein Ausdruck, der in Untersuchungen erscheint, welche Werke der mythologischen Literatur bestimmte Mythen anbelangen. Ein Beispiel einer derartigen Untersuchung ist U. Reinhardts systematisches Handbuch zum Antiken Mythos. Der Ausdruck ‘Theseus’ bezeichnet darin eine bekannte mythologische Figur. In Ausführungen, worin der Name *Theseus* erscheint, wird der Ausdruck auch in Verbindung mit Taten des Theseus erwähnt und diese werden chronologisch geordnet. Es wird auf Beginn und Ende dieser Taten hingewiesen und auf das Alter des Theseus zur Zeit der jeweiligen Handlungen (Reinhardt, 2011, pp. 129-132). Die Taten des Theseus scheinen, Handlungen in dessen Leben zu sein. Solche Ausführungen weisen damit eine gewisse Ähnlichkeit zu einer biografischen Darlegung auf. Es wird dabei nicht ausdrücklich bemerkt, in welchem Sinn gemeint wird, dass Theseus auf eine bestimmte Weise gehandelt bzw. gelebt hat. Der Sinn des Ausdruckes ‘Theseus’ wird nicht verdeutlicht und das mag zu Unschlüssigkeit führen: die Ausführungen scheinen auch Erfahrungen und Taten des Theseus zu betreffen. Diesem Theseus scheint gewissermaßen ein Leben zugeschrieben zu werden, obwohl die Untersuchung keine Beschreibung seiner Taten ist, sondern eine Darstellung und Erläuterungen von Mythen als fiktionale Inhalte. Diese Mythen werden aus dem Wechselverhältnis von vergangener Realität, fiktiver Vorzeit (als Spiegelung dieser Realität) und aktueller Gegenwart gedeutet (Reinhardt, 2011, p. 5). Die Mythen erscheinen nicht als Quellen für die Gestaltung eines Lebensganges. Trotz spezifischer mythenwissenschaftlicher Anliegen, heißt es von Theseus u.a., dass er auf Anweisungen seiner Mutter seine Heldenlaufbahn begonnen hat und in Skyros gestorben ist, dass er als junger Mann von Troizen nach Athen gereist ist, wo er anschließend von seinem Stiefvater Aigeus wiedererkannt wird (Reinhardt, 2011, pp. 130-131). Wird der Name ‘Theseus’ gebraucht, so ist der Eindruck anhaltend, dass dabei irgendwie zweideutig sowohl ein Mythos als auch eine handelnde Figur gemeint wird. Die Untersuchung nennt Titel und Autoren, welche Theseus-Mythen überliefert haben (so Apollodoros und Hyginus) (Reinhardt, 2011, p. 130). In der Untersuchung werden andererseits ausdrücklich die Taten des Theseus zeitlich geordnet aufgezählt, betrachtet und nicht die Texte, deren Titel genannt werden. Es werden zunächst die Taten des Theseus umrissen und dann knapp auf Inhalte von Mythen des Theseus eingegangen. Solchen Ausführungen haftet eine gewisse Zweideutigkeit an.

Dieser Beitrag setzt sich als Ziel, die Zweideutigkeit in Betrachtungen bezüglich Theseus zu umreißen, zu umgehen und eine stichhaltige Untermauerung für eine Biografie des Theseus zu bieten. Theseus ist eine mythologische Figur. Insofern nennt der Ausdruck *Theseus* das Subjekt bestimmter Mythen. Betrachtungen zum Leben des Theseus können nichtsdestotrotz zusammenhängend zu einer Biografie aufgestellt werden, wenn klargestellt wird, dass der Ausdruck *Theseus* auch das Objekt (nicht nur das Subjekt) von Texten bezeichnet. Das heißt, dass der Ausdruck etwas Bestehendes bezeichnet und nicht nur etwas bloß Erzähltes in jeweiligen Texten.

Der Terminus *Mythos* bezeichnet eine Kategorie von traditionellen Erzählungen (Burkert, 1979, p. 2) bzw. eine Art von traditionellen Erzählungen,

worin ein tiefer Sinn des menschlichen Daseins eingeflochten ist (Wheelwright, 1974, p. 538). Dass Mythen als traditionelle Erzählungen untersucht werden wird bei Rekonstruktionen von (griechischen) Mythen vorausgesetzt. Solche Mythenrekonstruktionen, sind mythenwissenschaftliche Vorgehen, die auch in der Literaturwissenschaft gebraucht werden. Es werden in solchen Rekonstruktionen aus vorliegenden mythologischen oder mythographischen Werken, ursprüngliche Mythen herausgesondert. Anschließend werden gemäß methodologisch festgelegten Verfahren zusammenhängende Darstellungen aufgebaut. Auswahl, Deutung und chronologische Einstufung der Mythenquellen wird vorgenommen (Rose, 1965, pp. 9-10). Die getreue Wiedergabe der Mytheninhalte (Kerenyi, 1974, p. xxii) und die fortlaufende Zusammenfügung von disparaten Teilelementen zu einer einheitlichen Mythenerzählung (Ranke-Graves, 2005, p. 20) werden als spezifische Zielsetzung einer korrekten Mythenrekonstruktion festgelegt. Damit wird erwogen, dass eine Mythenrekonstruktion kein Aneinanderreihen von Inhalten literarischer Werke ist, sondern eine Wiederherstellung eines hypothetischen, aber entsprechend dokumentierten Gefüges von zusammenhängenden Mythen. Das Ergebnis der Wiederherstellung ist ein narratives Konstrukt, welches den ursprünglichen Kern traditioneller Erzählungen wiedergeben soll. Zur Begründung für ein derartiges Vorgehen werden überlieferte Modelle der griechischen und lateinischen Literatur genannt (Gantz, 1993, pp. xv-xvi). Die anschließende Betrachtung der Mythen erfolgt unterschiedlich aus mythen- bzw. aus literaturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive. Entstehung, soziale und kulturelle Funktion in einem geschichtlichen Zusammenhang, Entwicklung und Veränderung des narrativen Kernes, Verknüpfung von mythischen, philosophischen, religiösen Vorstellungen sind Probleme der mythenwissenschaftlichen Analyse und Deutung von Mythen. Literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen verfolgen hingegen die Wirkung mythischer Strukturen im Rahmen von literarischen Werken, den psychologischen Aspekt von mythisch verankerten Konflikten, die Funktion symbolischer und dramatischer Elemente mythischer Prägung (Dabezies, 1992, p. 967).

Die obigen allgemeinen Erwägungen zum Mythos und den klassischen Mythen gelten ohne Weiteres auch für Rekonstruktionen der Theseus-Mythen. Mythenwissenschaftliche Arbeiten, worin Rekonstruktionen der Theseus-Mythen vorkommen (Kerenyi, 1974, pp. 129-132) folgen den genannten Zielsetzungen und lehnen sich dabei an überlieferte Modelle aus der griechischen Antike, so etwa jene welche Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Apollodorus liefern. Die Ordnung der Abschnitte in der Rekonstruktion ist die gleiche wie die bei Plutarch. Diese Abschnitte enthalten Erzählungen von der Geburt und Jugend des Theseus bei Pittheus in Troizen, Erzählungen von den Kämpfen auf dem Weg über den Isthmus von Korinth nach Athen, Erzählung der Ankunft in Athen und vom Stier von Marathon, dann der Bericht von Theseus auf Kreta, von der Tötung des Minotaurus, der Beziehung zu Ariadne und des Tod des Aigeus, Geschichten vom Streit des Theseus mit den Söhnen des Pallas aus Pallene und von den Reformen in Athen, Erzählungen vom Kampf mit den Amazonen, der Heirat mit Antiope,

und der Geburt des Hippolytos, die Erzählung von der Heirat mit Phaedra und dem Tod des Hippolytos, die Geschichte von der Freundschaft mit Peirithous, von dem Kampf mit den Kentauren, von der Entführung der Helena und vom Raub der Persephone im Hades, der Bericht vom Tod des Theseus auf der Insel Skyros.

Rekonstruktionen von Theseus-Mythen bestehen aus berichtartigen Zusammenfassungen und Zusammenfügung von Inhalten mythologischer und mythographischer Werke. An derartigen Rekonstruktion ist zumindest ein offenkundiges Charakteristikum erkennbar, welches auch eine Biografie kennzeichnet: diese scheint eine Chronologie der Taten des Theseus an verschiedenen Orten in Griechenland zu verfolgen. Wäre die Kennzeichnung der Rekonstruktion als *Biografie* insofern berechtigt?

Der Terminus 'Biografie' bezeichnet eine literarische Gattung. Als solche handelt es sich um eine einheitliche Erzählung eines Lebens an einen Dritten (Scheuer, 2009, p. 65). Als literarische Gattung hat die Biografie einen umstrittenen Status. Der Gegenstand der Schriftkategorie ist dabei aber nicht umstritten. Der Gegenstand ist das Leben eines Individuums. Umstritten ist hingegen die Darstellungsweise: die Wahl, die Perspektive, die Zielsetzung, die Interpretation der Daten kann kaum auf einen gemeinsamen Nenner gebracht werden. Fest steht nur, dass Biografien das Leben bestimmter Individuen vor allem von öffentlichen, oft von historischen Persönlichkeiten betrachten.

Eine Biografie wird einmal theoretisch als ein Zweig der Geschichtswissenschaft betrachtet worin das Leben eines Menschen wahrheitsgetreu rekonstruiert wird (Wellek & Warren, 1972, pp. 73-74). Auch praktisch, aufgrund der aufgeworfenen und behandelten Probleme gehört die Biografie ebenfalls dahin. Die Weise wie vorgegangen wird, die Bedeutung der Quellen, die Perspektive auf die erforschten Sachverhalte zeichnen Biografien gleichermaßen als geschichtswissenschaftlich geprägte Untersuchungen aus. Biografien setzen sich mit Individuen in einem breiteren sozialen Kontext auseinander, sie suchen dabei ein dokumentiertes Abbild der Eigentümlichkeit ihrer Lebensdarzulegen, und das Typische als Ausdruck spezifischer geschichtlicher Umstände als wesentlicher Teil des betreffenden Lebenslaufes zu präsentieren. Biografien werden andererseits aber auch als verbale Artefakte bezeichnet, welche in einem narrativen Rahmen das Leben des beschriebenen Subjektes, d.h. den betrachteten Gegenstand, zeugen (Nadel, 1984, p. 8). Die Ansichten zum Status der Biografie driften damit auseinander. Einerseits wird bestimmt, dass Biografien deskriptiv und faktual, vom Zeugnis der Quellen bedingt sind, und eine Rekonstruktion eines Lebenslaufes als wahrheitsgetreues Lebensbild zusammenfügen. Andererseits wird angeführt, dass Biografien konstruktiv und kreativ vorgehen und gewissermaßen eine Form literarischer Fiktion zusammensetzen (Seymour, 2002, p. 255).

Im Falle der Biografie handelt es sich offenbar um eine Form eines narrativen Artefaktes das sowohl als faktuale Darstellung wie auch als kreative Konstruktion gekennzeichnet werden kann. Eine Biografie scheint zugleich als ein faktual genaues bzw. wahrheitsgetreues wie auch als ein kreativ gefügtes

interpretatives Lebensbild aufgebaut werden zu können. Ohne jeglichen Bezug auf vorgegebene, faktual dokumentierte Umstände und ohne Bezug auf den (relativen und objektiven) Zeitverlauf kann aber auch eine kreative Biografie nicht umhin. Sollte eine kreative Biografien mittels einer figurativen Sprachführung und einer eigenen Auswahl von dargestellten Fakten, ein Lebensbild nahezu erschaffen, ist auch diese Biografie dennoch auf die Berücksichtigung von zwei Bedingungen angewiesen. 1. Die Biografie hat ein Leben als (faktualen) Gegenstand darzustellen. 2. Die Biografie ist die Darstellung einer (zeitlichen) Abfolge von Geschehen. Die Betrachtung des Lebens eines Individuums als abgelaufenes Faktum und die Gliederung der Darstellung unter Berücksichtigung einer doppelten (absoluten und relativen) chronologischen Ordnung sind wesentliche Bestandteile eines biografischen Textes. Jedwelche biografische Schrift muss diese Bedingungen erfüllen, auch eine des Theseus.

In der Mythenrekonstruktion scheint eine relative Chronologie vorhanden zu sein: die inhaltlichen Abschnitte deuten auf Früheres bzw. Späteres in einer Zeitachse hin. Der Umstand ist vordergründig als Verweis auf einen zeitlichen Ablauf identifizierbar. Der Anfang dieser relativen Zeitachse erscheint als Geburt des Theseus, das Ende als dessen Tod. Gemeint wird allerdings eigentlich, auch wenn nicht ausdrücklich so, immer eine Erzählung von etwas früher bzw. etwas später Erfolgtem. Die Analogie zwischen Mythenrekonstruktion und Lebensbericht ist damit da, aber dieser Umstand ist irreführend. Diese Analogie beruht auf den missverständlichen Gebrauch von Äußerungen welche augenscheinlich mit Theseus handeln aber eigentlich Erzählungen über Theseus meinen. Die Mythenrekonstruktion verknüpft im Grund genommen Inhalte von Erzähltem miteinander und verweist nicht auf chronologisch aufeinanderfolgende Lebensabschnitte. Die Mythenerzählung widerspiegelt eigentlich nichts chronologisch Abgelaufenes, sondern gibt nur einheitlich erzählte Zeitverhältnisse wieder. Eine biografische Darstellung des Theseus hat die Chronologie der Lebensabschnitte wiederzugeben, und nicht die Chronologie von Erzähltem in (wiederhergestellten) Erzählungen. Dieses Vorgehen wird in der Mythenrekonstruktion nicht realisiert. Die Mythenerzählung enthält keine korrekte Wiedergabe von zeitlich festgelegten Geschehen, sondern eine stichhaltige Zusammenfügung von zeitlich aufeinander abgestimmten Erzählsubjekten.

Die Mythenerzählung enthält unter anderem auch einen Bericht über die Entstehung einer politischen Einheit in der Attika, wofür Theseus, der König von Athen, als Urheber genannt wird. Es erscheint auch ein Bericht über Konflikte des Theseus mit den Söhnen des Pallas. Der Synoikismus, d.h. die Verschmelzung mehrerer selbständigen Poleis in der griechischen Halbinsel Attika zu einer politischen Einheit unter der Führung Athens, ist ein geschichtlicher Prozess, der in der historischen Forschung mit dem Namen des Königs Theseus verbunden wird. Dessen Regierung wird in der zweiten Hälfte des 13. Jahrhunderts v.u.Z. angesetzt (Bury & Meiggs, 1977, p. 117) d.h. im Kontext der Abwehr der Dorier (Alföldy, 1969, p. 13). Der Kampf des Theseus mit den Söhnen des Pallas aus Pallene mag

auf Konflikte in diesem Prozess hinweisen. Das wird geschichtswissenschaftlich ebenfalls als Faktum in Betracht gezogen (Bury et al., 1925, p. 547).

Solche geschichtlichen Geschehen d.h. solche politischen Entscheidungen und Konflikte eines Königs Theseus in Athen der Bronzezeit sind offenbar in griechische Mythen eingeflossen und wurden anschließend in deren Rekonstruktion eingebunden. Die Rekonstruktion dieser Mythen enthält damit kohärent zusammengefügte Verweise auf wiederhergestellte Inhalte traditioneller Geschichten, und auch einige Verweise auf faktual Vorgefallenes. In den wiederhergestellten Mythen, wird so auch geschichtlich Erfolgtes erwähnt und nicht nur Erzählgut zusammengeschweißt. Einiges, wovon Mythen des Theseus berichten, hat tatsächlich stattgefunden. Insofern verweist das, was in der Rekonstruktion der Theseus-Mythen aufgenommen wurde, indirekt auf geschichtliches Geschehen so auf die Tätigkeit eines Theseus als König von Athen. Dieser Umstand, dass die Mythenerzählung Gewisses nennt, was in den Mythen als verstelltes geschichtliches Faktum erscheint, reicht allerdings zur Kennzeichnung der Mythenrekonstruktion als Biografie nicht aus. Diese narrative Konstruktion ist weiterhin nicht als eine biografische Schrift zu betrachten, auch wenn darin Bestimmtes erscheint, das mythisch verklärt wurde, anschließend aber geschichtswissenschaftlich als empirisches Faktum nachgewiesen wurde. Es ist in der Mythenrekonstruktion ganz einfach nicht genug Material für eine Biografie des geschichtlichen Königs Theseus von Athen.

Die jeweiligen Ausführungen enthalten einen Namen der mit einer geschichtlichen Gestalt in Verbindung gebracht wird und zwar mit dem König Theseus, dem Urheber von politischen Reformen im geschichtlichen Athen und dessen Auseinandersetzung mit politischen Gegnern. In den Ausführungen ist auch eine zeitlich einheitliche Behandlung des Erzählten erkennbar. Weder der Verweis auf politischen Handlungen des Theseus noch die chronologische Kohärenz sind ausreichende Bedingungen zur Kennzeichnung der Rekonstruktion als Biografie: einige Verweise auf nachgewiesenen geschichtlichen Geschehen sind vorrätig aber diese sind gering. Der Verweis auf zeitlich Abgelaufenes ist einheitlich aber es ist keine Wiedergabe von etwas tatsächlich Erfolgtem.

Sollte eine Biografie von einer Gestalt verfasst werden, dessen Leben tatsächlich all das enthalten soll, was in Mythen erwähnt wird, dann kann es selbstverständlich nicht die genannte geschichtliche Gestalt gewesen sein. Jener Theseus hätte nicht in die Unterwelt hinuntersteigen können. Er hätte auch nicht auf dem Meeresgrund Götter treffen können. Diese Biografie hat eine Schrift zu sein, die chronologisch korrekt all dessen Handlungen wiedergibt und zwar jene die genauso abgelaufen sind, wie Zeugnisse in den Quellen es erwähnen. Der Theseus von dem die Biografie erstellt werden soll, soll jene Gestalt sein, die tatsächlich vom Gott der Unterwelt getäuscht und gefangengenommen und anschließend von seinem Vetter Herakles befreit worden ist. Das kann nicht mit dem König Theseus (der Bronzezeit) geschehen. Es dürfte wohl aber mit dem Herrscher Theseus (der mythischen Zeit) passiert sein. Diese Gestalt mag den gleichen Namen tragen wie ein geschichtlicher König von Athen und sie mag

auch in einer gleichnamigen Stadt geherrscht haben. Das ist aber sicherlich nicht die geschichtliche Ortschaft, deren Akropolis in der Bronzezeit errichtet, in der Archaik neu gegliedert wurde und während der Klassik, im Anschluss an den Sieg über die Perser, als architektonisches Kunstwerk aufgebaut wurde. Die Stadt wo der Herrscher Theseus gelebt hat, ist jene wo das Geschlecht der Erechtheidae geherrscht hat und worin Aigeus, der Vater des Theseus, eine Hexe mit einem Drachenzugwagen geheiratet und worin später Theseus den Thron bestiegen hat, bevor er zusammen mit seinem Freund Peirithous, in die Unterwelt gestiegen ist und dort vom Gott Hades gefesselt wurde. Eine Biografie dieses Herrschers Theseus sollte erstellt werden können und zwar ausgehend von den gleichen Quellen, welche die Mythenwissenschaft zur Rekonstruktion von Theseus-Mythen gebraucht. Die Quellen sollten aber hierbei zum Beleg von nicht-existenten (mythischen) Geschehen dienen und nicht zur Dokumentierung von existenten (geschichtlichen) Mythen. Hierzu sollte das Lebensbild dieses Theseus und dessen Quellen in einem angemessenen theoretischen Rahmen so aufeinander bezogen werden, dass dieses Lebensbild jenes Leben wiedergibt, das alles enthält, was von dem Herrscher Theseus aus der Sippe des Erechtheus berichtet wird.

Den theoretischen Rahmen einer Biografie des Theseus aus der Sippe des Erechtheus, umreißen spezifische literaturtheoretische und philosophische Erwägungen. Es handelt sich um solche, die um das Problem der literarischen Fiktion kreisen (Zipfel, 2001, pp. 20–29). Ein Vorgehen zur Erstellung einer Biografie des Theseus muss insofern ein partikuläres literaturwissenschaftliches sein, kein allgemein mythenwissenschaftliches. Es muss von faktualen mythologischen Schriften d.h. von Quellen von Theseus-Mythen ausgehen aber fiktive Sachverhalte bzw. den mythischen Theseus und dessen Leben in dessen realen Welt, nicht-faktualen Welt, betrachten. Vor einem spezifischen theoretischen Hintergrund hat diese Biografie konsequent von Bezugnahmen auf faktuale, literaturgeschichtliche Umstände abzusehen und konsequent auf fiktive mythische Umstände Bezug zu nehmen.

Hierfür soll zunächst gezeigt werden, unter welchen Bedingungen diesem Theseus, Realität zukommt. Es sollte dabei deutlich ersichtlich sein, um welchen Theseus es sich handelt d.h. welcher Lebensgang in der besagten Welt beschrieben wird. Es soll zudem aufgeklärt werden, in welchem Sinn, jener Theseus real und existent in einer fiktiven Welt ist und real aber nicht-existent in der faktualen. Dessen Lebensbild soll aufgrund von Quellen beschrieben werden, und insofern einen Anspruch auf wahrheitsgetreue Rekonstruktion erheben, auch wenn die Bestimmung „wahrheitsgemäß“ im Falle eines solchen Lebensbildes nur in einem spezifischen Sinne gelten kann. Das Aufstellen eines derartigen Lebensbildes des Theseus hängt mit der Art und Weise zusammen, wie reale aber non-faktuale literarische Welten bestehen und auch noch wie deren Sachverhalte richtig beschrieben werden können. Gewisse literaturtheoretische Ansichten klären die Bedingungen der Realität literarischer Welten auf und untermauern literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen fiktiver Welten. Nur

vor dem Hintergrund derartiger Aufklärungen kann von einem eigentlichen Leben des Theseus die Rede sein, eben weil es sich um Sachverhalte einer nicht-existenten Welt handelt.

Das Leben des Theseus läuft in einem literarischen Universum ab, das Gegenstand einer intuitiven Faszination ist, welches Staunen bei all jenen bewirkt, welche sie betreten (Pavel, 2011). Das Universum besteht aus literarischen Welten. Eine erste wichtige Bestimmung zur Kennzeichnung dieser Welten als etwas Reales beruht auf der expliziten Trennung von Darstellungsweise, Darstellungsinhalt und Darstellungsgegenstand einer literarischen Erzählung (Martinez & Scheffel, 2009, p. 20). Das Wie und das Was d.h. Darstellungsweise und Darstellungsgehalt einer literarischen Schrift sind Teil der faktualen Welt. Das Wie und das Was literarischer Schriften sind, semiotisch betrachtet, tatsächlich vorhandene Bestandteile jeweiliger Texte. Diese narrativen Gefüge werden dabei als Superzeichen betrachtet (Plett, 1975, p. 43). Es sind die Funktive eines literarischen Zeichens (Eco, 1976, p. 49). Gängige literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchungen befassen sich mit Aspekten des Wie literarischer Schriften, so beispielsweise mit der ausdrucksvollen Sprache, welche die Stimmung und Haltung des Sprechers vermitteln, den Leser zu überzeugen suchen und das Zeichen selbst betonen (Wellek & Warren, 1972, pp. 20-21). Auch Aspekte des Was werden von literaturwissenschaftlichen Betrachtungen betroffen: der Inhalt literarischer Werke wird als eine Welt der Einbildung, der Illusion, ohne Wahrheitswert gesehen (Wellek & Warren, 1972, pp. 23-24).

Dieser Trennung von Was und Wie einer literarischen Schrift ist das Worüber eines literarischen Textes als Ergänzung hinzuzufügen. Das Worüber meint dessen Gegenstand und dieser ist kein Teil der faktualen Welt, sondern Teil einer fiktiven Welt. Betreffs dieser Welt hat Folgendes zu gelten: es handelt sich um eine nicht-existente Welt. Die Realität einer solchen Welt ist an der Weise ihres Bestehens erkennbar: eine solche Welt ist ein Glied einer dualen Struktur, worin eine primäre aktuelle (faktuale und existente) Basis eine sekundäre (fiktive und nicht-existente) als Reales bestehen lässt insofern eine Form einer Korrespondenzbeziehung die Glieder der dualen Struktur als Realia verbindet (Pavel, 1986, p. 57).

Literarische Welten sind eine spezifische Form von emergenten Welten, d.h. solche nicht-existente Welten, welche in einer teilweise isomorphen Beziehung zur gegenwärtigen Welt bestehen: Umstände in der existente bzw. in der nicht-existenten Welt entsprechen einander teilweise (Pavel, 1986, p. 57). Literarische Welten enthalten zugleich faktual Mögliches (aber nicht Realisiertes) und faktual Unmögliches (und daher nicht Realisierbare). Das heißt, dass fiktive Sachverhalte außerhalb einer steifen Korrespondenzbeziehung zur existenten Welt bestehen. Sie enthalten eben nicht nur solche Sachverhalte, welche eine genaue Entsprechung in der faktualen Welt haben, sondern auch solche welche vergleichbar existenter Sachverhalte sind aber nicht genauso gefügt und daher keine genaue Entsprechung in der existenten Welt besitzen (Pavel, 1986, pp. 45-46). Literarische Welten werden allgemein als homogen bzw. heterogen, als

uniregional bzw. multiregional, als stabil bzw. instabil als analog bzw. nicht analog zur gegenwärtigen Welt gekennzeichnet (Martinez & Scheffel, 2009, pp. 127-129).

Eine literarische Welt befindet sich sowohl in ontologischer, wie auch in logischer, pragmatischer und narrativer Hinsicht in Verbindung mit bestimmten Texten so dass diese Welt als reales nicht-faktales und nicht-existentes Gefüge, als textvermittelt bestehend, feststellbar, erkennbar und beschreibbar ist. Diese Texte liefern in ontologischer und Hinsicht den Grund der Realität der besagten literarischen Welt. Die gleichen Texte liefern in logischer Hinsicht die Mittel der Erkenntnis derselben. Literarische Welten bestehen aus Motiven, wobei Motive ontologisch, logisch und pragmatisch in Verbindung mit Texten und literarischen Welten stehen. Motive werden durch Sätze ausgedrückt (Dolezel, 1997, p. 33) und diese sind die Einheit von Texten. Literarische Welten sind Gefüge welche ausgehend von Sätzen und vermittels literarischer Texte aufgebaut werden und durch diese als solche bestehen (Dolezel, 1997, p. 16). Sie sind nicht durch ontologische und logische Zwänge beschränkt und als nicht-existente Welten, unterschiedlich von der existenten Welt gefügt. Zu ihrer eigenen Form von Realität gehört auch der Umstand, dass in literarischen Welten Widersprüchliches d.h. einander ausschließende Sachverhalte ohne Weiteres bestehen können (Dolezel, 1997, p. 19). Die Betretung fiktiver Welten, sowohl homogener als auch nicht homogener d.h. widersprüchlicher fiktiver Welten, ist nicht realisierbar. Deren Beschreibung ist allerdings realisierbar auch wenn deren Wahrhaftigkeit nicht mit Bezug auf die faktuale, existente Welt erfolgt (Dolezel, 1997, p. 19). Das, was es in einer solchen Welt gibt, wird bei der Realisierung des Textes produziert. Der Gegenstand dieser Texte kann anschließend beim Lesen aufgegriffen und als fiktiv bestehender Sachverhalt behandelt d.h. betrachtet und beschrieben werden. Diese vorliegenden Sachverhalte kommen durch *authentication*, einen spezifischen Sprechakt als reale Umstände auf (Dolezel, 1997, p. 146) alles was als vorhanden angegeben wird, ist in einer fiktiven Welt real. Fiktive Sachverhalte bestehen so, wie Äußerungen in literarischen Werken es bestimmen und zwar als deren tatsächliche Referenten (Dolezel, 1997, 146).

Was – Wie – Worüber von Schriftwerken sind genau zu unterscheiden um die Realität des Gegenstandes solcher Schriften genauer zu beschreiben. Im Falle von Schriften welche als Quellen für eine Biographie des Theseus in Frage kommen, ist das Wie deren literarische Fügung d.h. die, Griechisch oder Lateinisch verfasste Gestalt. Diese sind literaturgeschichtlich als Werke mit mythologischem Einschlag zu betrachten und dienen u.a. als Quellen zur Untersuchung von Verarbeitung von Mythen, so auch von Theseus-Mythen (Peyronie, 1992, pp. 1112–1115). Sie fungieren mythenwissenschaftlich als Quellen zur Rekonstruktion dieser Mythen. Die Schriften selber werden aus literaturgeschichtlicher Sicht als dramatisch (z.B. die *Hiketiden* des Euripides), episch (die *Metamorphosen* des Ovid), lyrisch (*Dithyrambus 4* des Bacchilydes) oder als diskursiv (*Rede 9* des Isocrates) gekennzeichnet.

Das Was dieser mythologischen Schriften ist deren literarischer Gehalt der einen gelieferten Stoff d.h. eine vorgegebene mythische Fabel (Frenzel, 1963,

p. 21) in partikulärer Weise verarbeitet und verwertet: der gleiche Inhalt kann in unterschiedlicher Form vorliegen d.h. in unterschiedlicher Weise gestaltet werden. Ovid erzählt die Beziehung zwischen Theseus und Ariadne einmal in einem epischen Werk, den *Metamorphosen* (Ovid, 1960, p. 419) und einmal in einem lyrischen, in den *Heroides* (Ovid, 1963, pp. 121-133.). Eine Erwähnung der gleichen Beziehung zwischen Theseus und Ariadne erfolgt bei Apollodorus (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 73) und Diodorus (Diodorus, 1939, pp. 12-13) in Prosaform.

Das Würüber mythologischer Texte ist die fiktive, nicht-existente mythische Welt als Beispiel einer literarischen Welt. Diese ist als emergente Welt identifizierbar und als homogenes, uniregionales, stabiles Gebilde zu kennzeichnen. Theseus der Herrscher aus der mythischen Sippe der Erechtheidae und sein Lebensgang sind in dieser Welt zu verorten. Es ist eine reale Welt. Darin spielt sich das reale Leben des Theseus und dessen Taten ab und zwar alle jene, welche Theseus zugesagt werden. Als nicht-existenter und realer aber eben nicht als geschichtlicher Herrscher hat Theseus einen eigentlichen Lebensgang. Dieser Lebensgang ist vermittelt beschreibbar. Er ist als vergangener Umstand in dem faktualen geschichtlichen Zeitablauf nicht identifizierbar wohl aber in dem fiktiven mythischen. Der Herrscher Theseus ist real und existent in einer fiktiven Welt bzw. real aber nicht-existent in der faktualen. Das Aufstellen eines Lebensbildes des Theseus hängt mit der Art und Weise zusammen, wie reale aber non-faktuale literarische Welten und deren Sachverhalte korrekt beschrieben werden können. Ontologische Klärungen zur Realität der mythischen Welt sind durch solche bezüglich der Erkennbarkeit der mythischen Welt zu ergänzen.

Die Ereignisse von Theseus Leben sind Sachverhalte der mythischen Welt insofern diese als eine literarische Welt besteht. Als solche sind diese nach mehreren Kategorien einzuteilen. Einige der jeweiligen Sachverhalte sind solche, welche eine direkte Entsprechung in der faktualen (geschichtlichen) Welt besitzen. Es sind erstens solche, welche gleich wie ihre faktualen Entsprechungen abgelaufen sind. Sie sind aber eben nicht in der faktualen d.h. nicht in der geschichtlichen Welt zu verorten, sondern in der fiktiven d.h. in der mythischen Welt. Es handelt sich um jene Sachverhalte die aufgrund von Äquivalenz bestehen und als solche real sind. Beispiele von Sachverhalten dieser Art sind bestimmte politische Handlungen: Vereinigung der Attika unter der Führung Athens (Plutarch, 1914, p. 51), Auseinandersetzungen mit den Söhnen des Pallas aus Pallene (Plutarch, 1914, p. 43), Einführung der Demokratie in Athen (Plutarch, 1914, p. 53) usw. Auch gleichnamige Orte so Athen, Attika, Troizen oder Theben gehören in diese Kategorie: die betreffenden Namen nennen Unterschiedliches aber Äquivalentes in verschiedenen durch Korrespondenz verbundene Welten. Solche analog verlaufenen Ereignisse werden in der Geschichtswissenschaft als Kern von geschichtlichen Fakten behandelt.

Außer den genauen Entsprechungen gibt es weiter Umstände im Leben Theseus d.h. Sachverhalte, die möglich in der faktualen Welt sind aber darin nicht eigentlich erfolgt sind. Diese Umstände sind allerdings tatsächlich in der

mythischen Welt erfolgt. Theseus und seine Kämpfe mit den Straftätern, seine militärischen Auseinandersetzungen mit Theben und Tyrins, seine Stellung im Herrscherhaus des Erechtheus in Athen, die Beziehungen zu seinem Vater Aigeus, das Schicksal seiner Mutter Aithra, die Freundschaft zu Peirithous, die Heirat mit Phaedra, gewisse Umstände welche den Tod seines Sohnes Hippolytos verursacht haben usw. Das alles mag oder mag nicht in der geschichtlichen Welt mit einem König namens Theseus erfolgt sein. Hätte es einen König Theseus in der Bronzezeit gegeben so wäre das alles in dessen Leben möglich gewesen. Jener Theseus hätte im geschichtlichen Athen als Sohn des Aigeus um den Thron kämpfen müssen: seine Vettern hätten da Anspruch auf den Thron erheben können. Im mythischen Athen sind das keine Möglichkeiten, sondern Fakten. Hier hat Theseus den Kampf gegen die Söhne des Pallas tatsächlich bestanden (Plutarch, 1914, p. 43). Theseus hätte im geschichtlichen Athen auch gegen Menestheus, den Sohn des Peteos **kämpfen können. Im mythischen Athen hat er sich wirklich mit** Menestheus auseinandersetzen müssen und wurde von diesem aus dem Reich vertrieben. Theseus Vater Aigeus hat zusammen mit seinem Bruder Peteos den Thron errungen und alleine danach geherrscht (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 70). Das erklärt die Motivation des Menestheus, des Sohnes des Peteos, gegen Theseus anzutreten. Die Verbannung des Theseus durch Menestheus, den Enkel des Peteos, wäre in der geschichtlichen Welt wahrscheinlich gewesen usw. Menestheus hat sie im mythischen Athen erwirkt (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 75). Gleiches gilt über die Entführung der Aithra durch die Könige von Sparta. Diese Entführung könnte als Rache wegen des Raubes der Helena durch Theseus und Peirithous sehr wohl im geschichtlichen Athen erfolgt sein. Im mythischen Athen ist das so geschehen (Plutarch, 1914, p.79). Das hat auch dazu geführt, dass Aethra anschließend von Paris nach Troja entführt wurde (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 128) mit der Folge dass sie zur Zeit des trojanischen Krieges in Troja weilte (Homer, 1999, p. 103) und von ihrem Enkel Demophon befreit wurde (Quintus Smyrnaeus, 1962, pp. 553-565).

Zuletzt, d.h. drittens gibt es Umstände im Leben des Theseus, die in der faktualen Welt nicht möglich sind, in der mythischen Welt aber tatsächlich geschehen sind. Die Reise in die Unterwelt, der Kampf mit dem Minotaurus, der Besuch des Unterseepalastes, der Kampf mit den Kentauren, der Sieg über den Minotaurus, die Flucht der Medea in einem Drachenwagen sind Ereignisse die faktual sicher nicht stattgefunden haben können, wohl aber in der mythischen Welt in der Tat so passiert sind, wie es von den Stellen in den Quellenschriften dargestellt wird. Theseus hätte unmöglich ein Monster mit einem Stierkopf im Faustkampf töten können. Der Kampf ist in der mythischen Welt auf Kreta in der Tat erfolgt (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 71). Theseus Stiefmutter Medea hätte sicher nicht in einem von Drachen gezogenen Wagen wegfliegen können. So ist sie vor Theseus im mythischen Athen entflohen (Scott Smith & Trzaskoma, 2007, p. 20).

Die mythische Welt ist als literarische Welt auf bestimmte literarische Texte angewiesen. Diese liefern den ontologischen Grund der Wirklichkeit der

mythischen Welt. Diese gibt es als etwas, aufgrund der logischen Struktur der betreffenden Texte. Insofern es sie gibt, enthält diese Welt jene Sachverhalte deren Bestehen von bestimmten mythologischen Schriften als Realia in diese Welt eingesetzt wurden. Sie enthält zudem noch das, was aus diesen Realia logisch ableitbar bzw. was von diesen Realia logisch vorausgesetzt wird. Das Leben des Theseus als Sachverhalt in dieser fiktiven Welt ist etwas, das in der Welt abgelaufen ist, und zwar so, wie es Schriften anführen, welche seine Taten und Handlungen nennen und umfasst zudem alles, was daraus logisch ableitbar bzw. logisch vorausgesetzt wird. Die jeweiligen Texte sind der ontologische Grund für die Realität dieses Lebens.

Texte sind zugleich die Erkenntnisquelle für eine angemessene Beschreibung des Lebens des Theseus als Kette von chronologisch abgelaufenen Geschehen in der betreffenden Welt. Das was wahr über das Leben des Theseus ausgesagt werden kann, beruht auf Quellentexten. Sie enthalten zudem Hinweise zur Wiedergabe der chronologischen Ordnung der Lebensumstände des Theseus. Umfassendere Darstellungen des Lebens des Theseus sind in Texten ohne fiktionalen Charakter enthalten. Darin ist eine zeitliche Ordnung der Ereignisse im Leben des Theseus unmissverständlich erkennbar. Es handelt sich um mythographische Darlegungen (Apollodorus *Bibliotheke*, Hyginus *Fabulae*), um Abschnitte in geschichtlichen Werken (Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*), in Diskursen (Isocrates, *Helen*), um mythologische Essays (Plutarch, *Theseus*). Bestimmte nicht fiktionale Texte können der Festlegung von chronologischen Bezugspunkten, so etwa Chronografien (Hieronymus *Temporum liber*, *Marmor parium*, Eusebius *Chronicon*) usw. dienen.

In die Kategorie von Quellen der Biografie gehören auch fiktionale Texte wie die *Phaedra* des Seneca, der *Hippolytos* des Euripides, der *Oedipus Coloneus* des Sophokles, der *Dithyrambus 4* des Backhylides, die *Thebais* des Staius, der *Herakles* des Euripides usw. In keiner dieser Schriften erscheinen alle von Theseus Lebensumständen. Es sind Darstellungen von einzelnen Abschnitten oder auch nur von Momenten im Leben des Theseus: die Rückkehr aus dem Hades (Euripides, *Herakles*), der Tod seines Sohnes Hippolytos (Seneca, *Phaedra*), die Konflikte mit Creon von Theben zum Schutz des Oedipus (Sophokles, *Oedipus Coloneus*) und wegen der Entscheidung die Verbrennung der Leichen der Sieben gegen Theben zu untersagen (Staius, *Thebais*). Alle diese Geschehnisse werden in den Schriften genannt, erwähnt oder dargestellt und können in eine relative Chronologie des Lebens des Theseus eingeordnet werden.

Die Fahrt des Theseus mit Minos nach Kreta die Backhylides in seinem *Dithyrambus 4* erzählt, ereignet sich vor der Rückkehr aus dem Hades mit Herakles, die in dem *Herakles* des Euripides dargestellt wird. Der Tod seines Sohnes Hippolytos, welche Seneca in seiner *Phaedra* darstellt, erfolgt vor den Auseinandersetzungen mit Creon aber nach Fahrt nach Kreta und der Gefangenschaft in der Unterwelt, welche Euripides in dem *Herakles* nennt. Diese relative Chronologie ist allein am Inhalt der genannten Schriften nicht abzulesen oder nicht als Ganzes. Die relative Chronologie ist nichtsdestotrotz

erkennbar und begründbar, sobald Schriften herangezogen werden, welche diese und andere Ereignisse so darlegen, dass die relative zeitliche Gliederung offengelegt wird, welche mit der Geburt im mythischen Troizen ansetzt und mit dem Tod auf dem mythischen Skyros endet. Aus den Berichten im *Theseus* des Plutarch, in der *Epitome* des Apollodorus, in der *Historischen Bibliothek* des Diodorus Siculus ist ohne weiteres diese relative Chronologie des Lebens des Theseus greifbar. Diese nicht-fiktionalen Texte sind keine poetisch gefügten und explizit fiktional ausgestalteten literarischen Werke. Es sind vielmehr solche, welche in literaturgeschichtlicher (und mythenwissenschaftlicher) Hinsicht mythologisches Erzählgut zusammenfassen, gliedern und aufbewahren d.h. Mythen systematischen nacherzählen und Modelle für Mythenrekonstruktionen bieten. Die gleichen Schriften sind jene, welche in mythenhistorischer Hinsicht das Leben des Theseus als chronologisch geordnete Fügung Geschehen der mythischen Welt erkennen lassen.

Die komplette chronologische Reihenfolge der Ereignisse im Leben des Theseus kann aufgrund beider Kategorien von Schriften korrekt wieder hergestellt werden. Dabei sind alle verstreut in literarische Werke dargestellten Ereignisse als eigentliche Geschehen an jene anzufügen die das Leben des Theseus ausmachen: Geburt in Troizen, Bewährung in Kämpfen mit den Straftätern Periphetes, Sinis, Kerkyon, Prokrustes, der Sau von Krommyon, der Mordversuch der Medea, der Kampf mit dem Stier von Marathon, die Fahrt nach Kreta mit dem Besuch des Unterseepalastes des Poseidon im Ozean, der Kampf mit dem Minotaurus, die Flucht aus Kreta und das Verlassen der Ariadne, der Tod seines Vater Aigeus, der Kampf mit den Pallantiden, die Wirkung als König von Athen, Argonautenfahrt, Amazonenkampf, Heirat mit Antiope und Geburt des Hippolytos, Heirat mit Phaedra und Tod des Hippolytos, Freundschaft mit Peirithous und Kampf gegen die Kentauren, Raub der Helena, Abstieg in die Unterwelt, Entführung seiner Mutter Aithra nach Sparta, Rückkehr aus der Unterwelt und Tod seines Sohnes Hippolytos, Auseinandersetzungen mit Creon dem Herrscher von Theben, Verbannung aus Athen, Ermordung auf Skyros.

Alle Umstände im Leben des Theseus sind in derselben Welt als Teil einer umfassenderen Geschichte dieser Welt. Sie sind insofern in die objektive Zeit der mythischen Welt eingefügt. Eine präzise Datierung aller mythischen Ereignisse ist schwerlich realisierbar. Eine Einstufung von Ereignissen in einem breiteren chronologischen Rahmen ist allerdings erreichbar. Hierzu soll ein einziger Bezugspunkt und eine chronologische Einheit festgelegt werden. Der trojanische Krieg und ein Menschenalter kann hierzu gebraucht werden. Die Herrschaft des Theseus ist somit weitgehend ein Menschenalter vor dem trojanischen Krieg anzusetzen. Seine Söhne Akamas und Demophon gehören dann in die Generation der Teilnehmer am Krieg. Der Sohn von Peirithous, Polypoetes gehört ebenfalls in diese Generation und er wird ebenfalls als Teilnehmer am Krieg erwähnt. Der etwas ältere aber in die gleiche Generation gehörende Herakles hat ebenfalls einen Sohn, Tlepoemos, der an der Belagerung von Troja teilnimmt. Theseus Leben und Wirken kann, vor dem Hintergrund einer solchen absoluten Chronologie, mit

einigen der gleichzeitig ablaufenden Ereignisse direkt verbunden werden kann. Das Leben des Theseus kann somit auf die Argonautenfahrt, auf die Todesfeier des Pelias, auf die Jagd zu Kalydon, auf den Kampf der Lapithen gegen die Kentauren, auf die Unternehmungen des Herakles, auf die Ereignisse vor dem trojanischen Krieges bezogen werden. An all diesen Geschehnissen wird die Teilnahme des Theseus bezeugt. Er lebt später als Io, Danaos, Perseus, Cadmus und Europa und ist älter als Orestes, Pylades.

Als Abschnitt einer umfassenderen mythischen Geschichte ist Theseus Leben direkt in die Geschichte anderer mythischen Städte eingebunden auch wenn sein Wirken grundsätzlich Teil der Geschichte Athens ist. Sein Wirken beendet den Einfluss Kretas in Athen und zu seiner Zeit wird Minos als Gesetzgeber erkannt (Eusebius). Theseus greift in die Streitigkeiten unter den Labdakiden in Theben, den Nachfahren des Cadmus, ein. Theseus beschützt Oedipus, nach dessen Verbannung aus Theben durch Creon. Er setzt es durch, dass die Gefallenen im ersten thebanischen Krieg begraben werden. Theseus gewährt Schutz auch dem argivischen **König** Adrastus als dieser, nach der Niederlage vor Theben in Athen Zuflucht sucht. Theseus ist aufgrund seiner Verwandtschaftsbeziehung zu Herakles auch mit einem der Züge der Herakliden verbunden. Er hilft Hyllus, dem Sohn des Herakles in dessen Kampf gegen Eurystheus, dem König von Tyrins. Er spielt somit eine Rolle in einem wichtigen Ereignis der mythischen Geschichte: der Rückkehr der Herakliden. Diese beginnt vor dem trojanischen Krieg und endet nach dem trojanischen Krieg, während der Regierungszeitzeit des Tisamenos, des Enkels des Agamemnon, abgeschlossen ist.

Der Beitrag hat Argumente vorgelegt, dass im Rahmen einer partikulären Perspektive Leben des Theseus und Mythen des Theseus in einem eigenen Sinn miteinander verknüpft sind. Es wurde begründet, dass eine explizite Verankerung in literaturtheoretischen und philosophischen Erwägungen analytischer Prägung eine eigentliche Untersuchung des Lebens des Theseus und anschließend eine Biografie desselben als sinnvolles Vorgehen untermauern kann. Theoretische Erörterungen haben versucht zu zeigen, dass die missverständliche und diffuse Bezugnahme auf Theseus und Theseus-Mythen mittels ungenauer begrifflicher Unterscheidungen vermieden und durch konsistente Ausführungen ersetzt werden kann.

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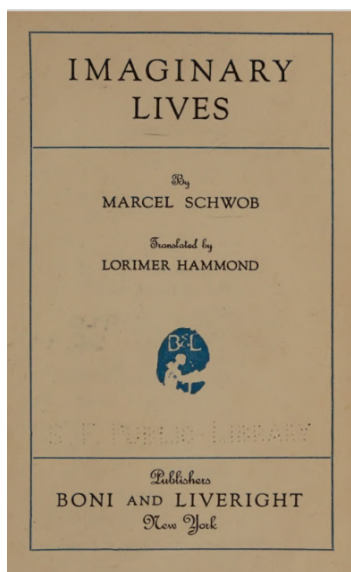
„ВЪОБРАЖАЕМИ ЖИВОТИ“<sup>1</sup> от Марсел Швоб

Превод от английски език Светлана Неделчева

*IMAGINARY LIVES* by Marcel Schwob

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/GKEP3248>



ПРЕДГОВОР

Науката история предизвиква у нас чувство на несигурност по отношение на отделните личности, тъй като разкрива единствено онези черти, чрез които личностите са свързани с общи факти. Според историята Наполеон е бил болен в деня на Ватерло, освен това прекалената интелектуалност на Нютон е трябвало да се отдаде на изключителната последователност на темперамента му, Александър е бил пиан, когато е убил Клит, а фистулата на Луи XIV вероятно е била причина за някои от неговите решения. Паскал разсъждава за дължината на носа на Клеопатра... и за възможните последствия, ако е бил малко по-къс, както и за песъчинката

1 „Въображаеми животи“ (*Vies imaginaires*) е сборник с кратки биографични разкази от френския писател Марсел Швоб, публикуван за първи път през 1896 г. Това е едно от първите произведения в литературната история, което съчетава фикция и биография, превръщайки реални и легендарни фигури в художествени образи с дълбока психологическа и философска стойност. Книгата оказва силно влияние върху автори като Хорхе Луис Борхес, Андре Жид и Алфред Жари. Всеки разказ във „Въображаеми животи“ представлява нов прочит на биографията на реална или легендарна личност, сред които Емпедокъл – философ, изобразен като бог; Херостат – човекът, подпалил храма на Артемида, за да остане в историята; Тит Лукреций Кар, Паоло Учело, Покахонтас, а също и напълно въображаеми или загадъчни фигури. Швоб не се стреми към историческа точност, а към литературна истина, в която чрез езика и стила се разкрива вътрешният свят на героите. Тези разкази често изследват теми като смъртта, славата, лудостта, изолацията, сънищата и вечното завръщане. – Бел. прев.

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Article history: Received: 12 May 2025; Edited: 30 May 2025; Revised: 9 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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в уретрата на Кромуел. Всички тези факти имат значение единствено ако променят събития или цяла поредица от събития. Това са дела – доказани или възможни, които трябва да оставим на учените.

Противоположно на историята, изкуството описва личности и се интересува единствено от уникалното. То не класифицира, а декласифицира. Без значение какви обобщения правим, те могат да се сравнят с тези, които засягат планетата Марс, а три прави, които се пресичат, могат да образуват триъгълник навсякъде във Вселената. Но помислете за едно листо със сложната му нервна система, за цвета му, променян от светлината и сянката, за отпечатъка от капка дъжд, за следата на охлюва, за златното докосване на есента. Потърсете във всички гори по земята друго листо, което е напълно същото. Няма да намерите такова. Нямаме познания за покритието на листото, за нишките на клетъчната структура, за извивките на вените, за навика, превърнал се в страст, или за капризите на характера.

Това, че носът на един човек е гърбав, че едното му око е по-високо от другото, че едната му ръка е слаба; че обича да яде пиле в определен час или предпочита Малвазия пред Шато Марго<sup>3</sup>... – това е нещо неповторимо в света. Талес може и да е казал „опознай себе си“, като Сократ, но никога не би почесал крака си по същия начин, преди да изпие чашата си с бучиниш. Великите умове и идеите им са колективно наследство на човечеството. В действителност, великите хора притежават само онова, което считаме за странно в тях. За да се опише човек в цялата му изключителност, книгата трябва да бъде произведение на изкуството – като японска гравюра, на която е изобразена една-единствена гъсеница, видяна в определен час от деня и запазена завинаги.

Историята мълчи за такива специфични факти. В суровия материал, който ни е останал като свидетелство, намираме малко уникални или неповторими данни. Тъй като са нещастници, които ценят само политиката или граматиката, древните биографи са ни оставили само речите на великите хора или заглавията на трудовете им. Аристофан сам ни е споделил, че е бил плешив. Ако плоският нос на Сократ не беше станал обект на литературни сравнения, ако навикът му да ходи бос не беше част от философската му система, нямаше да ни остане нищо освен морални съждения. Писанията на Светоний Транквил не са нещо по-различно от злобна полемика. Геният на Плутарх понякога го прави истински художник, макар че дори когато схваща същността на изкуството си, все още търси паралели – сякаш двама души, описани прецизно с качества си, могат наистина да си приличат. В търсенето си сме принудени да се обръщаме към Атеней, Авъл Гелий, схоластите и дори Диоген Лаерций, който си въобразява, че пише някаква история на философията.

В модерните времена изследването на индивида се е развило в положителна посока. Книгата на Босуел би била съвършена, ако той не се

3 Сортове грозде, използвани за производството на вино. – Бел. прев.

чувстваше задължен да цитира кореспонденцията на Джонсън и да се впуска в странични мисли относно творбите му. По-удовлетворяващи като цяло са „Житейските истории на знаменити личности“ от Обри. Обри притежава инстинкта на истински биограф, в това няма съмнение. Жалко е, че този отличен антиквар не успява да издигне стила си до висотата на своите идеи! Книгата му можеше да бъде вечен шедевър в своя жанр, но той така и не видя нуждата от изграждане на връзки между отделните факти и общите действия. Той знаеше, че други рано или късно щяха да разкрият славата на онези велики личности, които го вдъхновяваха, и това му бе достатъчно. Държавник, поет или часовникар – всеки от неговите герои чрез перото му придобиваше някаква уникална черта, която го отличаваше завинаги от всички останали хора.

През своите сто и десет години живот художникът Хокусай се надява да достигне върха на своето изкуство. В онзи момент той казва, че всяка точка и всяка линия, начертана от молива му, е трябвало да бъде жива. Под „жива“ той разбира – уникална и неповторима. Ала линиите и точките, по същество, са крайно еднакви – геометрията се основава тъкмо на този постулат. Но съвършенството в изкуството на Хокусай изисква възможно най-отчетлива разлика между тях. В този смисъл идеалната биография би трябвало да се стреми към изключителна диференциация между две философии, изградени около една и съща метафизика. Именно затова Обри, който се интересува единствено от хора, никога не достига съвършенството – той така и не постига чудодейната трансформация на приликите и разликите, за която мечтае Хокусай. Също така Обри не достига възрастта от сто и десет години. Въпреки това е възхитителен, а и сам е обобщил ограниченията на собствената си книга. „Спомням си – пише той в предговора си за Антъни Ууд – думите на генерал Ламбърт: и най-добрите хора са просто хора в най-добрия случай – и ще намерите множество примери за това в този необработен и набързо събран сборник. Дали тези тайни да бъдат разкрити днес, или след трийсет години? Може би е по-добре и авторът, и героите му първо да умрат и изгният (като мушмули).“

Сред предшествениците на Обри можем да открием някои наченки на неговото изкуство. Диоген Лаерций ни разказва, че Аристотел носел върху корема си кожена торбичка, пълна с горещо масло, и че в дома след смъртта му били открити множество глинени съдове. Никога няма да узнаем какво точно е правил Аристотел с тази керамика, но тайната е също толкова очарователна, колкото и догадките на Босуел за портокаловите кори, които Джонсън обичал да събира и да носи в джобовете си. В този случай Диоген Лаерций се доближава до възвишеността на несравнимия Босуел, но такива наслади са редки. Обри обаче ги предлага почти на всяка страница. За Милтън например той отбелязва, че „произнасял много твърдо буквата Р“. Спенсър бил „дребен човек, с късо подстригана коса, носещ малка якичка и маншетчета“. Бъркли „живял в Англия по времето на

крал Джейкъб. Бил старец с бяла брада и носел шапка с пера, която ужасно възмущавала строгите му съседи“. Еразъм „не обичал риба, въпреки че бил родом от рибарско селище“. А за Бейкън – „нито един от слугите му не смеел да се появи пред него с обувки, различни от испанска кожа, защото носът му незабавно усещал миризмата на телешка кожа, която той ненавиждал. Доктор Фулър се съсредоточавал толкова дълбоко в работата си, че често изяждал хлебче за два пенса, без изобщо да осъзнае това, докато се разхождал преди вечеря, потънал в мисли“. Обри ни предава следния разказ за сър Уилям Дейвънант: „Присъствах на погребението му. Имаше ковчег от орехово дърво. Сър Джон Денъм се закле, че това е най-красивият ковчег, който някога е виждал“. За Бен Джонсън той пише: „Чувал съм от актьора мистър Лейси, че Джонсън имал навика да носи наметало, подобно на това на кочияш, с отвори под мишниците“. Според написаното от Обри за Уилям Прин: „Начинът му на работа бил следният – слагал си висока заострена шапка, която постоянно се свличала над очите му и му служела като сенник, а на всеки три часа слугите му му донасяли хляб и кана ейл, за да освежи духа си. И така той продължавал да работи, пийейки и дъвчейки до вечерта, когато изяждал обилна вечеря.“ Хобс, казва Обри, „останал съвсем плешив в старостта си. Обичал да учи с непокрита глава, като твърдял, че никога не настива, но мухите, които кацали по плешивата му глава, го дразнели неимоверно.“ За книгата на Джеймс Харингтън „Океана“ Обри не споменава нищо, но разказва следната история за автора ѝ: „През 1660 г. е бил хвърлен в кулата под строг надзор и по-късно преместен в замъка Портси. Престоят му в тези затвори (бил е избухлив и буен по нрав) го довел до делириум или безумие. Никога не проявил насилие, тъй като говорел достатъчно разумно, бил приятен събеседник, но го преследвала налудничавата мисъл, че потта му се превръща в мухи и пчели *ad cetera sobrius*.“ Построили му подвижна къщичка в градината на господин Харт (срещу парка „Сейнт Джеймс“) и там извършвал експериментите си. Избутвал я на слънце, затварял всички прозорци и седял с четка от лисичи косми в ръце, за да изтреби всички мухи и пчели, които откривал. Понеже винаги правел експериментите си в топло време, обикновено в гънките на завесите се намирили няколко мухи. Когато топлината ги изкарвала навън след около четвърт час, възкликвал: „Е, сега вече виждате ясно, че излизат от мен, нали?“

Ето какво казва Обри за Мъртън: „Истинското му име беше Хед. Господин Бови го познаваше добре. Роден в ..., по едно време бил книжар и пътувал с циганите. Очите му, с изцъклен поглед, му придавали вид на мошеник, защото можел да ги променя както си иска. След като два или три пъти фалирал, започнал да продава книги към края на живота си. Прехранвал се с писане на разни неща, за което получавал по двадесет шилинга на страница, и написал няколко книги: „Английският мошеник“, „Изкуството да въртиш другите“ и т.н. Удавил се в морето, докато пътувал към Плимут около 1676 г., когато бил на около петдесет години“. Но непременно трябва да цитирам неговата биография на Декарт:

## „Monsieur РЕНЕ ДЕ КАРТ“

„Благородният французин, господин Перон, велик математик и философ, роден в Тюрен в навечерието на 1 април 1596 г. Починал в Стокхолм на 1 февруари 1650 г.“ (Този надпис намерих на портрета му от К. В. Дален.) Как е прекарал младостта си и по какъв начин е станал толкова учен? Той е дал на света знанията по тези въпроси в своя труд „За метода“. Обществото на Исус се гордее, че е имало честта да бъде негов възпитател. В продължение на няколко години е живял в Егмонт, близо до Хага, и някои от книгите му са написани там. Бил е твърде мъдър човек, за да се обременява с брак, но като мъж с мъжки желания и страсти си е взел за спътница в живота красива и добре сложена жена, която обичал и която му родила няколко деца (две или три, мисля). Би било наистина изненадващо, ако децата на такъв баща не получат блестящо образование. Толкова ерудиран е бил, че всички учени по онова време го посещавали, мнозина от тях искали да видят инструментите му (тогава математиката се считала най-вече за наука на уредите). Тогава великият учен отварял едно малко чекмедже на масата си и показвал на гостите си компас с пречупено рамо, като парченце намачкана хартия замествало липсващата част.“

Обри ясно е осъзнавал тази фаза от работата си. Той напълно преднамерено е правил това, което е правил. Не си мислете, че е подценил важността на Хобс или Декарт като философи. Просто това не го е интересувало. Съвсем откровено ни казва, че самият Декарт е обяснил на света идеите и системите си. Обри не пренебрегва и факта, че Харви е открил принципа за кръвообращението, но предпочита да отбележи как този велик човек се разхождал по нощница, за да се пребори с безсънието; как пишел с грешки и неразбираемо и как най-прославените лекари в Лондон не биха дали и пет пари за неговите предписания. Обри очевидно очаква да ни изненада, когато описва погледа на Франсис Бейкън като фин, пъстър на цвят и бърз като този на усойница. Но Обри не е художник като Холбайн. Той никога не успява да „закове“ една личност завинаги в съзнанието ни, като ѝ придаде отличителни черти на фона на обичайното или идеалното. Той вдъхва живот на окото, носа, крака или устните на моделите си, но не успява да оживи лицето. Старият Хокусай добре осъзнава необходимостта да се изведат общите характеристики така, че да изглеждат индивидуални. Обри не прониква чак толкова дълбоко. Ако книгата на Босуел е била само десет страници, тя би представлявала художествения шедьовър, който дълго сме очаквали. Добрият вкус на доктор Джонсън го е водел уверено през баналното и обикновеното. Босуел смегчава странната ярост, която придава на Джонсън неповторимо присъствие в целия свят. Бихте могли да отпечатате „Scientia Johnsoniana“ с индекс, от който Босуел не би имал естетическата смелост да избира.

Като изкуство биографията се основава на избора; истината не е задължително неин приоритет, защото от хаоса на човешките черти тя

може да създава. За да сътвори света – казал Лайбниц – Бог избрал най-доброто от възможното. Така и биографията, като някакво второразредно божество, трябва да подбира уникални личности от наличния човешки материал. И не бива да се проваля в изкуството си повече, отколкото Бог се проваля в благоволенieto и милостта си. И в двата случая инстинктът трябва да бъде безпогрешен. Търпеливи хора са събирали идеи, хроники на събития и описания на лица – всичко това в полза на биографията. Сред тези големи колекции изкуството трябва да избира онова, от което се създава форма, която няма да прилича на никоя друга. Не е от значение дали тази форма е създадена по-рано от висше божество, важното е тя да бъде уникална и да представлява истинско творение.

По правило биографите, за съжаление, са се възприемали като историци, с което са ни лишили от множество възхитителни портрети. Те са смятали, че животът само на великите личности би ни заинтригувал. Но изкуството е чуждо на такива съображения. В очите на художника портретът на неизвестен човек, нарисуван от Кранах, е толкова ценен, колкото и портретът на великия Еразъм. Защото името – Еразъм – не прави една картина неповторима. Биографията трябва да придава същата стойност на живота на неизвестен актьор, каквато придава на живота на Шекспир. Дълбок е инстинктът, който ни кара с удоволствие да забелязваме свития стерно-клейдомастоиден мускул в бюста на Александър или кичура коса в портретите на Наполеон. Усмивката на Мона Лиза, за която не знаем нищо (а може би дори е лице на мъж), завинаги остава загадъчна и въздействаща. Гримаса, нарисувана от Хокусай, може да ни отведе до дълбоки размисли. Ако изкуството, в което Босуел и Обри са се отличили, продължи да съществува, тогава подробните описания на велики хора, епохи или събития от миналото не са непременно необходими. Със същото внимание трябва да бъдат разказвани и уникалните съществувания на хора – свещеници, престъпници или напълно неизвестни индивиди.

## ЕМПЕДОКЪЛ

Смятан за бог

Никой не знае как се е родил или как е дошъл на земята. Той се появил край златистите брегове на река Акраг, в хубавия град Акрагент, малко след времето, когато Ксеркс заповядал морето да бъде бито с вериги. Традицията казва само, че дядо му го нарекъл Емпедокъл; нищо повече не е известно. Без съмнение се е твърдяло, че е самозаченат, защото безспорно бил бог. Учениците му вярвали, че преди да се яви славно в сицилианските земи, той вече бил преминал през четири съществувания – бил растение, риба, птица и девойка. Носел пурпурна мантия, дългите му коси падали по нея, на главата му имало златен венец, на краката му – бронзови сандали, а венец от вълна и дафинови клонки се сплитал в ръката му.

С допир на ръка лекувал болни или рецитирал стихове в Омиров стил от колесница, с тържествени интонации и поглед, обърнат към небето. Големи тълпи го следвали, хвърляйки се ничком пред него, заслушани в стиховете му. Под яркото слънце, озаряващо житни поля, хора от всички краища се стичали при Емпедокъл с ръце, пълни с дарове. Той ги омагьосвал, пеейки за небесния кристален свод, за огнената маса, която наричаме *слънце*, и за любовта, която обгръща всичко като огромна сфера.

Всички същества, казвал той, са само разединени фрагменти от тази сфера на любовта, в която омразата е проникнала. А това, което днес наричаме любов, е нашето желание да се обединим отново, да се слеем и изгубим, както някога сме били изгубени в прегръдката на великия бог-сфера, от когото сме били откъснати след раздор. Той призовавал деня, в който древното божество ще възкръсне след пречиштането на душите. Защото, казвал той, светът, който познаваме, е продукт на омразата и неговото разпадане ще бъде дело на любовта. Така той обикалял градове и поля с бронзовите си лаконийски сандали, които издавали звън, докато пред него ехтели чинели. Междувременно от кратера на Етна се издигал черен пушек, хвърлящ сянка над Сицилия.

Като небесен цар, Емпедокъл бил облечен в пурпур и злато, докато питагорейците носели ленени туники и обувки от папирус. Говорело се, че знае как да прогонва трески, да лекува рани и да извлича злото от болни крайници. Хората го молели да спре бурите и той правел заклинания от хълмисти възвишения. В Селин той отклонил два потока към коритото на трети и спрял наводнение; тогава хората започнали да го почитат, построили храм в негова чест и секли монети с неговия лик редом до този на Аполон.

Някои твърдели, че е магьосник, обучен от персийски вълшебници; че владее некромантията и науката за билките, които побъркват хората. Един ден, докато вечерял с Анхитос, в залата нахлул обезумял мъж с вдигнат меч. Емпедокъл протегнал ръце и запял Омиров стих за напитката на забравата – *непенте*, и магия се спуснала върху лудия: той застинал, мечът увиснал във въздуха, а умът му сякаш бил утешен от сладък отровен еликсир, смесен с пенливо вино.

Болни се стичали при Емпедокъл извън градовете, където той често бил обграден от тълпи страдалци. Сред тях имало и жени, които целували подгъва на скъпоценната му мантия. Една от тях се казвала Пантея, дъщеря на знатен мъж от Акрагент. Тя трябвало да бъде посветена на Артемида, но избягала от студената статуя на богинята и се врекла на Емпедокъл. Никой не станал свидетел на любовта им – Емпедокъл запазил божествената отдалеченост, говорейки винаги в епически метър и на йонийски диалект, докато местните хора говорили дорийски. Всичките му жестове били свещени, когато се срещал с хора, било за да ги благослови, или излекува. Обикновено мълчал. Никой от последователите му не го бил виждал да спи, познавали го само като величествено същество.

Пантея носела дрехи от фина вълна и злато, косата ѝ била подредена по модата на Акрагент, където животът течал спокойно. Червена лента поддържала гърдите ѝ, сандалите ѝ били напарфюмирани. Тя била висока, изящна и с привлекателен тен. Не е сигурно дали Емпедокъл я е обичал, или съжелявал. Скоро от Азия долетял дъхът на чумата и достигнал сицилианските поля. Мнозина били поразени от черните пръсти на заразата, мъртви животни лежали по краищата на полята до телата на овце с разтворени към небето уста и оголени сухи ребра. Заболяла и Пантея. Паднала в краката на Емпедокъл и издъхнала. Тези, които били наблизко, вдигнали вкочаненото ѝ тяло и започнали да го мажат с аромати. Свалили червената лента от гърдите ѝ и я заменили с погребална превръзка. Устата ѝ – леко разтворена – била стегната с кърпа, очите ѝ вече не отразявали светлината.

Емпедокъл се взрял в нея. Свалил златния венец от челото си и я докоснал с него. Поставил дафиновия пророчески венец на гърдите ѝ и започнал да рецитира неразбираеми стихове за пътешествието на душата. Три пъти ѝ заповядал да се изправи и да върви; и хората изпаднали в ужас. При третото повикване Пантея напуснала царството на сенките, животът се върнал в тялото ѝ и тя се изправила, цялата обвита в погребални платна. Хората видели, че Емпедокъл имал властта да връща мъртвите.

Писинакт, бащата на Пантея, започнал да почита новия бог. Дълги маси били разпънати под дърветата в имението му, където устройли пир с вина и ястия. До Емпедокъл роби държали факли, а глашатаи го възхвалявали – както и тайнственото му мълчание. Изведнъж, по време на третата нощна стража, факлите угаснали и мрак обгърнал присъстващите. Силен глас извикал: „Емпедокъл!“. А когато светлините отново пламнали, Емпедокъл бил изчезнал. Никой никога повече не го видял.

Уплашен роб разказал, че видял червена светлина, разсичаща нощта близо до върха на Етна. С първите бледи лъчи на зората поклонниците се изкачили по голите склонове на планината. Огнени езици все още изскачали от кратера на вулкана. По порестата лава до самия ръб на горящата бездна те открили бронзов сандал, изкривен от пламъците.

## ХЕРОСТРАТ

### Подпалвач

С двата си речни пристана град Ефес, родното място на Херострат, се простира по устието на Кайстър чак до кея Панорама. Оттам се различават бреговете на Самос в мъгливата линия по тъмния морски хоризонт. Богат на злато, платове и рози, Ефес процъфтявал, след като магнесийците, с техните бойни кучета и копиеносци, били разгромени край Меандър, а великолепният Милет бил унищожен от персите.

Докато почивал в тези дни на мир, Ефес празнувал с куртизанки в храма на Афродита Хетера. Гражданите се разхождали в туники от аморгина<sup>4</sup>, прозрачен лен в нюанси от виолетово и пурпурно до крокодилено зелено. Носели сарапиди с цвят на жълти ябълки – или бели, или розови, и египетски тъкани в оттенъци на зюмбюл, проблясващи с пламтящи нюанси и с променливите багри на морето. Техните персийски каласириси били от фино вълнообразно платно, обсипано с малки златни мъниста.

На бреговете на Кайстър, между планината Прион и друга внушителна скала стоял великият храм на Артемида, издигнат след сто и двадесет години труд. Порталите били от абанос и кипарис, тежките опорни колони – червени, а високите стенописи украсявали вътрешните стени. Светилищната зала на богинята била малка и овална; в центъра – изсечен с лунни символи в злато – стоял огромен черен конус, изваян от масивна скала. Триъгълният олтар бил от същия материал, както и няколко маси, пробити на равни интервали, за да се оттича кръвта на жертвите. До масите висели широки стоманени ножове с позлатени дръжки за прерязване на човешки гърла, а подът бил покрит с окървавени кърпи. Черният идол бил издялан във формата на две големи, твърди и заострени гърди. Това била Диана от Ефес – нейната древна божественост потънала в мрака на египетските гробници и персийските ритуали. Съкровището на храма било скрито в малък сандък, оформен като миниатюрна пирамида с украсени с месинг врати. Там, сред ценни пръстени, монети и рубини, лежал ръкописът на Хераклит, пророка на господството на огъня. Старият философ лично положил свитъка в основата на пирамидата, докато зидарите още строели.

Майката на Херострат била горда, строга жена. Личността на баща му никога не станала ясна и Херострат в крайна сметка обявил, че е син на огъня. Сърпът, родилен знак в лявата част на гърдите му, блестял като жив пламък в нощта на мъченията му. Присъстващи при раждането предсказали обвързаността му с Артемида. Тъмен, смугъл, със странно сбръчкано лице, той като дете обичал да ходи по стръмните скали под храма. Не можел да бъде свещеник, поради неясния си произход, и многократно свещеническият съвет му забранявал достъп до светилището, където се промъквал, за да се добере до свещените завеси и да види забраненото божество. Започнал да я ненавижда. Тайно се заклел да оскверни нейното светилище.

Смятал собственото си име за несравнимо, а собственото си физическо съществуване – за над всички останали. Жадувал слава. Първоначално се присъединил към група философи, които разказвали за учението на Хераклит, но знаел, че тайната не е у тях. Докато съкровището било заключено в малката пирамида, Херострат можел само да гадае думите на учителя. Наложил си да презира помпозния, разточителен живот на града: куртизанките и тяхната любов го отблъсквали. Говорело се, че пазел чистотата си за богинята, но Артемида не проявила милост.

4 Аморгина – фина прозрачна тъкан, изработена от местно отглеждани лен или памук. – Бел. прев.

С времето станал заплаха за Съвета на герусиите – пазителите на храма; те го прокудили извън градските порти и той се заселил по склоновете на Коресос, в стара пещера, издълбана от древните. Според някои, персийски мистици го посещавали там през нощите, докато той наблюдавал далечния блясък на светлинките на храма на Артемида, но съдбата му вероятно се представила чрез пламтящо видение. При разпит по време на мъчения признал, че разбрал значението на думата “Хераклит” (Пътят към Горния свят) и че философията му показала, че най-прекрасната черта на духа е, че е най-възпламеним – като прахан, сложен в огъня. Казал, че духът му в този смисъл е съвършен, затова искал да го заяви. За дързостта си не дал друга причина освен жаждата за слава и удоволствието да чуе собственото си име. Той щял да бъде самодоволен владетел; единствен и безспорен. Херострат бил коронован от Херострат. Никой не знаел кой е баща му... той бил син на собствените си дела, а делата му били есенцията на света. Сам сред хората, той щял да бъде цар, философ и бог в едно.

В безлунната нощ на 21 юли 356 г. страстите на Херострат нараснали така стремглаво, че стъпка по стъпка кристализирали старата му решителност да поругае светилището на Артемида. Изкатерил склон с преплетени храсти, достигнал до бреговете на Кайстър и бавно, болезнено се изкачил до храма, където стражите спели до свещените лампи. С една от тези лампи в ръка Херострат навлязъл в светилището. Тежка миризма на нард се разляла пред бляскавите абаносови балкони; златно-пурпурна завеса закривала богинята. Преминавайки от другата страна, Херострат спрял, треперейки от възбуда, докато светлината падала върху двете заострени гърди на черния конус... после ръцете му обвили идола в една страстна прегръдка. Когато се изправил, пред очите му бил малкият зелен сандък с формата на пирамида. Хванал месинговите щифтове, отворил вратата му и потопил ръцете си в недокосвани скъпоценности. Но извадил само папируса със стихове на Хераклит. И там, под светлината на свещените лампи, разбрал всичко.

Първият му бърз поглед бил достатъчен. Преди очите му да се отделят от древните думи, гласът му се издигнал в остър вик: „Огънят, огънят!“.

Докоснати от пламъка на лампата, свещените завеси бавно се запалили, докато пламъците не достигнали ароматните масла и мехлеми. След това те избухнали в синьо към тавана, докато черният конус отразявал сцената.

Огънят се изкачил по капителите на колоните и се разпространил към панеления свод. Една по една златните плочки, изписани с възхвали в чест на Артемида, падали с трясък върху каменния под. Ален стълб пламък пробил покрива; бронзовите керемиди отразили блясъка му, докато цялата планина пламнала. Херострат стоял прав в червеното сияние, като крещял името си сред рева на пламъците и тъмнината.

Цялата свещена планина се превърна в алено огнище в нощната тъма. Когато стражите го хванали, те запушили устата му с кърпа, за да не крещи името си отново и отново. Завързан и със запушена уста, той бил затворен в тъмница, докато пожарът още горял.

Артаксеркс изпратил незабавна заповед за разпит чрез мъчения. Но разбрали малко, тъй като Херострат не признал нищо освен вече казаното. Дванайсетте йонийски града издали декрет, който забранявал произнасянето на името му във всички бъдещи времена под смъртно наказание, но името му е достигнало до нас дори шепнешком. Историята за тази нощ, когато Херострат е опожарил храма на Артемида в Ефес, била предадена чрез Александър Велики, цар на Македония.

ДВЕ ГНЕВНИ КНИЖКИ ОТ СРЕДАТА НА ХІХ ВЕК: „Прескорбно  
оправдание Еманои́ла Васкидовича“ (1846) и „Истинний глас на  
България...“ (1853) на Анастас Гранитски

Николай Аретов

TWO ANGRY BOOKLETS FROM THE MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY:  
“Preskorbnое opravdanie Emanoila Vaskidovicha” (1846) and  
“Istinniy glas na Bulgaria...” (1853) by Anastas Granitsky

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/NKKH9236>

**Abstract:** *The article examines two atypical autobiographical texts by Emanuil Vaskidovich and Anastas Granitsky in the context of both the authors' lives and the literature of the time. The two authors belong to different generations. The reason why the two works should be considered in parallel is the similar grievances of the two authors and their indignation against certain personalities. Both Vaskidovich and Granitsky were prominent writers of their time, and their short books offer interesting accounts of educational work in Svishtov (Vaskidovich) and social life in Constantinople (Granitsky). At the same time, both employ different strategies in presenting their misadventures, situating them in different contexts – local (Vaskidovich) and general (Granitsky). Both short books are well known to scholars. Still, they have hardly been studied in depth, as have other similar texts (not very numerous) that, to some extent, change the perception of the period and the processes in the mid-nineteenth-century literature.*

**Keywords:** *Emanuil Vaskidovich, Anastas Granitski, self-victimisation, autobiographism, resentment*

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Article history: Received: 21 April 2025; Reviewed: 22 May 2025; Revised: 29 May 2025; Accepted: 9 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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През 1846 г. един надхвърлил 50-те години книжовник и учител публикува една нетипична за времето си брошура – „Прескорбное оправдание Еманоила Васкидовича, тридесетолетного учителя свищовского училища святого Преображения против клеветника. Иждивлением же одного от своих учеников“. Изданието е само 22 страници и завършва с „Известие“ за готвени от автора книги. Повествованието започва в едно спокойно утро, в което авторът разсъждава за „мирский мой театр“. Но пристига един неназован приятел, който му съобщава: „Ти си изгубен. Не щат те“. Следват срещи с градските първенци, на които авторът припомня как е пристигнал в Свищов, как е поканен за учител и какво е направил за тукашното училище през годините.

Историята около това издание и реакциите, с които то е посрещнато, е документирана в спомените на Васил Манчев и донякъде и в други документи от епохата. Но и днес, както и навремето, книгата поражда повече въпроси, отколкото отговори. „Прескорбное оправдание...“ на Васкидович предизвиква умерен интерес сред литературните историци, които се въздържат да разчетат ясно конфликта и да вземат страна в него. В историята на Б. Пенев на „интересната брошура“ са отделени четири реда (Penев, 1977, р. 426), в другите истории по правило тя е пропускана.

До този момент Васкидович (1795 – 1875) се въздържа да пише за себе си, предпочита полезните книги, на първо място – учебниците. Всъщност дотогава е публикувал само съвместния си труд с Неофит Бозвели „Славеноболгарское детоводство за малките деца“ (ч. 1-6, 1835) и старогръцка граматика (1837), издадена на гръцки. Много вероятно е поводът за „оправданието“ да е сериозен, но той не става напълно ясен от текста, а въпросният „клеветник“ е назован „Г. Владул“. Според В. Манчев става дума за чорбаджията Николчо Векилев (Manchev, 1982, р. 31), а Иван Гунев, който представя по-подробно сюжета, нарича чорбаджията Николчо векил (sic) Гиовеси (Gunev, 1988, р. 149 ff.). По-късно Векилев „е променил отношението си към Васкидович“ и го защитава „от невъздържаната критика на дейността му“ (Gunev, 1988, р. 204). Неназован е и събеседникът – „един приятел, който претворно ми беше приятел“. Неназован остава и ученикът, с чието „иждивление“ излиза книгата. Според Манчев те са двама: Димитраки Икономов и Гаврил х. Денков (Manchev, 1982, р. 32). Г. Хаджиденков и (донякъде) Д. Икономов по-късно стават сътрудници на Г. Раковски (Nikolova, 2006, pp. 411-412, р. 295).

В текста попадаме на няколко имена на свищовлии, но отсъства Неофит Бозвели, с когото Васкидович е свързан чрез забележителното издание отпреди десетина години „Славеноболгарское детоводство“ (Bozveli, Vaskidovich, 1835), а и чрез други съвместни действия, вероятно и чрез лично приятелство. Отсъства и конкурентът в просветното и книжовното поле Христки Павлович. Всъщност според изследователите, които коментират едно писмо на Васкидович до Неофит Бозвели, по това

време Христки Павлович, наречен в писмото „Хрисанта учителя“, е сред хората, оклеветили Васкидович. По това време двамата враждували и в предговора към „Перва понятия за детинско употребление“ (1847) Васкидович нарекъл Павлович „завистливия Сатурн“ и го наредил сред своите „зоили“ (Gunev, 1988, pp. 149-152).

Творбата на Васкидович несъмнено е важен (а и авторитетен и често цитиран) документ за развитието на просветата по българските земи и това дава основание да се търсят аналогии с появилата се няколко години по-рано по-авторитетна „Денница на новобългарското образование“ (1841, 1842) на Васил Априлов. Разликите между двете издания също не са малко. Ще спомена само, че книгата на Априлов, писана и публикувана на руски, споменава „Славяноболгарское детоводство“ и неговите автори, знае и за училищата в Свищов, които обаче поставя на осмо място (след училищата в Габрово, Копривщица, Панагюрище, Сопот, Карлово, Трявна и Казанлък). В раздела за Свищов се казва, че „Свищовцы ещо в 1813 году завели Греческое училище в своем городе“ (Aprilov, 1841, p. 46). Тъй като е гръцко, това училище не е толкова важно, казва този текст, писан на руски език, и споменава Хр. Павлович и други учители и благодетели в града, но не и Васкидович. Вероятно тази фактическа неточност може да се разглежда и в контекста на характерното за това време напрежение между „елинисти“ и „слависти“. В „Допълнение к книге Денница“ (1842) Априлов коригира твърдението си и косвено признава първенството на Свищов (Aprilov, 1842, p. 35; Gunev, 1988, p. 35).

„Прескорбно оправдание...“ е подчертано въздържана книга по отношение на църковната борба, която днес стои в центъра на вниманието на изследователите на епохата и в която, поне според В. Манчев, а и П. Р. Славейков, Ем. Васкидович взема сериозно участие (Slaveykov, 1978, p. 153; Manchev, 1982, p. 34). И, разбира се, не споменава за причината той да напусне Мелник и да се окаже в Свищов (Aretov, 2015).

В. Манчев разказва една история, която не е включена в „Прескорбно оправдание...“, но разкрива един от конфликтите, в които Васкидович е замесен:

Николчо Векилев, първи чорбаджия в конака при войводата (така наричаха тогавашните управители в Свищов), пламна против тримата и тия, като усетиха, побегнаха тайно. Тогава параходът не работеше и отидоха до Мачин [град в северна Добруджа, по това време част от Османската империя]. Щом Николчо усети, че избягали, заявил на войводата, че горните трима обрала градската черква „Св. Преображение“ и настоявал да се вържат и докарат в Свищов.

Писмото на войводата, като сигнал, научили се тримата, че ги търсят. Не след малко ги хванали и тикнали в мачинския затвор. През нощта научават се от заптиетата, че това се дължи на Николчо Векилев и че оковани в жезла ще ги докарат в Свищов. Тия през нощта са се наговорили да избягат. Гаврил и Димитраки счупили прозореца, пазарили една лодка за 200 гроша, минали в Браила и се отървали. Но Васкидович, горд и уверен в своята правда, не щял

да ги последва. Тогава на другия ден, щом се съмнало, дошле заптиите да ги вземат, но намерили само Васкидович и войводата поръчал да го оковат в жезла както краката, така и ръцете, и го изпращат в Свищов на една ладия. Помня, че бяхме деца и като чухме, че ще го докарат в жезла, слезнахме на скелята. Всички негови ученици заплакахме, щом го видяхме. А като го водеха през сред града, го придружихме до затвора. Много от гражданите отидоха при войводата да го молят да го пусне, но то не беше възможно, защото Векилев настояваше да се накаже. Най-после войводата го изпрати във Видин при пашата, защото оттам се управляваше Свищов. Щом стигнал, пашата разгледал книгата и съгледал, че тук един чорбаджия иска да си отмъщава. От друга страна, видинският владика и един гръцки търговец Парисиади го измолват от пашата, който го освобождава веднага (Manchev, 1982, pp. 31-32).

Освен документ за епохата и развитието на образователното дело, „Прескорбно оправдание...“ е и документ за психологическите преживявания на българския интелгент от първата половина на XIX в., а с казаното и премълчаното – и за някои от социалните конфликти на времето. Както на няколко пъти посочва Ив. Гунев, Васкидович е най-добре платеният учител в Свищов, а и не само там. Той се ползва с авторитет сред гражданите, участва в обществения живот на града, думата му се чува. И изведнъж върху него се стоварва това, което той определя като „клевета“. То е нещо по-различно от борбите около сградата на училището, за които той пише.

Ако се насочим към психологическия подход и се откажем от патоса на преклонението пред големите фигури от миналото и безусловното доверие към всичко, което те ни съобщават, може би ще се окаже, че характерът на Васкидович ни се изплъзва. Той очевидно има желание да говори за себе си и си харесва ролята на жертва и се представя в подобна светлина не само в „Прескорбно оправдание...“, но и в други текстове. Една от обявите за предстоящо негово издание например е подписана от „многострадателный Юманоил Васкидович“<sup>2</sup> (cit. in Gunev, 1988, p. 212).

Това всъщност е една обичайна маска, използвана от по-старите книжовници през Средновековието, а и през Възраждането. Васкидович несъмнено си дава сметка за собствената си роля в обществения живот и се оценява не по-ниско от именитите си съвременници. И дори, според негово писмо до Неофит Бозвели от 6 април 1845 (?) (Arnaudov, 1930), се кандидатира за „Директор [sic] думам на всичките училища триновски, рухчушки свищовский до Видин, което е потребно в настоящее според царски законоположения и колко книги ся издават без да ги прегледа да не ся издават на свет...“

В писмата си Васкидович се оплаква от различни неща и хора – не само от Хр. Павлович и неговото високо самочувствие, но може би и от Неофит Бозвели. В писмо до Неофит Рилски от 25 март 1837 подхвърля:

Реших да се явя пак, както по-рано, на попрището на превода и съчинителството[...] Може би чу за страданията ми, които изпитах преди четири години

2 Вж. по-подробно в „Българска пчела“, № 47, 17 април 1864

и от – не зная как да го нарека – моят сътрудник, който ме постави в дългове и много обременителни тежести, но засега нищо не казвам за него, а само нека го накаже правосъдието на Бога (cit. in Krastanov, 1995, pp. 24-25).

Едни виждат у Васкидович съратника на Бозвели, противника на фанариотите и бореца за църковна независимост, дори другар на Раковски. Други се позовават на колебливата и забавена реакция на свищовлии (а в по-малка степен – и на Васкидович) в подкрепа на Бозвели и говорят за малодушие и нерешителност (Arnaudov, 1930, p. 539). Трети в откровен донос го обявяват за калвинист. На 8 април 1854 г. Йеромонах Акакий Рилец пише от Плевен до Св. Синод на Рилския манастир:

Завчера пък архонтът логотет, главният учител г-н Манолаки, произнесе слово от амвона, учейки народа, че училището е Св. гроб, Св. Гора, манастирът Рилски, Троянски и прочее. Човек покварен, калугеромразец, калвинисти прочее. [...] както се вижда, имат намерение съвсем да премахнат таксидиотството, както [стана] в Свищов поради скандалотвореца учител Манолаки (Snegarov, 1968, pp. 98-99).

Документите го представят като добре платен учител, но биографите предпочитат да говорят за недоимък и не пропускат да цитират Оправданието: „Гол отидох и гол се върнах, без да усвоя нито бодка от сиромашка кръв“. Всъщност различните образи на Васкидович могат да се разглеждат и като предварително очертани социални роли, през които една личност се възприема сама, иска да бъде възприемана от другите и реално е възприемана от съвременниците и по-късните поколения. А колкото до трудното съгласуване между различните образи, то това всъщност не трябва да ни изненадва. Същото се наблюдава и при практически всички фигури от миналото, пък и ако искате, при съвременниците ни.

По-различен поглед към учителя предлага неговият ученик В. Манчев, който всъщност е добронамерен към него. И все пак:

Васкидович, висше строг, твърде много се разядосваше с учениците, биеше немилостиво, като се разсърди. До 5-6 деца, наказани от него, са умрели от бой [...] Къде 1844 г. по причина, че на Васкидовича не му прашаше баща ми печена пуйка, а кокошка, ни обруга и баща ни ни заведе при Христаки Павловича и Иван Стоянович Мерданченина... (Manchev, 1982, pp. 29-30).

По-късно Манчев се връща при Васкидович. Дори известно време е помощник учител при него. След това отношенията им отново охладняват и Манчев се оказва в лагера на новите конкуренти, „паризлии и виенлии“, в долномахленското петропавловско училище, оглавено от Петър Ангелов (Gunev, 1988, p. 210). Промените, разбира се, се дължат на изминалите години, които са пренесли някогашния модернизатор в лагера на старите.

Сред критиците на Васкидович е и Иван Селимински, който го обвинява в гръкоманство и „охлаждане към религията, отрицание на народността и презрение към нашия език и нашето произхождение“ (Seliminski, 1904, p. 67; Krastanov, Penakov, Maslev, 1968, pp. 163-169), вероятно

също не особено добре осведомен за дейността му. Васкидович всъщност държи да се преподава на първо място именно „нашия език“, след това гръцки и други славянски езици, а не влашки, както настояват неговите клеветници. В непубликувания приживе „Спомен на четиридесетгодишната ми писателска деятелност“ Петко Славейков пък говори за „неговата разговорчивост и откритост“ и прибавя, че го обичал „като баща“ (Slaveykov, 1979, p. 152)<sup>3</sup>. Някои от документите, които трябва да го представят в положителна светлина, стоят на границата с легендата, както са някои споменавания за незапазена кореспонденция с Раковски (Gunev, 1988, p. 159).

Струва ми се основателно литературното осмисляне на „Прескорбное оправдание...“ да тръгне от жанра и от контекста, в който попада творбата. В новата българска книжнина съществуват и по-ранни автобиографични текстове, главно писма, останали в ръкопис – на католика Петър Парчевич (XVII в.) и на православния духовник Партений Павлович (XVIII в.). Сред тях се откроява „Житие и страдания грешнаго Софрония“ (началото на XIX в.); всички те ни разказват за интересни човешки съдби и спестяват някои важни за нас събития и имена.

Успоредно с Васкидович различни дневникови и автобиографични текстове пишат Неофит Бозвели, Неофит Рилски и други, които обаче също остават в ръкопис и са публикувани по-късно. Така че може да се приеме, че „Прескорбное оправдание...“ е първата печатна автобиографична творба. И както всички подобни творби от това време тя не влиза в по-късно установените жанрови норми. Това, което днес се приема за автобиографии на П. Парчевич и Партений Павлович, са всъщност писма; Софроний нарича своята творба „житие“ и това дава храна за спорове около жанра ѝ. *Оправданието* на Васкидович всъщност също е близко до някои негови писма (Porgeorgiev, 1921; Snegarov, 1951; Krastanov, 1975), а М. Арнаудов цитира и „Архив на Григорий Доростоло-Червенски“. Автобиографични моменти има в предговорите към други негови по-късни книги.

Подобно на Софроний, а също и на П. Р. Славейков и мнозина други, включително и на Григор Пърличев доста по-късно, Васкидович поставя акцента върху несправедливостта, на която е жертва или смята, че е жертва. Лаконичните сведения за просветната му и книжовна дейност и за забележителното свищовско училище, с което се свързва началото на светското образование, са въведени преди всичко като контрааргументи срещу неясните клевети.

Някои автори настояват, че „Прескорбное оправдание...“ трябва да се разглежда като литература. От една страна, текстът на изданието, което може да бъде определено и като брошура, ясно заявява своята цел – отхвърляне на клевета – която всъщност може да се определи по-скоро като публицистична. Характерът на *Оправданието* несъмнено въвежда мемоарни и автобиографични моменти. Така че има основания брошурата

3 Вж. и „Отец Неофит Хилендарец или Бозвели“, СБНУ, кн. 12, 1895.

да бъде отнесена към публицистиката и литературата на факта (или документалната литература).

От друга страна, Васкидович реално има отношение към литературата в по-тесния смисъл на думата. Нещо повече – на него принадлежи едно от най-ранните нейни определения на български език:

Прозата е естественият човеческий язык, и то както ви обично говорите [...] Стиховете са другий язык, по-висок художественый, а малко естествен. Разликуват ся стиховете от прозата, защото с мярка биват и защото сякий стих са окончава с такава реч, която същий глас има с речта на другий стих (Vaskidovich, 1847).

Косвен начин да се разбере представата на един автор за литературата, е като се видят споменаваните от него литературни произведения. В „Прескорбно оправдание...“ те не са много, всъщност като литература в един по-тесен и по-съвременен смисъл може да бъде определен единствено „Телемах“ на Франсоа дьо Фенелон (Aretov, 1990, pp. 133-134). Това е едно от най-разпространените по това време френски литературни произведения, като причината е използването му в образованието. Васкидович е смятал да публикува свой превод на книгата (който е запазен), но в „Прескорбно оправдание...“ споменава с уважение превода на П. Пиперов, който го накарал да се откаже (р. 19). Съществуват сведения и за превод на Васкидович на Лукиан – древният автор днес, от известна гледна точка, също може да бъде отнесен към литературата. И той, и Фенелон стоят някъде близо до границите ѝ. В учебниците на Васкидович се откриват и някои стихове, напълно в духа на съвременната им даскалска поезия (Arnaudov, 1971, pp. 322-323; Tacheva-Vumbanova, 2002), но и съвременниците, и литературните историци не го виждат като „поет“, името му отсъства и от антологиите на поезията от епохата.

Прозата може да е „естественият човеческий език“, но все пак тя става литература, когато авторът ѝ придаде някакви качества, които той и неговото време определят като „литературни“. Авторите могат и да не използват тази дума, да нямат подобна осъзната цел, но неизменно се отдалечават от естествения език – нулевата степен на литературата (Р. Барт), а когато по-късно използват този „естествен“ език, то това в някакъв контекст също може да придава литературност. Неофит Бозвели, не само съвременник, но и съавтор на Васкидович, ясно демонстрира един от начините за превръщане на един текст в литература – архаизиране на езика, изковаване на нови сложни думи, повторения и други реторически похвати. Авторът на „Прескорбно оправдание...“ не тръгва по този път, поне не така демонстративно.

Изследователите с основание се спират на пейзажа и свързаните с него разсъждения на автора в началото на „Прескорбно оправдание...“. И както и в други подобни случаи са склонни да му придават свой смисъл. Струва ми се, че това описание е важно като знак за желанието на автора да създаде нещо, което да се отличава от „естествения човеческий език“,

да бъде „по-художествено“. И това вероятно е единственото условие, според което текстът отговаря на изискването за литературност – за да бъде литература един текст, трябва да се стреми да бъде литература (да оставим настрана многобройните изключения, които предполагат по-пространни пояснения).

Едно възможно обобщение би могло да бъде формулирано и така: Васкидович очевидно си поставя за цел да напише публицистичен/документален текст, който да бъде „по-художествен“. Той е сред най-подготвените хора по това време, ако съдим по забележителната му лична библиотека; прибъгва до арсенала от литературни (според собствените му представи) изразни средства, разполага и с оригинален сюжет (собствените си прекеждия), който обаче не разгръща. Резултатът все още не е литература. Защото второто и по-важно условие за това е съвременниците му (или поне следващите поколения) да го възприемат за литература. Въпреки усилията на Васкидович и други негови съвременници – учители и учебникари, подобна представа още не е изградена, а когато по-късно бива изградена, тя се насочва към друг тип текстове. Подобно заключение в никакъв случай не подценява „Прескорбно оправдание...“ и творби като него, които реално подготвят появата на представа за литература, литературна публика, а и възможни автори на литературни творби. Това, което в случая донякъде е проблематизирано, е твърде обхватната, твърде патетичната и поставената твърде високо в някаква въобразена йерархия представа за литература.

\* \* \*

През 1853 г. котленецът Анастас Гранитски публикува една особена книга – „Истинний глас на България или оправдание на българити пред сами себе и пред своите иноземни доброжелатели и благодетели, срещу лъжите и безбожните постъпки и действия, что е учинил с народното българско имя Александър Стоилов Бойоглу Ескизаарец (самозван лъжно Бейоглу Екзарх Българский)“ (Granitski, 1853a). Въпреки че, за разлика от другите му текстове, тя е подписана само с инициали – „съставил А. П. Г.“, това безспорно е най-личното му дело.

Анастас Поппетров, който по-късно приема псевдонима Гранитски, е роден в Котел през 1825 г. (1830 г. според други източници). Учи в родното си градче при Сава Доброплодни, след това в Сливен, продължава в Цариград: в Куручешменската гръцка гимназия и в Медицинско-хирургическата академия в Галата сарай, но не успява да се дипломира – може би поради прекъснатата подкрепа от страна на Стефан Богориди, с когото вероятно е свързан баща му, поп Петър.

Младежът започва да сътрудничи на арменския печатар Тадей Дивитчанин, за когото „изправя“ (което вероятно ще рече „редактира“) няколко книги: „Кратко описвание за святата и преславна гора Атонска. Съчинено от священодякона А. Хилендарца“ (Granitski, 1853c) и поредното издание на „Книга нарицаемая митарства“ (Granitski, 1853b), включваща

няколко произведения, едно от които е отново описанието на х. Антоний Хилендарец. По това време той става един от редовните сътрудници на „Цариградски вестник“, помощник на редактора Александър Екзарх, а според собствените му твърдения – и редактор на изданието.

Въпреки младостта си (Гранитски няма още 30 години, когато издава „Истинний глас...“), той вече е автор, по-точно преводач на няколко книги с различен профил – медицина, учебни помагала, гадателни книги, литературни преводи. Първата му изява е преводът на „Сборниче за холерата“ (Granitski, 1848, 2th Ed. Granitski, 1849a). Тази книга е резултат от усилията на правителството да се справи с върлуващата по това време страшна болест. Написана на турски и преведена на езиците на народите в Империята, тя съдържа кратки исторически сведения, описание на симптомите, препоръки за профилактика и лечение и пр. След три години Гранитски превежда от френски и друга книга с медицинска проблематика – „Гигиена. Начин за сохранение на здравието“ (Granitski, 1851).

Сред първите книжовни трудове на Гранитски е и „Буквар за малките деца“ (Granitski, 1849), подготвен заедно с Андон Никопит, от който не са запазени екземпляри; съществуват обаче и за други негови трудове: „Священа история“, „Учебник по френски език по Олендорфовата метода“. Свързани с дебатите по просветни въпроси са неговите статии за езика, които влизат в полемика с Найден Геров. Гранитски съставя и две гадателни книги, в които са представени божества от старогръцкия пантеон, вмъкнати са и негови авторски стихове: „Пития или гледание за щастие“ (Granitski, 1849b) и „Знаменитаго астронома Казакий месецослов предвещателний. Содержающий всеобщее умозрение за лето 1850“ (Granitski, 1850c). Все по това време Гранитски подготвя и първата от няколкото си религиозни книги: „Краткий священный катихизис“ (1849), в превод на Адамандиос Кораис. Книгата е превеждана по-рано от Неофит Бозвели (1835) и Ем. Васкидович (1847) (Danova, 1985, pp. 49-50; Aleksieva, 1987, p. 92), но именно Гранитски първи посочва името на Кораис.

В историята на българската литература Гранитски вероятно ще остане като преводач. Той се насочва към три произведения с особено място в литературния живот от това време, публикувани първо като подлистници на „Цариградски вестник“, а след това и като самостоятелни издания – „Индийска хижа“ (Granitski, 1850) и „Павел и Виргиния“ и „Училище за децата“ от Бернарден дьо Сен Пиер (Granitski, 1850b; Granitski, 1852). Преводите са направени от гръцките варианти в мерена реч, дело на българина Никола Пиколо, като е използван и френският текст. Двете повести са едни от върховете изяви на сантименталната книжнина на Българското възрождане, както и на налагащото се по това време преосмислено отношение към любовта в литературата. През 1851-52 г. в „Цариградски вестник“ е поместен третият подлистник – „Училище за децата“, излязъл в самостоятелно издание през 1853 г. Към тази творба на френската писателка от XVIII в. Мари Льопренс дьо Бомон по-късно се насочват Кр. Пишурка, Ил. Блъсков и др.

„Истинний глас на България...“ е необикновена книга, която излиза от обичайната за епохата проблематика, а и от дотогавашните книжовни занимания на Гранитски. По обем (72 страници) тя е по-голяма от брошурата на Васкидович. Текстът започва с кратко историческо въведение и преминава към критично представяне на жизнения път на Александър Екзарх и неговото семейство. Специален акцент е поставен върху публикуваната от Ал. Екзарх брошура „Глас на българите“, която е резюмирана в едно „Прибавление“ (Granitski, 1853a), а след това от нея е препечатано „Сведения за съчинителя на прошението и циркулярите. Нрави на българити“ (Granitski, 1853a). Гранитски пише от свое име и на няколко места вмъква автобиографични елементи – по-малко, отколкото Васкидович. По-късно той няма да публикува автобиографични текстове. В сравнение с Васкидович езикът му е по-близък до днешния, но четенето се затруднява от множеството пространни бележки под линия. В книгата е включена и вероятно първата печатна изява на Г. Раковски – пространно възторжено писмо по повод изданието.

Книгата очевидно е провокирана от личен конфликт. Според Воалери Гранитски „моли няколко години по-късно Ал. Екзарх да забрави този памфлет и техните различия“ (Voillery, 2007, p. 31). Гледната точка на Ал. Екзарх може да се намери в една друга книга, появила се десетилетия по-късно – „Черти от животат на Александра Екзарха“ (Planinski, 1884). Тя е написана от Начо Планински, но стъпва върху непубликувана автобиография на Ал. Екзарх (Voillery, 2012, pp. 309-321).

По това време и през следващите години и други възрожденски дейци и периодични издания (в. „Дунавски лебед“, в. „България“) също изразяват открито неодобрение спрямо дейността на старозагорския просветител (Vorshukov, 1976, pp. 76-78; Terziev, 2023, p. 206) и издавания от него „Цариградски вестник“. По-късно, при кандидатирането му за княз, което поражда различни реакции, особено остър е П. Р. Славейков (Slaveykov, 1981, pp. 381-385; Slaveykov, 1982, pp. 65-70, p. 549).

По спомените на А. Илиев, който в начало на ХХ в. се опитва да намери екземпляр от „Истинний глас...“, се оказва, че такива почти не са запазени в Цариград (Iliev, 1903). Авторът допуска, че книгата е била обект на преследване, възможно и унищожение в Цариград, където по това време Екзарх се ползва с доверие и влияние (Terziev, 2023, p. 206).

За разлика от Гранитски Ал. Екзарх не е активен книжовник, дори в неговия „Цариградски вестник“ името му практически не се появява под текстове. С него се свързва единствено неподписаният превод на повестта „Младата сибирянка“ (Ekzarh, 1851) от Ксавие дьо Местр. Непубликувани остават два други негови текста: поемата „Плачеща България (1840 (?))“ (Voillery, 2012, pp. 140-144) и споменатата незавършена автобиография от 80-те години. Нещо подобно се забелязва и при други редактори от епохата, плодовити

книжовници, които рядко подписват материалите в собствените си издания. Ал. Екзарх е добър организатор на вестника и на издателската му дейност, както и на разпределянето на средствата, които получава от Русия, но амбициите му са в дейностите, които по-късно са определяни като „дипломация“.

Отношението на по-късните историци към личността на Ал. Екзарх е амбивалентно (Sharova, 1976; Sharova, 1984; Boneva, 1997; Boneva, 2007; Logu, 2007; Tankova, 2007), всички те извеждат на преден план неговата политическа/дипломатическа дейност: мемоарите до Великите сили, до Високата порта, до външния министър на Франция Франсоа Гизо, двете изложения до руския император, обръщения към българите и др. – общо 34 текста (Voillery, 2012, pp. 154-155, p. 165, pp. 178-179, pp. 224-225, pp. 291-292), коментирани по различен начин през десетилетията, като по-късните изследвания оценяват дипломатическите усилия на Ал. Екзарх по-скоро положително. От друга страна, по-късното му самопредлагане за княз на България е виждано по-скоро като недоразумение.

Въпреки резервите към личността му, днешните изследователи сякаш са по-склонни да застанат на негова страна в конфликта му с Гранитски или, по-често, да игнорират сблъсъка. Възобновяването на интереса към Ал. Екзарх може да се свърже и със започналото през 70-те години на XX в. „реабилитиране“ на просветителите от цариградския кръг. Това понякога води и до категорични оценки, лишени от аргументи – така, в едно изречение, Т. Жечев нарича „Истинний глас...“ „един пасквил“ (Zhechev, 1976, p. 63). Немалка част от по-късното насочване към делото на Ал. Екзарх е инспирирана от Пиер Воалери, негов правнук, който му посвещава няколко публикации в България и Франция (Voillery, 2005).

Изследователите виждат Гранитски, който не е компрометиран от други шумни изяви, по-скоро като второстепенен книжовник и общественик и избягват да се вглеждат в скандалната му книга. А обвиненията му са сериозни и многопосочни. Първото е за претенциите на Екзарх за особения, едва ли не аристократичен произход на рода му, съчетани с користоно използване на финансирането от Русия:

Но преди няколко години появиха ся някои чловеци Българи, и на които Българите имято не знаяха, които почеха да ся скитат тамо обамо по Европа; и с народното Българско имя да лъжат и да просят уш за да помогнат на сиромашеското състояние на нашиит народ, и за да му заличат раните, които му нанесли время и люди, но главно за да събират злато и сребро за свой джеп, и да правят други безчестни и своекористни дела (Granitski, 1853a).

Случаят не е изолиран: Гранитски, чиято фамилия също е псевдоним, отправя сходни обвинения и към Захари Княжески („разни лъжни Князове“, (p. 5), който в Русия по подобен начин претендира, че е от благороден род. Подобен измамник бил и Партений Зографски (p. 49), отново свързан с Русия. Ал. Екзарх инспирирал в „Цариградски вестник“ публикации за

заслугите си за изграждането на българската църква в столицата (бр. 49, 98, 24), подписани от негов приятел от Казанлък, „прост и безрасуден учител Г-н Ф.“ (Granitski, 1853a).

Следващата група обвинения са свързани с морала на Екзарх:

[...] он побегнал и отишъл в Свищов, и тогава найшъл тамо учителя гръка Емануила Васкидовича, и он му изискал, чрез тогдешните свищовски школки епитропи тескере (паспорт), дали му от милост и пари, та отишъл в Букурещ. [...] и все что зимал, давал го на пиянство и плотски похоти (Granitski, 1853a, p. 8).

Той Бойоглу бил задължял в Париж на една мадама [...] до 6000 франги, зарад что седял и ял в гостилницата ѝ, която го кредитувала за свое сластолюбие с него (Granitski, 1853a, p. 9).

Според Границки Ал. Екзарх бил хвърлен в затвора, където останал година и половина, Петър Берон платил дълга му и го освободил. Не са спестени и обвинения за връзките му с племенницата Ирина Екзарх. Следват и традиционните за епохата обвинения в отклонения от православие:

да разпространи едните нихното вероизповедание, другите своята народност [...] той действувал и искал да действува един такъв проситилизъм върху Българити да ги прави протестанти и западни (латини) (Granitski, 1853a, p. 11).

Основният мотив, подтикнал Гранитски да се противопостави на Ал. Екзарх и да напише брошурата, са некоректното поведение на Екзарх като книжовник и издател на „Цариградски вестник“. Според Гранитски той отнел с финансови машинации печатницата и вестника на Богоров (Granitski, 1853a, pp. 38-39), а и си присвоил труда на котленеца, според когото:

Редактова ся вестника от бр. 1 до бр. 26 от Г-на А. Г. (т. е. Гранитски – б. а.) [...] от брой 90 до брой 105 от истаго горереченаго Г-на А. Г. [...] от бр. 124] от г-на Хр. Даскалов (Granitski, 1853a, pp. 39-40).

Освен това Ал. Екзарх измамил Добрович, не му платил броеве на „Мироздание“ (р. 48), също и А. Никопит („преводителът на Енциклопедията“). Самият Гранитски също се чувства ощетен. Като говори за себе си в трето лице и се споменава с инициали, той пише:

В превода „Павел и Виргиния“, защото печатанието ся събираше, кога го остави Г-н А. Г., он допълни една типографическа кола, и според това, от адска мисъл скина имято на преводчика (Granitski, 1853a, pp. 44-45).

За други издания Ал. Екзарх издал „лъжливи записи“, а когато Гранитски отишъл в Свищов за учител, Ал. Екзарх пратил писмо срещу него.

Едва ли може да има съмнения, че по-младият, но също амбициозен Гранитски се е чувствал ощетен от социално по-високо стоящия от него Екзарх. Струва ми се, че отношението му е близко до въведения от Ницше термин *ресантимент* (*ресантиман*).

\* \* \*

Днешният поглед открива както сходства, така и различия в гневните книги на Васкидович и Гранитски. И двамата автори представят своите прежеждия подборно, и двамата се обрисуват като жертвинанесправедливости, извършени от техни сънародници, а не толкова от обичайните за епохата гръцки злодеи и турски (мюсюлмански) насилници. Самовиктимизацията е ясно забележима и при двамата, макар и в различна степен и с различен характер. Обективно погледнато, и двамата в някакъв смисъл наистина са жертви. Васкидович обаче предпочита да се въздържа да назовава своите клеветници и противници (както впрочем и своите помощници); остават неясни и конкретните обвинения на противниците. Гранитски е съвсем директен в обвиненията. Те са недвусмислени: финансови и книжовни некоректни дела, неморално поведение (да не кажа разврат); обвиненията за обвързаност с чуждо вероизповедание са нещо обичайно за епохата. Но докато Васкидович е жертва на клевета, т. е. обвиняем, то Гранитски обвинява своя противник и затова понякога е виждан като клеветник.

И Васкидович, и Гранитски са автори на няколко стихотворения, които не привличат вниманието на публиката, а и на изследователите. Все пак, като книжовник и преводач Гранитски стои по-близо до днешните представи за литература – той превежда Бернарден дьо Сен Пиер и Льопренс дьо Бомон. Васкидович (р. 1785) е по-възрастен, но не и по-необразован (завършил е Княжеската (Бейската) академия „Свети Сава“ в Букурещ), той е представител на предишното поколение, обвързано преди всичко с учебникарската книжнина. Но от известна гледна точка неговото автобиографично повествование сякаш е „по-литературно“, докато това на Гранитски е „по-публицистично“. Повествованието на Васкидович сякаш навлиза по-дълбоко в психологията на своя автор, докато Гранитски се съсредоточава върху обекта на своя текст.

По-късните историци проявяват известен интерес към личността на Ал. Екзарх и неговата политическа дейност, но и те, и литераторите практически игнорират книгата на Гранитски, а авторът ѝ остава в периферията на наблюденията им. Донякъде същото може да се каже и за Васкидович и неговата книга. Вероятно една от причините е в това, че общите прегледи и публицистичните текстове предпочитат да се насочват към единството на интелигенцията, дори на народа, и избягват конфликтите, лични и обществени, с които е изпълнена епохата. Някои от тези конфликти могат да привлекат вниманието на биографите и особено на жълтата преса, но с двата при Васкидович и сблъсъка Гранитски – Ал. Екзарх това практически не се случва. Извън вниманието остават по-сложните психологически преживявания, документираны в двете гневни брошури. Тези преживявания – огорчението от своите, обидите, неоченените книжовни и обществени дела и свързания с тях *ресантиман* – всъщност не са изключение за епохата, но по-трудно се вметват в идеализираните, понякога и по-схематични представи за Българското възраждане.

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# A CHRONOTOPIC STUDY OF WOMEN'S WAR EXPERIENCE IN THE WORKS OF S. ALEXIEVICH, AN ANONYMOUS AUTHOR<sup>1</sup>, AND I. GREKOVA

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/BEWE5535>

**Abstract:** *This article studies the women's perspective on war and its effects on the female characters in three significant works written by women, namely "The Ship of Widows" (1994) by I. Grekova, "A Woman in Berlin" (2011) by an Anonymous author, and "U vojny ne zhenskoe litso" (2013) ("The Unwomanly Face of War") by S. Alexievich. The purpose of this research is to display, for the first time collectively, how women's perspective on war is narrated not by men but by women themselves who have experienced WWII or its aftermath effects in their lives. Despite a significant literature/bibliography on WWII, the latter primarily reflects the male view, making the three selected books exceptional. Furthermore, unlike the previously available articles on the aforementioned texts, our article originally conducts a collective and comparative study of them. Women's studies have separately dealt with these three literary works, highlighting the women's experiences and ordeals of war. Instead, we focus on the setting of the stories. The communal buildings in the first two works and the war front in the third one gain a significant historical and personal dimension that can be framed and explained by Bakhtin's concept of chronotope, where according to Lefebvre "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history" (1994, p.84). In terms of explaining the nature of the spatiality in these literary oeuvre, H. Lefebvre's concepts of "dominated space" and "appropriated space" are employed.*

**Key words:** *chronotope, dominated space, appropriated space, wartime, women's experiences of war*

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1 In this study, the 2011 Virago Modern Classics edition is used and the author is mentioned as anonymous. The actual author is Marta Hilliers, but to the best of our knowledge, her name has not appeared on the book cover.

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**Article history:** Received: 6 March 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 2 June 2025; Accepted: 9 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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This study examines the use of space to represent women's experiences, struggles, and traumas during WWII in three books written by women, namely "A Woman in Berlin," anonymous (2011), "The Ship of Widows" by Irina Grekova (1994), and "The Unwomanly Face of War" by Svetlana Alexievich (2013). These groundbreaking books have been studied earlier in several articles and dissertations from many different angles but have never been compared and investigated from this perspective of Lefebvre's notions of dominated and appropriated space and the Bakhtinian concept of chronotope. The three books discussed in this article present narratives in which female characters are depicted in wartime settings fighting to survive during the war. The theories of Bakhtin and Lefebvre allow the critic to pay attention to the represented places not only as wartime spaces but also as sites of gender and class conflict and struggle. In other words, they provide us with the necessary tools to explore and understand the nature of wartime spaces and how they give voice to women's experience of war. Bakhtin's chronotope provides a way of joining the temporal dimension of the war with its spatial dimension narrated in all three books, enabling the authors to regard the places where the actions occur as wartime spaces. Lefebvre's concepts of "dominated space" and "appropriated space," on the other hand, describe space as a part of social originating superstructures, which are represented by institutions and the state itself (1991, p. 85). For Lefebvre, dominated space is authoritarian, technologically oriented, and repressive. He writes: "Thanks to technology, the domination of space is becoming, as it were, completely dominant. The dominance has its root in... history and in the historical sphere, for its origins coincide with those of political power itself... Dominated space is usually closed, sterilised, emptied out." (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 164-165) According to Isobel Armstrong, who comments on the relevance of Lefebvre's theories in the study of space in the 19th-century novel, appropriated space is "the space of limited freedom" (Armstrong, 2013, p. 18). Therefore, it is totally in contrast with dominated space. As Lefebvre describes it, "It is a natural space modified in order to serve the needs and possibilities of a group that it has been appropriated by that group" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 165).

One important motivation for the authors' choice of comparing the aforementioned books and analyse the theme of women's experiences of war was the fact that, although there is a vast literature on WWII, for the most part, the war events and the impact of the war on civilians are described from a male point of view. Consequently, in male literary works, women appear as secondary characters who are not actively involved in the conflict but perform their duties as mothers, family members, lovers, wives, or as professionals in traditionally female jobs such as nurses, cooks, and maidservants. A characteristic aspect of all three analysed books is their direct focus on women, on how they went through all phases of war, during and after, on what kind of experiences they had, and on how they survived depending solely on their own strengths and seemingly meagre sources. At this point, it may be worthwhile to outline shortly the main features of the texts discussed, pointing out common and contrasting features.

As has already been mentioned, all books deal with the same wartime space and nearly the same period, reflecting a similar gender-related focal point. Unquestionably, all three authors share the view of condemning the destructive outcome of war on people. In this way, the texts contribute to the anti-war movement. The journalist Alexievich, who won the 2015 Nobel Literature Prize, confessed in an interview her reason for writing her oeuvre: “I would like to write a book so that even a hint of war would be disgusting and made people sick. Even military generals.” (Alexievich, 2013, p.10) Indeed, Alexievich’s book presents devastating, heart-wrenching, and horrible records of women who participated in the war and portrayed their post-war lives as completely and unequivocally destructed. Even readers of the 21st century are thrown into despair and agony for all those ruined youths and lives destroyed.

In “A Woman in Berlin,” the anonymous female character records her daily troubles immediately after the end of the war when the Soviet and American armies occupied Berlin. She is left homeless and jobless. She seeks shelter in a building where every flat is shared by several people who are total strangers to each other but who experience the same misery and hardships. The scale of devastation is reflected on the other end of the warring parties by the Berliner woman who portrays the reality of her and all the Berliners’ sufferings as such: “At the moment, we are marching back in time. Cave dwellers.” (2011, p. 21) The book is a first-hand narration of how life was during and immediately after the surrender of Germany. The name of the narrator is never mentioned, similar to the anonymity of the author of the book, and all the events evolves around how the she-narrator tries to survive amid the chaos and devastation of the war and the occupation. She goes through a series of incidents in order to barely survive and make a very precarious living, meeting with all kinds of people and ordeals while trying to do so.

“The Ship of Widows” gives an account of the lives of five women who are assigned by the government authorities to share their existence in a large communal apartment when the war is still raging throughout Europe and the USSR. They continue to live together in it even after the end of the conflict. The novel presents predominantly the woman’s world of the narrator, but her story is interconnected with the past and present of all the rest of her flatmates. This female community has rather turbulent relations, but is united by their care for the growth of a baby boy. In dire living conditions, the latter gives all the women the joy of motherly love and compassion.

In the foreword written by Helena Gosciolo to the novel “The Ship of Widows”, the place and weight of women during WWII are described as follows:

The war split Russian society into two separate spheres - the battlefield and the domestic front. Although that division followed gender lines, women comprised approximately 8 percent of the armed forces. They not only worked in transport, the medical corps and clerical positions but also joined in combat as machine gunners, tank drivers, snipers, sappers, navigators, and bomber pilots. Women replaced men

in industry, agriculture, and medicine on the domestic front. Besides their direct, tangible contribution to the war effort, women also fulfilled the key psychological role of morale boosters and “safe keepers of the domestic flame” – they provided a haven for the returnees from the battlefield... Their unglamorous, dogged fortitude solidified forever, it seems, the image of Soviet womanhood as eternally patient, nurturing, and capable of withstanding any travails... It is to the women who capacitated this image that “The Ship of Widows” pays a moving yet unsentimental tribute (Goscilo, 1994, p. xvi).

It is noteworthy to mention that while “A Woman in Berlin” and “The Unwomanly Face of War” are written by journalists who tried to deliver the facts meticulously using their literary skills, the author of “The Ship of Widows” is a mathematician by profession who reflects and transforms her personal experience of living behind the frontline in the USSR during WWII into a narrative text. The three books are inspired by true stories and, as such, enable the authors of this article to conduct an in-depth analysis of the existence and survival of women during wartime through the prism of Lefebvre’s dominated and appropriated space concepts. The important issue that attracted the authors’ attention to these works is that women are not voiced or made visible in this landscape of war via men’s perception and points of view, but they express their lives, traumas, and hardships by their own accounts.

As it has been explained earlier, Lefebvre’s concepts are employed in our study because female characters in all three books create for themselves the conditions for their survival in the chronotope of “dominated” space of war and wartime. They transform the space they live in sheltering and nurturing “homes” in the Bachelardian sense. According to the latter: “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home. This is the environment in which protective beings live...the sites of our intimate lives” (Bachelard, 2014, pp. 27, 29-30). In “The Ship of Widows,” Olga describes her “appropriated space” or “assumed home” as follows:

I began to look for my own living space... my own corner, my own four walls. The regional Soviet quite quickly allocated me a room whose previous occupants had either died or moved out. It turned out to be quite small...The previous occupants had left a bed, evidently abandoned because it was useless (Grekova, 1994, p. 6).

The urge for home as not only a place but some kind of shelter against the cruelty and horrors of the environment is expressed by the narrator in “A Woman in Berlin” as: “Back in the attic apartment. I cannot really call it a home. I no longer have a home. Not that the furnished room I was bombed out of was really mine either. All the same, I’d filled it with six years of my life.” (2011, p.18) In “The Ship of Widows”, Olga explains her situation after she is discharged from the hospital:

Yes, I loved it all, I would have liked to keep this emptiness, this simplicity, this brightness. I didn’t want to acquire a lot of things. They say ships encrusted with barnacles lose speed, and I didn’t want to lose speed, even though I had nowhere to go (Grekova, 1994, p.7).

Meanwhile, in Alexievich, a woman character records her memories:

I remembered the Leningrad siege... Especially an incident which shocked us all. We were told that an old woman opened her window every day and poured down on the street a mug of water, and she managed to aim further away each time. Initially, we thought she was crazy-there was all sorts of weirdness during the siege – all the same, we decided to ask her why. You know what she said to us? If the fascists come to Leningrad and dare to come to my Street, I will pour boiling water on them. I am old; this is the only thing I can do... So, she was practising... Everyday... This was how she could fight... Everybody thought of what to do to protect the city. Death was too easy; something else had to be done. An action... (Alexievich, 2013, p. 86).

The books under study are considered within the paradigm of Bakhtinian chronotope as well. They contain a definite juxtaposition of time (wartime) and space as the Berlin communals in “A Woman in Berlin,” a Muscovite communal flat in “The Ship of Widows,” and the frontline with all the other war spaces in “The Unwomanly Face of War.” As Alexievich affirms in a metaphoric way, “Time is also a homeland” (Alexievich, 2013, p. 15). The concept of Bakhtinian chronotope affirms itself as a physical and concrete entity which cannot be separated from time. As Isobel Armstrong writes, according to Bakhtin, “history becomes visible as space, and the “when” and “where” of the novel, as Franco Moretti elegantly puts it, come together in a unique convergence, one that could only occur at this juncture in the narrative and at that historical moment” (2013, p. 2). Bakhtin makes time visible and moving, a consisting space in itself. It becomes the chronotope of the narration. The spaces, in which the female characters in all three books live, are real spaces bound to reality in terms of their connection with time. Hence, the spatial and temporal dimensions of the chronotope in all three books converge to form the manifestation and the space of how these women experience and endure war and its aftermath. On the other hand, since the characters fail to provide themselves with a home in the Bachelardian sense, which offers them shelter, comfort, safety, security and continuity of a domestic space called “home”, Henri Lefebvre’s appropriated space concept helps us to understand how these women characters manage to survive despite the lack of a proper “home”. In “The Ship of Widows,” the narrator writes :

These were my neighbours in the flat, and with these people I was destined to live. They’re my family now-formed not by choice but by chance... So, for me, doubly bereft, this was the only possible form of the family now, and if this hadn’t existed, I wouldn’t have been able to bear it (Grekova, 1994, p. 17).

In her study of the significance of the communal living in the Soviet Union, Erin Collopy observes how Olga, the narrator in “The Ship of Widows,” tries to normalise her communal living: “Despite everything, it is apparent that Olga appreciates what solace her living situation brings her. Her apartment mates are a sort of family, perhaps as dysfunctional as any” (Collopy, 2005, p. 8).

Lefebvre clarifies his concept of appropriated space by stating that “Private space is distinct from, but always connected with, public space. In the best of circumstances, the outside space of the community is dominated, while the

indoor space of family life is appropriated.” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 165) The concept of appropriated space against the dominated space of war can be seen in the three books as the fulfilment of the yearning for the Bachelardian home in the communal flat in “The Ship of Widows”, in the communal lodging in “A Woman in Berlin”, and in the war front, or the bunkers, or the open fields in the “The Unwomanly Face of War.” Anna Strumilima, a guerilla warrior recalls:

I was not afraid of darkness anymore. Nor of animals, Except the snakes... At nights, she-wolves, would howl. We would remain in our dugouts - nothing would happen... The wolves were wild, hungry. We had very small dugouts, like caves. The wood was our home (Alexievich, 2013, p. 95).

The same metaphor of a cave as a protection from the outside danger can be traced in “A Woman in Berlin”: “...people here are convinced that their cave is one of the safest. There is nothing more alien than an unknown shelter. ... Every place has its own set of quirks and regulations.” (2011, p. 23) In “The Ship of Widows,” Olga describes her appropriated home in the following manner:

Home...

Work is one thing, but we all need a home to go back to where we can take off our working clothes, put on a dressing – gown and live.

The flat was in a large, gloomy, six-storey building constructed sometime around the turn of the century... Now it was run down, peeling and dilapidated: the lift didn't work, the plaster was falling off... There were four rooms in the flat besides mine: three women lived in three of them, one in each room, and the fourth was locked while its owners, Fyodor and Anfisa Gromov, were away at the front (Grekova, 1994, p. 17).

In “The Unwomanly Face of War” Valentina Chudaeva, an artillery sergeant severely wounded during the battle, describes her yearnings:

How I wanted to go home. Even though there was no father or mother. Home – it is something that is more significant than people living there and even greater than the home itself. This is something special... Every person must have a home... (Alexievich, 2013, p. 87).

In his article on Irina Grekova, Benjamin Massey Sutcliffe mentions the concept of “chronotope of crisis” since Grekova’s novel uses non-linear and self-erasing time in conjunction with communal and liminal space as a focal point for commentary on the burden on Anfisa as an inhabitant of the communal dwelling and the ordeals of motherhood within this juxtaposition (Sutcliffe, 2004, p. 80). Using the same concept of “chronotope of crisis,” Sutcliffe points out that Grekova in “The Ship of Widows” established women’s everyday lives as a legitimate, sometimes controversial, theme. The use of the chronotope of crisis focuses attention on gender-specific (hospital, communal apartment, line) and the repetitive nature of women’s time (Sutcliffe, 2004, p. 80). Hence, the chronotope of crisis is portrayed as an unenviable environment like the inescapable reality of Olga Ivanovna and, by extension, of the intelligentsia. Moreover, the chronotope of crisis becomes visible in the character of Olga, who was once a piano player, but

now yells in the kitchen and argues over who should wash the hallway (Sutcliffe, 2004, p. 43).

The same concept can be traced/found in “A Woman in Berlin,” where the linear time constructs the gender-specific emotions and the communal mundane life. The chronotope of crisis is seen as such in the following instances:

Breakfast in the basement. Everyone is trying as best as they can to recreate some semblance of family life. A genteel morning meal served on trunks, crates and chairs, with paper napkins and little tablecloths.... The widow conjured up some real coffee and cooked it on a fire made of broken champagne crates – that did us good. But people are fidgety, cranky, getting on one another's nerves (Grekova, 2011, pp. 54-55).

Nevertheless, the literary methods of presenting the universal concepts of gender factors, pacifism and humanity through emotional and deeply impressive stories are significantly different among the texts. Not only do the authors have various and differing war experiences, but also their writing styles are not alike. The books represent three distinct genres. Journalistic narrative via a great number of commented interviews characterizes “The Unwomanly Face of War.” “A Woman in Berlin” is a kind of diary and memoirs. “The Ship of Widows” is a fictional work. As a result, in “The Unwomanly Face of War”, we find stories told by women, who participated in the battlefields of WWII, along with their attitudes, feelings, flashbacks, and judgements.

Contrasting the presentation of about 100 stories in “The Unwomanly Face of War,” “A Woman in Berlin” uses only everyday notes of a single woman describing her confined neighbourhood. However, the reader understands that the author reveals a typical portrait of women in Berlin.

As for “The Ship of Widows,” the author of the metaphorical ship paints a bright picture of life, where each character is an unforgettable personality. The characters range in their status from an uneducated, low-qualified worker, Panya, to a former theatre actress, Ada, trying even during the war to live in her imaginary world of music and romantic feelings. Every story, however laconic, calls for the reader's sympathy, even for the seemingly negative characters.

It should be emphasised that despite all the differences, the books share a common thought: women showed resilience and had the common – sometimes covert – goal not only to survive the war but also to have a home, family, love, and stability. They follow different paths to reach this goal: immediate involvement in military actions in “The Unwomanly Face of War,” building their small worlds bounded by rooms in a communal flat in “The Ship of Widows,” and establishing “sex for food” relations with enemy soldiers in “A Woman in Berlin.”

The characters of all three works are described as going through various stages of physical and emotional experiences, ordeals, and traumas of differentiating degrees in similar and/or dissimilar environments. They represent various social backgrounds, education levels, ideological views, professions,

nationalities, and age groups. The striking difference stems from the fact that the woman in "A Woman in Berlin" represents the people of the aggressor but defeated country, while the characters of the other two works act as defenders of their homeland. At the same time, they lived under harsh regimes, which made them all victims of the historical events and circumstances of WWII.

Furthermore, it can be stated that the characters are united by the overwhelming will to survive and have a family as well as a home. So the limited space they try to live in is appropriated as "home" in the Lefebvrian sense, allowing them to create an illusion of a safe home where they can maintain their longing for a family and a cherished life. The small details sprinkled in all stories demonstrate that "home" is not just a place to live but also a place of individual cosiness. In "The Ship of Widows," after coming back from the frontline, Anfisa is worried about her flowers despite war hardships and her own desperate situation:

Anfisa wasn't listening. She was looking at her plants. She had kept a lot of plants and flowers once. They'd been the best in the whole house. Now there were just some withered buddleias in jam jars. She felt so sorry for the flowers, more sorry than anything. (Grekova, 1994, p. 24)

In "The Unwomanly Face of War" a lieutenant pilot Anna Dubrovina-Chekunova remembers: "I brought flowers from my room and asked neighbours: please water the flowers" (Alexievich, 2013, p. 92), just before leaving for the battlefield.

The same theme is present in "A Woman in Berlin". In the narrator's words: "I planted some chervil and borage in the rotting balcony boxes, that is to say, I made some shallow grooves and sprinkled in the brown grains and tiny black seeds that are supposed to become my kitchen garden." (2011, p. 234).

Resilience and a will to survive and turn back to life are common traits in all female characters, and they were not even expected by the women themselves.

In "The Unwomanly Face of War", Anna Strumilina, a guerilla warrior, states: "I am not a hero... I was a pretty girl, spoiled by parents. Then the war came. I did not want to die; I was afraid to shoot. Oh, I was afraid of the dark, of the wild forest." (Alexievich, 2021, p. 95). And this woman was a warrior during the whole war!

Life far from the frontline also required strength to overcome hardships and losses of war.

The narrator in "A Woman in Berlin" writes: "I feel something nagging at me, boring into me. I can't go on living like a plant, I need to move, I have to act, start doing something." (2011, p. 235)

In "The Ship of Widows", Olga, a severely crippled former musician who lost all her family and ability to continue her professional career clings to life in her own words:

...I had already started to lose hope when I was suddenly offered a job! The offer terrified me and stirred up the depth of my lack of confidence. I didn’t know anything, couldn’t do anything. But it was a job, and I had to work in order to live. And I had to live – for some unknown reason I absolutely have to live! (Grekova, 1994, p. 9)

Later, former operetta singer Ada Efimovna displays the same theme of the will to survive, insisting that “War’s war, but you still have to look after yourself. You can’t get yourself go for too long... In fact, a woman should take special care of herself in a war. One should cultivate both art and nature...” (Grekova, 1994, p. 40)

Despite the wartime environment, which is against a woman’s nature – the unwomanly face of war – all women do not abandon the urge and hope for ordinary female life, accepting, albeit unwillingly, some form of its ersatz. Here are some examples, encircling the theme of the persisting nature of hope and the urge for survival despite the lack of a home, but its assumed ersatz, and validating Lefebvre’s concept of “appropriated space”, despite all the adverse chronotopic instances.

As can be seen in the following examples, amidst the horrors of the war, we can find the following confessions, which show that women still pursue love and compassion or at least some form of romance in their miserable lives:

To the question “Did you fall in love?”, Svetlana Lyubich, a nurse, replies: “Certainly, we were so young.” (Alexievich, 2013, p. 307)

Lyubov Grozd, combat medic tells us that: “It was a true love. He was killed and we were burying him. He was lying on his soldier trench coat. I approached and kissed him... It was my first kiss.” (Alexievich, 2013, p. 312–313)

Nina Mihay, a sergeant nurse, reveals the story of one of her friends:

The troop commander and nurse Lyuba Silina... They were in love! Everybody knew it... Whenever the commander went to fight, the nurse would follow... She would say she would never forgive herself if she would not be by his side when he died. “Let them kill us together. Just one bullet would do.” They were to either die or live together. There was no tomorrow for love, just today (Alexievich, 2013, p. 309).

In “The Ship of Widows,” Anfisa’s story of the war-time love for a wounded soldier, Grigorii, is described as such:

And it was there that Anfisa first discovered what love was. She used to think she loved Fyodor [her husband] – little did she know then! There was simply no comparison. This affair with Grigorii was the real thing: everything was new and special, the whole world changed, ... Love changed her; she grew prettier, ... She wasn’t afraid of bombing now (Grekova, 1994, p.35).

Whatever blows they had endured, all the women characters put efforts into managing their life and homes after the war ended.

Klavdiya, a sniper in “The Unwomanly Face of War”, says: “I dreamed of love. Wished home and family. To feel children’s smell at home.” (Alexievich, 2021, p. 315)

Meanwhile, Olga in “The Ship of Widows,” crippled during bombardment, appreciates some private talks with her neighbour war veteran Fyedor:

...so Fyodor loved me, but what about me? Of course not, I couldn't love anyone, least of all Fyodor. Why then the thought of his love makes me so happy? ... Could it be that in me, too, there lived a woman begging for charity? That I, this freakish creature without sex or age, with my lameness and my stick, was still a woman who needed to be loved? (Grekova, 1994, p. 83)

The narrator of “A Woman in Berlin” describes her drama when meeting her fiancé after her forced sex with the Soviet army soldiers. The fiancé Gerd is ashamed and disgusted of her: “It’s horrible being around you. You’ve lost all sense of measure.” Then Gerd left without any notice of his possible return to her. Despite this, there is a hint of light at the end of tunnel: “Does Gerd still think of me? Maybe, we’ll find our way back to each other yet.” (2011, p. 307–308). Agatha Schwartz, in her detailed study and analysis of “A Woman in Berlin” from the perspective of shameful assaults towards women in Berlin and their ensuing long-term traumas, points out that women still found outlets to survive and told their stories to a public who would rather close their eyes to such a severe and collective women issue:

A Woman in Berlin offers an account of this atmosphere of lawlessness in which, according to Pötzsch, women became reduced as per Giorgio Agamben’s term to “bare life” meaning that “their bodies become disposable objects that can be mistreated or killed without legal consequences for the perpetrator” (20). However, the anonymous narrator and other women characters maintain a sense of agency and develop ways to survive. We can speculate that the women’s refusal to be reduced to “bare life” was what made the initial reception of the diary controversial in the years of the German economic miracle marked by a desire to move on and to forget (Schwartz, 2015, p. 15).

In conclusion, the attitudes, experiences, and ordeals of women belonging to different nations and backgrounds, but sharing similar time/space frames have been explored in this study primarily to display women’s perspectives on war and its traumatic effects on their lives from their own mouths. Secondly but not least importantly, the research contributes to the study of women and war theme through the use of three distinguished scholars’ concepts to understand how the nature of wartime spaces are represented in these works in order to reveal how all these women narrators respond to war and its impact on their existences. In this article we have also argued that the “wartime space” is tied to diverse places, such as communal flats and frontline. Demonstrating women’s perspective of war, the authors emphasise the importance of “home” as not just a “place”, but a private domain, which is a fixed point of life, regardless of how unhuman and turbulent time is. Additionally, the three books show the destructive impact of war on the lives of women who were deprived of “homes” and who tried to find substitutes for them.

It should be underlined that our synthesised study of the selected works provides a wide diapason of stories in which diverse backgrounds and wartime situations show common attitudes of women, such as hope against despair and resilience after defeat. In the review in the back cover of "A Woman in Berlin," Nina Bawden sums up the situation of all the female characters, who, despite their miserable living conditions, are still capable of seeing the bright side of life: "It could have been an unbearable story if it had not been for the courage and astonishingly, the humour with which it is often told".

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# RELATIONAL SELF-REPRESENTATIONS OF QUEER LIVES AND POLITICAL OPPRESSION IN ROMANIAN LIFE WRITING

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/LDGQ9727>

**Abstract:** *The article examines four autobiographical works written in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The texts chart their authors' experience of non-heteronormative identity construction alongside a history of political oppression during the communist regime in Romania. In addition to self-identifying as homosexuals and reflecting upon the interconnection of their sexuality, cultural background and discourse position, Ion Negoïtescu, Mihai Rădulescu and Petre Sirin, who knew each other well, were part of a larger network of like-minded friends and interacted intensely with key figures of the Romanian interwar intelligentsia. The analysis looks at their texts through the lenses of performativity, positionality and relationality and shows that, despite their genre heterogeneity, Negoïtescu's unfinished autobiography, his correspondence with Radu Stanca, Rădulescu's posthumous collection of autobiographical writings and Sirin's autobiographical account of his relationship to Rădulescu can all be read as relational life narratives. On a formal level, the posthumous publication of the texts dislocates the life writers from their autonomous position through shared authorship with the editors. On a content level, every life writing piece analysed here combines performative narrative self-construction with representations of personal relationships. A close reading of the texts reveals how engaging with stigmatized homosexual experience and at the same time adjusting to conservative stances of the Romanian high culture disrupts the linear narrative of autonomous self-development and provides accounts of queer subjectivity that challenge both rigid genre and gender boundaries.*

**Key words:** *autobiography, relationality, queer, Romania, political oppression*

## Introduction

This article explores autobiographical works by Ion Negoïtescu (1921-1993), Mihai Rădulescu (1919-1959) and Petre Sirin (1926-2003) which were published posthumously and have been to date the only examples of queer life writing in Romanian literature. In addition to sharing a non-heteronormative sexuality and reflecting upon its interconnection with other aspects of their life stories, all three life writers – the celebrated literary critic Negoïtescu as well as the less famous musicologist Rădulescu and documentary film director Sirin – aspired to play

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**Article history:** Received: 4 May 2025; Reviewed: 25 June 2025; Revised: 31 May 2025; Accepted: 2 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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a significant role in Romanian mainstream culture and were part of a cultural network afflicted by political persecutions in the 1950s and 1960s.

The present article originates in a paper accepted for publication in a projected thematic issue on Central and Eastern European literary representation of non-heteronormative masculinity by the Australian e-journal *Sextures* which eventually went offline. A second occasion to present the same topic to an international audience was a project entitled “Alternative Formen der Sexualität in der rumänischen Literatur nach 1945. Eine literaturhistorische Spurensuche” hosted by the German department of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj and the University of Innsbruck<sup>2</sup>. Both times I considered the scarcity of autobiographical testimonies telling the story of queer lives in communist Romania and only a selected corpus of texts by the three authors mentioned above seemed an appropriate choice for describing the queer autobiographical discourse in Romania. The present article maintains the focus on the three authors, while extending the corpus of texts to Negoïtescu’s correspondence, which hasn’t been addressed previously. Given the centrality of friendship in the life writings of the three authors, the present analysis focuses not only on the “performance of identities that become constitutive of subjectivity” (Smith, Watson, 2010, p. 214) but rather on the “relational structure of the autobiographer’s identity” (Eakin, 1999, p. 60). At the same time, it reflects more deeply on the research methods and the theoretical frame by placing the analysis at the intersection of life writing studies, queer studies and Romanian literary studies.

Queer readings of Romanian literary works or studies focusing on LGBTQ representations in the Romanian literature are still scarce in the academia. Moreover, as the researcher in gender and queer studies Ramona Dima (2018) remarks, they are rather mapping exercises to identify Romanian literary texts with queer potential than in-depth studies of the literary phenomena from a queer perspective. Larger attempts to identify historical material for research in the nascent field of Romanian queer literary and cultural studies briefly analyse Negoïtescu’s *Straja Dragonilor* [The Dragons’ Watch]<sup>3</sup> without addressing the life writing narratives by Rădulescu and Sirin. Angelo Mitchievici describes Negoïtescu’s *Straja Dragonilor* as “Bildungsautobiographie” (Mitchievici, 2010) and Dima as “memoir” (Dima, 2022, p. 96) without further differentiation in point of literary genre.

One of the main theses of this article is that all selected texts fulfil the conditions of autobiography, even though under special circumstances that are to be discussed below. These circumstances relate to the second major thesis of the present paper, i.e. the relational character of the self-representations and the collaborative narration strategy that places emphasis on the relationships and

<sup>2</sup> The paper appeared in the conference proceedings. Cf. Maria Irod: *Homoeotik und Subjektstitution in den autobiografischen Schriften von Ion Negoïtescu (1921-1993), Mihai Rădulescu (1919-1959) und Petre Sirin (1926-2003)*. In: *Studia UBB Philologia*, LXI, 4, 2016, pp. 73-88.

<sup>3</sup> The title refers to a place in the old town of Sibiu usually known by its German name Dragoner Wache, i.e. Dragons’ Guard or Dragons’ Watch, the Dragons being an old military order.

interactions shaping lives and life narratives. In my argument, I take the position of the reader as a starting point, as Lejeune does: “in reading them [the texts], it is we who make them function” (Lejeune, 1989, p. 4).

In what follows, I attempt to show how the analysed texts function as coherent life narratives not only about the writing self but also about its “involvement in another’s life and story” (Eakin, 1999, p. 60). In doing so, I will examine them through the lenses of performativity, positionality and relationality<sup>4</sup> as main interpretation categories in life writing studies (Balestrini, 2017, pp. 92-94).

At this point, a terminological clarification regarding the term “queer” is needed, especially as it is used on texts that do not participate in any theoretical or political paradigm built around this concept. In employing the term “queer”, I value its contingency (Butler, 1993, p. 230) compared to the concurrent concept “gay”, while being fully aware of the inadequacy of both words in capturing the particularities of self-reflections written in the non-English-speaking-world at a time when such identity categories were hardly available. While trying to highlight the uniqueness of each author’s cultural self-expression, the present article embraces the constructivist commonplace that individual and collective identities are malleable and historically determined by discursive practices as well as the general assumption that literature, including life writing, does not merely reproduce reality, e.g. by simply integrating non-literary discourses, but reflects it and modifies it at the same time.

### I. Negoïtescu: *Straja Dragonilor* [The Dragons’ Watch] (1994)

Two facts stand out about Ion Negoïtescu<sup>5</sup>: he was deeply driven by his homosexuality and he had a leading role in literary networking<sup>6</sup> during the communist regime. Both fundamental aspects of his personality are reflected upon in his life writing works.

The only work in the corpus analysed here that has received critical attention is Negoïtescu’s *Straja Dragonilor*, first published in 1994 and issued in two further editions by the reputed publishing house Humanitas. The autobiography, left unfinished at the time of the author’s death, made Negoïtescu the first Romanian writer to publicly acknowledge his homosexuality. A cursory look at the book’s reception in Romania’s mainstream literary criticism shows that the author’s status as a famous literary critic and political dissident, on the

4 In the context of life writing, the category of performativity shifts the focus away from the stable identity of the autobiographer toward the constructed identity of the narrator. Positionality refers to the use of discursive strategies that signal the moral, political and cultural stance of the narrator. Finally, the concept of relationality points to the way in which autobiographical identity is constructed in relation to others.

5 The author signed his texts only with the initial of his first name, i.e. I. Negoïtescu.

6 The Romanian-American scholar Virgil Nemoianu (b. 1940), who knew Negoïtescu well, emphasizes his excellent connections to major authors such as Lucian Blaga, Eugen Lovinescu, Liviu Rusu, Tudor Vianu and Petru Comarnescu and his mediating role between older and younger generations of Romanian writers (Nemoianu, 2021, p. 12.)

one hand, and the artistic merits of the text, on the other hand, are the main tenets of the critical approach to Negoïtescu's autobiography.

At the first glance, to describe *Straja Dragonilor* as a relational autobiography would be far-fetched as the book meets the genre expectations of classical autobiography on a formal level. Its opening line evokes Goethe's famous incipit of *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: "I came into the world on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1921, two hours after midnight"<sup>7</sup> (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 35). The first passage continues very much like in Goethe's autobiography with a short comment linking the autobiographer's birth circumstances to his personality traits, followed by situating the narrated I within his familial and social context. The two chapters of Negoïtescu's unfinished autobiography recount experiences from the autobiographer's first twenty years of life. It makes sense to read Negoïtescu's text as "Bildungsautobiographie" (as Mitchievici does), given the author's early interest in German classicism. We can even consider this late autobiography as the fulfilling of Negoïtescu's youthful project to write "a *Bildungsroman* in Goethe's style" about his "erotic experience and education" (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2022, p. 94). *Straja Dragonilor* seems to have been conceived as a linearly structured life account that was interrupted in its 'cradle-to-old age' chronology only by the autobiographer's death. Even though this autobiographical model might place emphasis on the time dimension of the life narrative, *Straja Dragonilor* can be productively read alongside a "topography of autobiography" as described by Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf (2010). These spatial aspects disrupt causality and allow free associations and retrospective interpretations that do not fit into the chronology (Wagner-Egelhaaf, 2010, pp. 195-196).

The titles of the two chapters, "The Ball Dress" and "Called to the Headmaster's Study", hint at two major themes explored within Negoïtescu's life narrative: the feminine element in the autobiographer's personality, nurtured in the family and the private space, and the masculine world of school and politics. This seemingly rigid gender binary is disrupted by means of narrative organization. Even though both chapters thematize family relations, school memories and sexual experiences in early childhood and in teenage years, the first chapter revolves around childhood experiences and environmental factors that influenced the autobiographer's later development on a rather subconscious level, while the second chapter explores the protagonist's entrance in the public sphere, the main aesthetic and ideological orientation that crystallized during the high-school years and the conflicts arisen from a turbulent political climate. The ball attended by the narrator's parents and the encounter with the school's principal might be regarded as minor events in the autobiographical development depicted in the book. Nevertheless, they function as subtle textual organizers attracting significant memories and arranging them into a meaningful narrative order. The spatial dimension of remembering, foregrounding objects and places that are significant for the narrator's identity formation, shifts the focus away from the linear succession of events and its implicit teleological construction of an

7 All translations from Romanian and German are mine.

autonomous subject to the narration act itself that brings disparate emotionally laden “autobiographical occasions” (Smith, Watson, 2010, p. 214) together. Thus, Negoïtescu’s life narrative attains a high degree of performativity in the sense of self-reflexivity and “mediation of the act of narration on the level of the narration” (Berns, 2014). The narrating I permanently shifts back and forth between memories situated at different points in time and place, reflecting upon their affective interrelations and their role in connecting different instantiations of the self. The ball dress episode coalesces around histrionic elements showcasing the fluid relation between play-acting and authenticity. The interaction of domains like *haute couture*, performance arts, aesthetics and transvestite practices and the remembered lived experiences underscores the gendered dimension of narrative performativity. The core event in the first chapter takes place far from the protagonist’s home, in Galați, a port town on the Danube that Negoïtescu’s narrator exoticizes and contrasts to his native Transylvania. It features the 10-year-old narrated I, anxiously anticipating the upcoming military ball his parents were going to attend and passionately counselling his mother how to dress (Negoïtescu, 1994, pp. 89-91). The boy’s enthusiasm about his mother’s clothes and his active involvement in the process of dressmaking goes beyond mere anecdotal experience. The narrator often leaves the chronological path to explore interrelated meanings, especially of potential achievements and failures in his life history. The genuine pleasure derived by the child from engaging with his mother’s clothes is embedded in a narrative context tracking back the narrator’s aesthetic predispositions. The narrating I asks himself whether fashion could have been a more suitable domain for him to manifest his “aesthetic vocation” (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 90) and goes on to remark that despite his childish exuberance and communicative urge he also failed to embrace a pedagogical career (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 90).

The child who puts on his mother’s dresses, the adult who counsels his mother in buying hats and dying her hair, the art connoisseur contemplating paintings, the child enacting self-directed plays and singing opera arias before other children from the neighbourhood, the melancholic child experiencing “guiltless guilt” (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 82), the avid reader, the solitary adolescent pursuing sexual encounters in closed spaces (e.g. in the storage room of a fellow schoolboy) or in public places (e.g. by furtively petting anonymous men in cinemas) are all puzzle pieces the narrating I uses to make sense of the hybridities that constitute his identity. This narrative identity is constructed apart from the traditionally male-connoted career path, but also beyond the stereotypical image of a marginal effeminate man.

The second chapter is very dense in information and references, embedding the narrated life in its historical and cultural context. Even more than the first chapter, it displays a tortuous style with complex and interrupted syntax. An extreme example of this broken narrative mode, rendering the distorted way in which memory meanders back to undesirable recollections, is the very opening passage of the second chapter. After a plain first sentence stating that the 14-year-

old was called by the school's principal to his study, a digression comprising seven pages (Negoïțescu, 1994, pp. 129-136) summons up memories related to the cultural developmental level of the narrated I. It briefly tackles the atmosphere of Romanian patriotism in Aiud (a Transylvanian city where Negoïțescu attended his first two years of high-school) and dwells on the protagonist's reading habits, his first literary attempts and his family's connections to major Transylvanian writer Liviu Rebreanu. The whole passage is full of self-ironical comments about the narrator's youthful literary production and it retrospectively focuses on the oscillation of the narrated I between modernist, cosmopolitan aesthetics and traditionalist values. Thus, before the main plot line is resumed, the reader is provided with significant background information combining biographical and historical material to emphasize the experienced state of confusion at a time of rising fascism in Romania. The school's principal wants to know from the top pupil Negoïțescu whether there are members of the Legion of the Archangel Michael<sup>8</sup> among his fellow students (Negoïțescu, 1994, p. 136). The protagonist's vague answer comes four pages later when we learn that the principal's inquiry only prompted the teenager's curiosity about the clandestine movement. The narrating I comments on his past naiveté: "What prophet would have dared to whisper in my ear then: sooner than you could imagine, you will be one of them?!" (Negoïțescu, 1994, p. 140). At this point, it seems appropriate to ponder on the communicative role assumed here by the author of the autobiography, bearing in mind that the life writing text is "a site of constructing, negotiating, defending, or reformulating subjectivity in view of experienced historical change" (Depkat, 2019, p. 139). After the "ethical turn" (Pop, 2022, p. 48) in Negoïțescu's biography, following his involvement in 1977 in the human rights movement around Paul Goma<sup>9</sup>, politics became a matter of high concern in the writer's life, manifested especially in his journalistic activities during the exile years<sup>10</sup>. *Straja Dragonilor*,

8 The Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard, was a Romanian fascist organization that emerged in the 1920s as a students' antisemitic movement; it was banned because of repeated political assassinations and finally disintegrated after a failed coup in 1941. Unlike other European fascist movements, the Legion held mystical views inspired by Christian orthodoxy which appealed to a wide variety of people, including some prominent Romanian intellectuals. Historian Roland Clark describes the Legion as "one of the largest and most enduring fascist movements in interwar Europe" (Clark, 2015, p. 4) and attributes its popularity to its ideological mix of nationalism and spirituality: "Led by the charismatic Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, legionaries combined political assassination, street violence, and antisemitic hate speech with romantic nationalism, religious symbolism, and charity projects. They claimed that they followed a "religion," not a political party, and they described the Legion as a "spiritual" movement whose aim was to create a "new man" through suffering and sacrifice" (Clark, 2015, p.2).

9 In 1977 Negoïțescu signed an open letter of solidarity with the Romanian novelist and dissident Paul Goma who had been arrested by the Securitate after having drafted a petition against Ceaușescu's social and cultural policies. Threatened by the authorities with prosecution for homosexuality, Negoïțescu retracted his support for Goma and expressed regret for his statements against the regime.

10 In 1983 Negoïțescu left Romania for good. Until his death he contributed to Radio Free Europe and to several Romanian diaspora magazines. He expressed critical opinions of Ceaușescu's National Communism, and also about political developments in Romania after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

as a life narrative written shortly before the author's death, adopts a positionality reflecting the public image Negoïtescu had achieved throughout his whole career. Negoïtescu's autobiography does not hide his short-term involvement with the Legion of the Archangel Michael but rather tries to identify the cultural and historical circumstances that endorsed it. In doing so, Negoïtescu's life writing piece troubles the linear progressive narrative of an autonomous intellectual agent, uncoerced by irrational influences. In struggling with the recollection of his legionary past, the narrating I makes use of narrative techniques and stylistic devices that emphasize the distancing of the present self from his past errors and confusions while reiterating the unreliability of his memory (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 146, p. 150). The frequent flashbacks and flash forwards take the reader out of the chronological order and explain the narrator's idiosyncrasies in their evolution, foregrounding the cultural formation of subjectivity. Enumerations of titles read by the narrator at different stages in his life are intertwined in the reflexive account of past events and their partially contradictory representation. The young Negoïtescu wrote surrealist poems that impressed his girlfriends (Negoïtescu, 1994, pp. 166-167), was enthusiastic about Romanian contemporary art as well as European modernism with its "deconstruction of the natural" (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 165) and expressed vivid interest in foreign, even exotic cultures (Negoïtescu, 1994, pp. 190-191). Spirituality, especially of Catholic persuasion, is depicted as a constant source of inspiration in the narrator's life, unrelated to his fleeting fascination for the legionaries, but rather embedded in the larger context of aesthetical and mystical experience (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 146). A significant passage towards the end of the second chapter reflects upon the highly contradictory discourse position<sup>11</sup> of the narrated I, at a time when he published both decadent lyrics and ultranationalist articles (Negoïtescu, 1994, pp. 200-201). The narrating I asserts his present position by commenting negatively on a late interview with the nationalist, Christian Orthodox thinker and former political prisoner Petre Țuțea (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 200). Elsewhere the narrator considers himself "cured" of the fascist "disease", in contrast with other Romanian interwar intellectuals like Țuțea, Eliade or Noica (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 210).

The autobiographer never refers to male bonding as an important element of his political activity. On the contrary, his individualistic nature resented military discipline and he maintains he was not inclined to conspiracy (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 145). As a matter of fact, Negoïtescu was never interested in adventure or detective fiction; the hyper-masculine heroes therein stimulated his "erotic rather than his heroic imagination" (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 144). But maybe it was this very eroticized fascination with virile men that unconsciously led the young Negoïtescu to his early political commitment. The Legion's strong emphasis on masculinist ideals of violent bravery and sacrifice reminds of the common stereotype of the feminized Jew as agent of cultural and moral decay. And in the background lurks the "disgusting" figure of the effeminate and decadent homosexual whom the

<sup>11</sup> The concept "discourse position" is used here as understood within the critical discourse analysis, i.e. as "specific ideological location of a person" (Jäger, 2001, p. 48).

young Negoïtescu despised. Of the three life writers discussed here, Negoïtescu is the only one who uses the identity category “homosexual” in respect to himself (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 65, p. 150). But he also uses it as a derogatory term about others. A significant passage recounts how the 17-year old Negoïtescu was approached by an older man whom the narrator retrospectively compares to Oscar Wilde after his release from prison. The gentleman started a conversation and they eventually shook hands, a short physical contact which the narrated I found disgusting when he realized that the stranger might be homosexual (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 153). Elsewhere the autobiographer recalls the attraction he felt as a high-school pupil for a fellow student who embodied “utter normality” and contrasts this remembered figure with another schoolfellow whose reputation as a homosexual made the latter repulsive in his eyes (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 173). We could interpret these instances of contingent use of an identity category by using insights from the field of affect studies. Within this framework, disgust is seen as a speech act which renders its object equally fascinating and repelling by activating latent emotional reactions associated with words (Ahmed, 2004, p. 84). A strong tradition that condemns sexual desire between men as abomination is reinforced by the narrator’s dwelling on his past seemingly natural repulsion towards people incarnating this type of desire.

On the whole, it can be argued that *Straja Dragonilor* makes use of the genre conventions of classical autobiography but at the same time breaks with the linear depiction of a coherent self in its developmental pathway in a twofold way. At a formal level, its “strategies of emplotment” (Depkat, 2019, p. 139) favour spatiality over temporality and organize the memories in narrative patterns, coalescing into the main thematic concerns of sexuality, spirituality, literature and politics. The distance between the narrating and the narrated I is made very clear, especially by the former’s cultural affiliation to democratic values which enables him to look critically upon past errors. The retrospective interpretation of past events – e.g. the memory of an early homoerotic experience intertextually linked to a poem by Rimbaud (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 124) – is frequently used and suggests the high performativity of the autobiographical text. At a content level, Negoïtescu’s autobiography parts with the “compartmentalising mode” of life writing that expels destabilizing private and emotional aspects from “conventional, masculinist (and heterosexist) life history” (Rassool, 2020, p. 124). In *Straja Dragonilor*, the author practises a sort of “self-exposure” (McCarthy, 2023) that blends the private and the public in a way unprecedented in Romanian life writing<sup>12</sup>. The polarization of the feminine and the masculine is disrupted by associating feminine attributes with the narrator’s self-construction, especially in the ball dress episode, as well as by highlighting the role of female mentors,

12 I am aware that this interconnection of private and public aspects in one’s life suggests a feminist interpretation context (“The personal is political”). Without being documentedly embedded in any feminist or queer framework, Negoïtescu’s autobiography shocked its Romanian audience in the nineties not only by challenging the stigma associated with non-normative sexuality but also by oversharing intimate details and thus challenging the Romanian “civilization of modesty and ethics of what is proper and what is not” (Simion, 2007, p. 4).

like Ana Slăvoacă, thoroughly portrayed in the second chapter, in introducing the protagonist to the male-connoted world of high culture.

Finally, Negoïtescu's autobiography can be regarded as relational in the sense proposed by Schoof (2023, p. 7), i.e. as written "in response to an implicit query made from a specific cultural context". We can argue that Negoïtescu writes his autobiography against the norms of a so-called shame culture prevalent in Romania (Simion, 2007). As it has been shown (Pop, 2022), the commitment to morality is a constant of his work. That explains the emphasis Negoïtescu puts on his autobiography as a crowning of his literary career. His youthful plan to relocate the Romanian culture within a classical, humanist setting of Western descent is doomed to failure because of the political context. Therefore, the autobiography is Negoïtescu's last attempt to assert his position against an orientally coded shame culture – based on outer instances – and to plea for embracing a guilt-centred approach, which relies on the individual's conscience and his inner sense of wrong and right.

### I. Negoïtescu, Radu Stanca: *Un roman epistolar* [An Epistolary Novel] (1978/2021)

If relationality is present in the background of *Straja Dragonilor*, the other work analysed here, in which Negoïtescu shares the authorship with the poet and playwright Radu Stanca (1919-1962), turns the relationship between the two letter writers into its central element. The correspondence of Negoïtescu and Stanca is deeply rooted in their friendship and both authors repeatedly reflect upon its meaning in their lives and also upon letter writing as a necessity originating in the frustrated desire of communicating with the absent friend. Indeed, the "epistolary I always constructs their identity in relation to the letter's addressee" (Depkat, 2019, p. 140). But the letters regularly exchanged between Negoïtescu and Stanca over a period of 15 years are more than "traces of past communication between real people" (Depkat, 2019, p. 140). The correspondence is described by the co-author and editor Negoïtescu as a "Bildungsroman" (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 10). In editing his correspondence with Stanca, whom he calls in *Straja Dragonilor* "my great friend" (Negoïtescu, 1994, p. 157), Negoïtescu shifts the focus on two elements which according to Lejeune are central in autobiography: the mainly narrative character of the text and the individual life as a primary subject (Lejeune, 1989, p. 5). The retrospective perspective is given by the editor's very act of arranging the letters so that they can tell the story of a past stage in his life in relation to and as reflected by his friend Stanca. Drawing on Petrarch's *Epistolae familiares*, research emphasizing the literariness of the epistolary genre points out that Petrarch's project to collect his Latin letters in a book turns the individual letters into parts of a unitary work accounting for the evolving of personal conscience along a whole lifetime (Guillén, 1994, p. 13).

We have a similar situation here as the correspondence of the two young members of the Sibiu Literary Circle was edited by Negoïtescu after Stanca's premature death and provided with the title "epistolary novel", suggesting

a narrative dimension and a certain degree of fictionality. There is a clear intentionality and a sense of superior coherence which place these collected letters in the proximity of the autobiography.

The possibility of reading letters as novel-like prose is highlighted by Livius Ciocârlie in the foreword to his book *Mari corespondențe* [Great Correspondences] which analyses, among other letter exchanges between writers, I. Negoïtescu's and Stanca's "epistolary novel". Ciocârlie employs a reader-oriented approach when he states that any text, regardless of its initial intentionality, can achieve literariness if it stimulates the reader to create an imaginary universe (Ciocârlie, 2019, p. 8). When reading letters that are not addressed to oneself one tends to concentrate on their existential content and reflect upon human nature and psychology in a similar manner to when novel characters are considered (Ciocârlie, 2019, p. 8).

The first edition (1978, republished in 1998) encompasses a total number of 303 letters, of which 209 were authored by I. Negoïtescu and the remainder 94 by Radu Stanca. To the second edition (2021) 20 letters were added, so that it contains 222 letters written by Negoïtescu and 101 by Stanca. The fact that the letters and passages which are absent in the first edition mainly deal with Negoïtescu's sexual orientation but also with other biographical elements he was trying to hide, such as his conversion to Catholicism, leads to the assumption of self-censorship. A startling detail is the total absence of letters by Radu Stanca in the interval from August 1947 to July 1948, even if Negoïtescu's letters from the same period read as if they were part of an epistolary exchange. In his foreword, deploring certain flaws in the narrative unity of the epistolary novel, Negoïtescu maintains that some letters by Radu Stanca have been lost (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 9). Actually, as the editor Ion Vartic explains in two footnotes (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 9 and 516), the missing letters were destroyed by Negoïtescu's parents after his arrest in 1961, along with other potentially compromising documents<sup>13</sup>.

Negoïtescu and Stanca befriended each other in Sibiu where the University of Cluj took refuge in autumn 1940 after the Second Vienna Award which separated Northern Transylvania from Romania. The familiar atmosphere of the smaller town Sibiu was a catalyst for the literary talented and like-minded students to establish more personal relationships with each other and with their professors, especially with Lucian Blaga<sup>14</sup>. Both Negoïtescu and Stanca were actively involved in various activities like informal literary meetings, lectures and debates. Inspired by German classicism and opposing nationalist and orthodoxist currents in the Romanian literature, several students gathered around the ideal of aesthetic autonomy, advocating the alignment to a larger Central European cultural discourse. After the war and his return to Cluj,

<sup>13</sup> This episode of Negoïtescu's mother burning her son's manuscripts, including his early diaries, is related in *Straja Dragonilor* (1994, p. 106).

<sup>14</sup> Lucian Blaga (1895-1961) was a poet, philosopher, playwright and translator, one of the main representatives of Romanian modernism and a commanding personality of the interwar cultural life. He taught cultural philosophy at the University of Cluj from 1939 to 1948, when he was dismissed for refusing to express support to the communist regime.

Negoïțescu tried to maintain the cohesion of the group and planned to edit a magazine named *Euphorion* – an intertextual allusion to Goethe’s *Faust* and the integration of Germanic spirit and Classical Greek culture. Negoïțescu’s plans also included a publishing house and a theatre which should have promoted only Romanian literature following the principles of the Sibiu Literary Circle. The project was hindered by the political environment, and only in 1990 could a new edition of the magazine be published in Sibiu at the initiative of young writers eager to continue the tradition of the Literary Circle. I. Negoïțescu contributed to all issues until his death in February 1993.

There are several dominant thematic areas that can be identified in the letter exchange between Negoïțescu and Stanca, such as the intertwining of ethics and aesthetics as the fundamental idea promoted by the Sibiu Literary Circle, the disquieting situation of the two friends nurturing their utopian dream of reconstructing the Romanian culture based on highest axiological principles and, on a personal level, Stanca’s declining health, his passionate love affairs with different women, as well as Negoïțescu’s torments of unrequited homoerotic love. An analysis that would go beyond the scope of this article can show how Negoïțescu’s reflections upon his own sexuality and his strategies to legitimize it by means of cultural references change along time. The interconnectedness of the self-reflexive movement and the epistolary I’s effort to elaborate the “Euphorionist” vision of a mature Romanian culture points to the discursive constituting of Negoïțescu’s non-heteronormative identity and the performativity of his identity formation through letter writing.

Ciocârlie’s reading of Negoïțescu’s and Stanca’s divergent “performances” and “positions” (Balestrini, 2017, p. 93) as an opposition between the creator’s self, following a cultural goal, on the one hand, and the personal self, expecting psychological support, on the other hand (Ciocârlie, 2019, pp. 310-311), makes the evolving relationship between the characters of the epistolary novel appear more clear and the narrative better structured as they really are. When he suggests that Radu Stanca’s fragile personality would have needed more personal support from his friend and that Negoïțescu failed in that respect (Ciocârlie, 2019, p. 310), Ciocârlie does this mainly to contrast Stanca’s hesitant attitude and depressive mood with Negoïțescu’s “pathetic” exaggeration of Stanca’s creative force (Ciocârlie, 2019, p. 307) and thus uses his “position of the reader” (Lejeune, 1989, p. 4) to make the correspondence function as a psychological novel. To be sure, his reliance on the first, censored edition of the correspondence contributes to Ciocârlie’s truncated image of Negoïțescu as a chilly, almost asexual character, philosophising on love rather than experiencing it. A careful reading of the integral edition shows that Negoïțescu’s epistolary I experiences the whole range of erotic feelings – from infatuation to loving intimacy and purely sexual attraction – changing his perspective on eroticism according to biographical circumstances and adapting his sharing of intimate details to the dynamics of the letter exchange. There is also enough evidence of Negoïțescu providing Stanca support in personal matters – from his deeply felt condolence letter after the death of Stanca’s father

(Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, pp. 182-183) to his advice in sentimental affairs<sup>15</sup> and the affectionate admiration for Stanca's wife<sup>16</sup> – as well as critical feedback on Stanca's work and concrete initiatives to help him publish.

The integral edition of the *Un roman epistolar* provides scarce but valuable insights into social relations and networks connecting the Sibiu Literary Circle to intellectual circles in Bucharest in which political dissidence and queer sexuality played an important role. In a letter from October 1957, complaining about financial difficulties and lack of accommodation in Bucharest, Negoïtescu mentions Mihai Rădulescu as his temporary host and mediator of literary connections (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, pp. 497-498). Two years later, after Stanca's short trip to Bucharest, Negoïtescu writes that he regrets not having spent more time with his addressee because of the panic induced by Ovidiu Constantinescu (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 513), a writer whom Negoïtescu had befriended in Bucharest. The editor's explanatory footnote mentions police investigations against homosexuals as the reason for Constantinescu's fears. Nevertheless, Negoïtescu's letter fails to mention that Mihai Rădulescu was in prison at that time.

### **Mihai Rădulescu: *Jocul cu moartea* [Playing with Death] (1999)**

Mihai Rădulescu's only publications during his lifetime were short musicological essays. The posthumous life narrative *Jocul cu moartea* borrows its title from Rădulescu's best known essay on Mozart and was edited by his brother, medical doctor Dan Rădulescu. This publication is actually part of a larger project initiated by the historian Stelian Tănase. Tănase's book *Anatomia mistificării* [The Anatomy of Mystification] (1997; 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2009) is a comprehensive documentation of the political process that led to the sentence of two major figures of Romanian culture, Constantin Noica<sup>17</sup> and Dinu Pillat<sup>18</sup>, along with other political dissidents. Mihai

15 Unsure which of the two women he was dating at that time to invite to the New Year's Eve party organized in Cluj by members of the Literary Circle, Stanca asked Negoïtescu to make the choice (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 331).

16 Radu Stanca married the actress Dorina Ghibu (Doti) in June 1951, at a time when he was working as a stage director in Sibiu. There are several passages where Negoïtescu expresses great admiration for Doti as a person and as an actress (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, pp. 396-397, p. 408, pp. 323-324). In December 1957, Negoïtescu wrote to Doti complaining that he had not received any news from Stanca for a long time (Negoïtescu, Stanca, 2021, p. 499).

17 Constantin Noica (1909-1987) was one of the most important Romanian philosophers. He represented, along with historian of religion Mircea Eliade and philosopher Emil Cioran, the so-called golden generation of interwar Romanian intellectuals. In spite of his youthful enthusiasm for the national and mystic dimension of Romanian fascism, Noica never joined the Legionaries. During World War II he lived mainly in Germany, where he attended Martin Heidegger's lectures. After his return to Romania, Noica suffered persecutions at the hands of the communist regime, which accused him of nationalist and reactionary views. He was sentenced to forced domicile and eventually to 25 years in prison. After his release, he worked for a while as a researcher in the Romanian Academy and settled eventually in a small cottage in the mountains, where he was regularly visited by his disciples. These 'private lectures' were documented in a book by Gabriel Liiceanu, the founder of the Humanitas Publishing Group, and contributed to Noica's fame after the fall of the communist regime.

18 Constantin (Dinu) Pillat (1921-1975) was a writer and literary critic. He had already published

Rădulescu, whose name might have been completely unknown to most readers before the publication of Tănase's documentary book, was associated with this group of political dissidents due to his close friendship and long correspondence with Constantin Noica. Arrested in spring 1959 and initially sentenced to five years in prison for homosexuality, Rădulescu was eventually charged for sharing hostile ideas about the regime and transferred to another prison where he was found dead in his cell on 31<sup>st</sup> October. He supposedly hanged himself using a piece of torn garment. Nevertheless, speculations about a possible murder under torture could not be excluded, and his death remains a mystery.

As the subtitle<sup>19</sup> suggests, *Jocul cu moartea* is a collection of various autobiographical subgenres. Diary jottings, personal essay-fragments and letters are arranged chronologically in a cradle-to-grave narrative. The book comprises six chapters focusing on the different stages in Rădulescu's life, from adolescence until his death. The editor provides each chapter with biographical information that gives the whole work narrative coherence. Even though Mihai Rădulescu's name on the front cover suggests an autobiographical pact as defined by Lejeune, i.e. we can read the book simply as a life account of its author, there is also another possible reading inspired by a relational approach that destabilizes the "conventional assumption of autobiographical monologue" (Rüggemeier, 2018, p. 95). If we acknowledge the fact that not only the very existence of this book, but its structure as a life narrative are the work of the editor, *Jocul cu moartea* can be read as relational auto/biography<sup>20</sup> based on a mix of autobiographical and biographical material. Dan Rădulescu assumes the role of a discreet narrator, focusing on his brother as protagonist. But whereas "[p]roducing an account of another's life normally belongs to the domain of biography [...] when the biographical subject is a member of one's own family the line between the genres blurs" (Miller<sup>21</sup>, 1996, p. 2, qtd. in Rüggemeier, 2018, p. 83). Beside being the co-author of the book, Dan Rădulescu is also part of the narrated world, as he is the addressee of many letters by his brother. Interestingly, he does not include his own part of the correspondence, so that it is only Mihai's voice that we hear throughout the life narrative.

In initiating the posthumous dialogue with his brother, Dan Rădulescu reflects on the cultural norms that shaped his brother's self-accounts as well as on the specific context of the book's publication, thus pointing to another level of relationality identifiable in *Jocul cu moartea*, which is of discursive nature. We can read *Jocul cu moartea* as a piece of the relational network centred on

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two novels and several essays and was assistant professor of literature at the University of Bucharest when he was arrested in 1959 and sentenced to 25 years of hard labour for authoring a samizdat novel (*Așteptând ceasul de apoi* [Waiting for the Afterlife], first published in 2010).

19 "Însemnări, pagini de jurnal și corespondență", i.e. „notes, diary jottings and correspondence”.

20 The life writing scholars Egan and Helms coined the term "auto/biography" to suggest the hybridization of the two genres in relational self-narratives. Cf. Susanna Egan / Gabriele Helms: *Life Writing*, in: Eva-Maria Kröler (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Canadian Literature*. Cambridge 2004, p. 216, quoted by Rüggemeier, 2018, p. 82.

21 Nancy K. Miller: *Bequest & Betrayal. Memoirs of a Parent's Death*. New York, Oxford 1996.

the historical exploration of the Noica-Pillat trial. In his preface, Dan Rădulescu credits Stelian Tănase with opening up the path of the publication of Mihai Rădulescu's autobiographical writings. Accordingly, he constructs the book in response to the implicit demand of a heroic life narrative featuring a politically and sexually oppressed protagonist. In choosing the way in which his brother's life story is presented to the posterity, Dan Rădulescu tries to adapt to a conservative Romanian high culture on which, in his view, the book's reception depends. Mihai Rădulescu's homosexuality plays a crucial role in his brother's editorial reflections which present it as the "main problem", due to the "prudishness" of the "Romanian mentality" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 8). Dan Rădulescu regards his decision to publish explicitly homosexual passages in the text as a courageous act, and the publication of the book itself as "moral repair for a man who had to suffer because he could not be like everybody else" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 8). This blending of inborn deviance, suffering and moral purity is a rhetorical thread running through the whole book, from the editor's motto which quotes *Hamlet* on "these men, carrying [...] the stamp of one defect, [...] be they as pure as grace"<sup>22</sup> to Mihai Rădulescu's own reflections on his sexual otherness. Only Dan Rădulescu uses the word "homosexuality" in his preface (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 9), whereas the autobiographical texts employ dysphemistic and euphemistic phrases like "my misfortune", "my plight" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 373), "my passion" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 374), "my erotic singularity" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 450), avoiding pre-determined identity categories and linking non-heteronormative sexuality to the life writer's tendency to self-abasement, his adaptive behaviour patterns (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 381) and his feeling of being less real than other people (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 451). It was Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* that Rădulescu chose as a main reference point in his process of coming to terms with his homosexual desire. In a diary entry from 1942, Rădulescu recalled having read the novel six years earlier, in a French edition, and having felt great relief at the realization that there were many other people "like me" and that "these things could be depicted in such a high and pure manner" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 94). As Jonathan Dollimore contends, Hall did something of immense significance by conjoining in the central character, the "masculine" lesbian Stephen, "the (religious) martyr and (romantic) outsider", where "each identity offers, and reinforces in the other, images of a superior sensibility and integrity being persecuted by the ordinary and the normal" (Dollimore, 1991, p. 49).

Rădulescu also records the strong and contradictory impression Negoïtescu's flamboyant personality<sup>23</sup> made on him. The two men met in Cluj in 1949 through the mutual friend Constantin Noica and their relationship had its ups and downs. Nevertheless, a letter from 1957 stylizes Negoïtescu's friendship into a major source of reassurance in Rădulescu's life:

22 A longer passage from Act I, Scene IV is quoted in original and in Dan Rădulescu's own translation.

23 Two letters from April 1949 – one to his mother and one to his good friend Alexandru Dragomir – praised Negoïtescu as the most brilliant of his new acquaintances in Cluj (Rădulescu, 1999, pp. 337, 343). In January 1950 Rădulescu again wrote to Dragomir expressing his bitter disappointment with the "real person" he discovered behind Negoïtescu's "angelic mask" (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 356).

You are one of the few whose words really matter to me. ...It is a great joy – maybe the greatest and, to be sure, the purest joy people like us can afford – to feel the other beside you, full of life, as you feel a lover or a military comrade (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 474).

This letter also attests to Mihai Rădulescu's ideal of male friendship, which he placed above all other forms of human affection. While Noica stirred his intellect with his “urge to team work based on a common worldview” (Rădulescu, 1999, p. 86), Dragomir<sup>24</sup> and Negoïtescu were “closest” to his “deepest aspirations” (Rădulescu, 1999, pp. 474-475), which might have included the freedom to speak openly about his sexuality.

### **Petre Sirin: *Castele în Spania* [Castles in Spain] (2013)**

This book meets the criteria of relational life writing as it obviously departs from the classical focus on individual autonomy to construct the narrator's identity in relation to other persons (Balestrini, 2017, p. 93). Sirin's autobiographical account focuses on events between 1949, when he first met Mihai Rădulescu, and 1959, when Rădulescu died, and reads as a coherent narrative, alternating diary entries from that period with retrospective recollections. *Castele în Spania* can also be read as a love story with a historical background. All through the book we can trace the evolution of Sirin's feelings for Mihai Rădulescu from their first, rather indifferent encounter to intense physical attraction, consuming passion and finally up to Sirin's enduring attachment beyond Rădulescu's death.

Sirin's self-account is also relational on a formal level, due to an authorship situation similar to Rădulescu's life writing piece. Sirin had initially planned an auto/biographical narrative in two volumes, the first one comprising Rădulescu's letters and diaries<sup>25</sup>. The project was abandoned when Rădulescu's autobiographical material was published by his brother. Sirin died four years later, in 2003. When *Castele în Spania* [Castles in Spain] was published in 2013, possibly as a follow-up to the collection of texts by Mihai Rădulescu and to Stelian Tănase's documentary about the Noica-Pillat trial, parts of it had already been published before. Tănase drew heavily on Sirin's unpublished manuscript in his reconstruction of the events surrounding Rădulescu's death. Sirin's literary estate – comprising his unpublished manuscripts – is in the possession of his life partner, Alexandru Lupescu (b. 1934), who edited and prefaced the present edition. At their home in Bran, Lupescu preserved Sirin's entire archive, which documents relationships and “traces of past communications” (Depkat, 2019, p. 140) within a friends' network, providing a detailed picture of male homosexual life in Bucharest in the mid-twentieth century. Dedicated to the memory of George Tomaziu<sup>26</sup> and

<sup>24</sup> Alexandru Dragomir (1916-2002) was a philosopher. A close friend of Constantin Noica and a former PhD student of Martin Heidegger, he had to interrupt his studies and leave Germany during World War II. Later, for fear of political persecution he led an anonymous life of poverty, with no possibility of publication or of an academic career. His philosophical notebooks were published posthumously by the Humanitas publishing house.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. the editorial note (Sirin, 2013, p. 2).

<sup>26</sup> George Tomaziu (1915-1990) was a painter, book illustrator and writer. During World War II, he

Dinu Albulescu<sup>27</sup>, Sirin's archive provides, as Depkat shows in respect to letters, "more than purely verbal texts" (Depkat, 2019, p. 140), containing visual material that complements the written one. Since 2018, Sirin's archive has been part of the main collection of the Museum of Queer History and Culture in Romania (Buhuceanu, 2022, p. 144).

The relational character of Sirin's life narrative is underscored by the subtitle, which describes it as a "family chronicle". The title itself is a metaphor referring to the author's network of homosexual friends. By making up an imaginary world placed in thirteenth-century Spain and populated by knights, bishops and other noblemen like the King of Portugal (Mihai Rădulescu), and the Great Inquisitor (Dinu Albulescu), Sirin created a safe space of psychological comfort for himself and his friends. The metaphor of castles in Spain is significant for the formation of a self-conscious homosexual male community in a time of oppression. Without a political agenda, and lacking the means of public communication, Petre Sirin and his friends resorted to this type of social and cultural isolation in order to resist the oppressiveness of everyday life in communist Romania. The core group constituted in the library of the French Institute in Bucharest at the time that this was led by Roland Barthes (1947-1949) (Sirin, 2013, p. 50). After the French Institute was dissolved by the communist regime, the friends continued to play the game initiated by Barthes. They met regularly and spoke mostly in French to both protect their privacy and to signify cultural superiority. New contacts were established through personal recommendation; friends introduced their lovers or new homosexual acquaintances at the 'Court of Spain', so that over the years the group developed into a network of social and sexual relations, maintaining its coherence through shared intellectual interests and a common alternative slang.

Rădulescu himself met Sirin through a mutual friend (Sirin, 2013, p. 15). This reveals how homosexual relations were interwoven with other social bonds. Negoîtescu does not seem to have belonged to the core group of Sirin's friends as he does not have a nickname, but he was introduced at the 'Court of Spain' by Rădulescu and spent some time with Sirin and other 'Spanish knights'. In a letter from 1956, Sirin recounted how impressed he had been by Negoîtescu's "erotic madness" on a trip to the seaside with himself and Rădulescu (Sirin, 2013, p. 233). Even though there are frequent mentions of affairs and flirting outside

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was an agent of the British Intelligence Service and led a group of Romanian collaborators. In 1944, he was convicted for espionage but was soon released, as Romania joined the Allied forces. During the communist regime, Tomaziu was imprisoned for 13 years for his wartime activities. In 1969, he left Romania with the help of the British government and after a short stay in London he settled in Paris. His memoir *Figurant d'epoque* was originally written in French and appeared in 1995 in Romanian (*Jurnalul unui figurant 1939-1964*, transl. by Mariana and Gabriel Mardare) and in 2015 in English (*The Witness*, transl. by Jane Reid).

27 Dinu Albulescu (1914-1965) was a translator of French literature. He was also the life partner of George Tomaziu and one of his closest collaborators in the espionage group. Albulescu was arrested together with Tomaziu in 1944 and was also imprisoned during the communist regime. After his release, he was harassed by the Securitate and he committed suicide.

the borders of 'Spain', the book does not provide any details about cruising possibilities in Bucharest at that time and remains focused on the central group of friends, tracking their relations, quarrels and reconciliations and, in some cases, their premature and violent deaths. The last page of the book (Sirin, 2013, p. 285) is a short note from 1990 that lists all the friends who died of an unnatural death, who either killed themselves to escape public defamation and imprisonment or who were killed during trial.

Sirin's self-reflections also display aspects of intersectionality. A point of divergence with Rădulescu was the fact that Sirin was neither the crude, working-class man whom Rădulescu perceived as sexually attractive, nor the sophisticated erudite celebrated by the interwar intelligentsia. Moreover, Rădulescu regarded Sirin's common-sense, domesticity, and his taste for popular entertainment as mediocre. In a diary entry quoted by Sirin, Rădulescu dwells on his incompatibility with the so-called "average" man (Sirin 2013, p.163). Sirin concluded that class differences might affect interpersonal relations (Sirin 2013, p. 163): a meditation on the way that closed circles of intellectual elites resisted forced class egalitarianism by reinforcing interwar conservatism in this period.

Sirin's attitude towards Constantin Noica is also significant in this context. While acknowledging Noica's status as mentor for a whole generation and for Romanian philosophy, Sirin could not cope with the philosopher's past enthusiasm for the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Not even Rădulescu's argument that Noica's involvement was purely intellectual and motivated by his fear of the Bolshevik peril could dissuade Sirin from finding it morally questionable (Sirin, 2013, pp. 46-47).

## Conclusions and outlook

This paper has shown how the life writings of Negoïtescu, Rădulescu and Sirin make use of different genre conventions and narrative strategies to perform a non-normative sexual identity within the constraints of cultural conservatism and political oppression. From a reader-oriented perspective and in spite of their genre heterogeneity, all texts can be read as autobiographies, i.e. as coherent retrospective accounts of individual lives. Nevertheless, all texts disrupt the linear narrative of autonomous self-development by engaging with disturbing emotions and reflecting upon the "decisive (negative) impact" of social norms on the autobiographers' life-experiences (Schoof, 2023, p. 5). Negoïtescu's, Rădulescu's and Sirin's life writing pieces are also fragmentary (either unfinished or subjected to (self)-censorship and a selection process by the editors). As authors, Negoïtescu, Rădulescu and Sirin were partially deprived of control over their autobiographical communication by the posthumous publishing of their works, a situation which endorses an idea inherent in Lejeune's autobiographical pact, namely that "the self might be a creation of language", turning "the identity between author, narrator and character" irrelevant and shifting the focus on "how such an identity can be conveyed to, and conceived by, readers of self-referential narratives" (Allamand, 2018, p. 53).

Reading these autobiographical works along the categories of performativity, positionality and relationality challenges any assumption of identifiable authorial intentions behind the texts that can be attributed to the historical actors Negoïtescu, Rădulescu and Sirin. The awareness that these life narratives are only puzzle pieces in a larger project of historical research investigating political repression of the interwar intelligentsia in communist Romania opens up a research path that foregrounds the discursive positions of the life writers in relation to those of the editors. With the possible exception of Mihai Rădulescu, whose diaries and correspondence seem to have been entirely made available, from the other two authors readers still expect further publications. Negoïtescu's diary, due to be published thirty years after the author's death (Hurezeanu, 2002), is in print, while Sirin's *Castele în Spania* is just a small part of this author's unpublished autobiographical material. Future research could focus on the way in which the editors' positionality and their affiliation to the liberal intellectual group around the Humanitas publishing house intersected with the life writers' positionality and how this influenced the published autobiographical material. As it seems clear that the publication of Rădulescu's and Sirin's life narratives by Humanitas is only due to the authors' close relationship to Constantin Noica, the mentor of the editorial group's founder, it is worth analysing the appropriation of queer narratives by the still conservative Romanian high culture.

From the relational character of the life narratives analysed in the present paper arises the need to delve deeper into the dynamics of interpersonal relationships that marked the life writers' self-understanding and positionality. Therefore, another topic of a future network-oriented analysis could be to investigate the literary interactions between queer and non-queer members of artistic communities affected by political oppression in communist Romania.

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## THE DIARY AS A SPACE FOR PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

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**Abstract:** *The diary has long served as a meaningful tool for psychological transformation. This article examines diary writing as a dynamic space for emotional expression, reflective thinking, and narrative construction. Through a narrative review of peer-reviewed literature, primarily focused on publications from 2010 to 2025, and supplemented by foundational earlier studies, this paper explores the psychological functions of diary and journal writing across domains such as education, mental health, and personal development. Special attention is given to how writing facilitates self-awareness, emotional regulation, and identity construction. A structured search strategy was employed across five databases – Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, PubMed, and ERIC – yielding a curated set of 15 empirical studies relevant to the intersection of journaling and personal transformation. These studies were analyzed thematically and grouped into five domains: (1) self-reflection and cognitive integration; (2) emotional regulation and psychological containment; (3) meaning-making in times of disruption; (4) identity formation and personal development; and (5) educational and professional applications. Findings indicate that diary writing is not merely a retrospective activity but a transformative narrative practice, through which individuals externalize experience, process emotion, and shape evolving self-concepts. The integrative function of writing is thus positioned as both a psychological intervention and a personal method for engaging with change.*

**Key words:** *journaling, expressive writing, self-reflection, personal transformation, narrative practice*

*“I can shake off everything as I write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn.”*

*April 5, 1944, Anne Frank<sup>2</sup>*

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**Article history:** Received: 22 May 2025; Reviewed: 3 June 2025; Revised: 8 June 2025; Accepted: 11 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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<sup>2</sup> Frank, A. (1995). *The Diary of a Young Girl: The Definitive Edition* (O. Frank & M. Pressler, Eds., S. Massotty, Trans.). Doubleday. (Original diary: 1942–1944)

## Introduction

There are moments in life too fleeting for speech, yet too significant to forget. In such moments, many turn to the page. The diary – silent, loyal, unjudging – has long been more than a private chronicle of days. It serves as a personal and transformative space – an intimate territory where the unspeakable finds form, emotions are contained, and the evolving self takes shape. From Anne Frank’s hidden writings to contemporary therapeutic practices, the diary has endured as a transformative space – one that allows experience to be narrated, pain to be contained, and identity to be reshaped.

In contemporary life, shaped by speed and distraction, the act of writing – by hand or on a screen – offers a rare pause: a return to the self. But the diary is no longer only the domain of introspective adolescents or solitary thinkers. Today, journaling is recognized across disciplines as a psychological tool used in education, therapy, coaching, and health care – for cultivating insight, emotional regulation, and personal transformation.

The following review traces this evolution. Drawing on recent empirical and theoretical contributions, it examines how diary writing functions not merely as self-expression, but as self-construction: a dynamic space where thought and feeling converge, where the past is processed, and the future rehearsed. In this quiet ritual of words, many find clarity, healing, and the courage to grow. To position this inquiry within academic discourse, it is important to clarify the terminology commonly encountered in literature addressing personal writing practices. In English-language academic sources, the terms *journal*, *diary*, and *journaling* are often used interchangeably, though they carry nuanced distinctions. While a *diary* traditionally refers to a chronological, often private record of daily events and emotions, *journals* are typically associated with a more reflective and purposive form of writing, frequently applied in educational, psychological, or therapeutic settings. The verb *to journal* and the noun *journaling* are widely used in expressive writing research to denote an intentional practice of self-reflection through writing. While honoring the emotional and historical weight of the term *diary*, the review adopts *journal* and *journaling* as umbrella terms for conceptual clarity. These encompass both structured and unstructured personal writing practices oriented toward insight, self-regulation, and transformation. Over recent decades, journaling has evolved beyond practice of documentation into a structured mode of reflective engagement, integrated across therapeutic, educational, and developmental frameworks. Through a narrative review of literature published primarily between 2010 and 2025, this article explores the diary, or journal, not merely as a record of experience, but as an active psychological space for meaning-making, emotional processing, and personal growth. The period 2010–2025 was selected to ensure a contemporary and methodologically diverse sample of studies, while still capturing the most influential recent developments in the fields of expressive writing and reflective practice.

## Methodology

To explore the diary as a reflective and transformative medium, a narrative review was undertaken, aiming to synthesize contemporary scholarship on the psychological functions and developmental significance of personal writing practices. The focus was placed on identifying how diary-based writing facilitates introspection, emotional regulation, and identity construction across various domains.

Unlike systematic or meta-analytic reviews that seek to quantify outcomes, this narrative review adopts a conceptually integrative approach, emphasizing theoretical grounding, psychological mechanisms, and application contexts. The objective was not exhaustiveness but rather a meaningful synthesis of representative research that sheds light on the diary as a space for self-reflection and psychological transformation.

The review concentrated on peer-reviewed journal articles published in English between 2010 and 2025, drawing on literature indexed in five major academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycINFO, PubMed, and ERIC. A combination of targeted keywords and close synonyms was used, including *diary*, *journal*, *journaling*, *expressive writing*, *self-reflection*, *emotional regulation*, *identity development*, and *personal transformation*. Boolean operators refined the search (e.g., “journaling AND emotional regulation”), and filters were applied to limit records to English-language, peer-reviewed sources.

The initial search yielded 68 unique results, distributed as follows: Scopus (20), PsycINFO (18), Web of Science (15), ERIC (10), and PubMed (5). After de-duplication and abstract screening, 15 studies were selected based on the following inclusion criteria:

- A conceptual or empirical focus on journaling as a mechanism for psychological change.
- Theoretical alignment with recognized psychological models (e.g., narrative identity theory, expressive writing paradigm, cognitive-emotional integration).
- Explicit attention to internal psychological processes such as affect regulation, meaning-making, or self-concept restructuring.

Studies that primarily focused on writing as a literacy skill or pedagogical tool without a psychological dimension were excluded.

To complement these contemporary sources, the review also incorporated seminal works published prior to 2010 that continue to shape the theoretical landscape, including the expressive writing framework of Pennebaker, Viktor Frankl’s existential model of meaning-making, and McAdams’ theory of narrative identity. These foundational texts were included to ensure conceptual continuity and theoretical robustness, despite falling outside the primary time window.

The final sample reflects a diverse array of disciplines – clinical and counseling psychology, developmental and educational psychology, and health sciences – and includes a range of methodologies, from experimental designs to qualitative case studies and theoretical analyses.

### **Strengths and Limitations of the Review**

One strength of this review lies in its cross-disciplinary scope and emphasis on psychological depth. By integrating findings from educational, clinical, and developmental contexts, the review captures the multifaceted nature of diary practices and highlights their versatility as tools for self-work, growth, and reflection.

The inclusion of seminal theoretical sources – such as the works of Bion, Frankl, and McAdams – ensures conceptual coherence and enriches the interpretive framing of recent empirical findings.

However, certain limitations must be acknowledged. First, the non-systematic nature of the review means that some relevant studies may have been omitted, particularly gray literature or studies published outside indexed journals. Second, language restrictions (English only) may have excluded valuable contributions from other linguistic and cultural contexts. Third, the review does not include a formal quality appraisal of included studies, and thus the evidentiary weight of different contributions is treated interpretatively rather than hierarchically.

Moreover, many of the reviewed studies rely on self-report measures, and few offer longitudinal follow-up, limiting conclusions about the sustained impact of journaling on behavior or wellbeing. Finally, while this review highlights conceptual themes, it does not engage in meta-analytic synthesis, which could quantify specific psychological outcomes of diary interventions.

Despite these limitations, the review offers a rich conceptual map of current thinking about the diary as a psychologically meaningful space – one that continues to inspire research, education, and therapeutic practice.

### **Forms and Functions of Personal Writing Practice**

The reviewed literature reveals that personal writing is not a uniform or static activity, but rather a versatile tool whose impact depends on its purpose, context, and structure. Scholars differentiate between various forms of diary and journaling practices, each aligned with distinct psychological functions (see **Table 1**).

One of the most extensively studied formats is *expressive writing*, popularized by Pennebaker and colleagues. This method involves writing about traumatic or emotionally significant events for 15–20 minutes over consecutive days. It has been associated with improvements in immune function, reduced anxiety, and emotional regulation (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016; Frattaroli, 2006).

In contrast, *free writing or spontaneous diary entries* involve unstructured reflections recorded daily or intermittently. This approach, often used in educational and developmental settings, supports self-discovery and cognitive processing through openness and fluidity. Koziol (2021) found that students who wrote freely reported greater clarity about stress and improved emotional insight.

**Table 1. Summary of Common Forms of Diary and Journaling Practice**

Type of Writing	Structure	Primary Focus	Representative Study
Expressive Writing	Unstructured	Emotional processing, trauma	Pennebaker & Smyth (2016)
Free Writing	Spontaneous	Insight, emotional clarity	Koziol (2021)
Thematic Diary	Semi-structured	Life transitions, values, identity themes	King (2001)
Guided Journaling	Prompt-based	Emotional regulation, self-compassion	Hakim & Rajan (2025)
Positive Affect Diary	Structured focus	Gratitude, joy, hope	Smyth & Helm (2003)
Mindfulness-Based Diary Writing	Present-focused	Attention, non-judgmental awareness	Baikie & Wilhelm (2005)
Professional Reflection Journal	Contextualized	Metacognition, ethical development	Ullrich & Lutgendorf (2002)

*Thematic diaries*, focused on specific content areas – such as gratitude, grief, identity, or transition help individuals integrate meaning around central life themes. For example, King (2001) explored writing about personal goals, showing benefits for growth and motivation.

*Prompt-based or guided journaling*, often structured around reflective questions, sentence completions, or metaphorical imagery, provides accessible entry points for those less familiar with introspective writing. Hakim and Rajan (2025) used such structured formats to support self-regulation and enhance self-compassion, particularly in students under academic pressure.

A newer approach, *positive affect journaling*, emphasizes the recording of uplifting experiences, sources of hope, or emotionally rewarding moments. According to Smyth & Helm (2003), this form of diary writing contributes to resilience by reinforcing constructive emotional memory.

Additional formats include *goal-directed diaries*, *mindfulness-based diary writing* focused on present-moment awareness, and *professional reflection journals* used in training contexts – particularly among educators, medical trainees, and counselors. In these applications, the diary becomes a space for

ethical reflection, integration of knowledge, and professional growth (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005; Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002).

While these modes differ in structure, intentionality, and emotional depth, they share a core function: transforming private reflection into narrative insight. Whether free-form or guided, the diary offers a versatile space for observing the self, regulating emotions, and creating meaning through language. The appropriate format often depends on individual needs – therapeutic, pedagogical, or developmental.

### **Thematic Domains of the Narrative Review**

To further explore how this writing-based inner space supports personal change, the reviewed literature was examined thematically. As a dynamic container of lived experience and reflection, the diary/or the journal – becomes not just a tool, but a narrative environment in which transformation unfolds. From this perspective, five interrelated domains emerge:

1. self-reflection and cognitive integration.
2. emotional regulation and psychological containment.
3. meaning making in times of disruption.
4. identity formation and personal development.
5. educational and professional applications.

### ***Self-reflection and cognitive integration***

A dominant theme across the reviewed literature is the role of diary writing in cultivating reflective thinking and introspective awareness. Diaries serve not merely as containers of thought, but as dynamic spaces where internal experience is externalized and examined. This process creates distance between the thinker and the thought a phenomenon often associated with increased metacognitive awareness (Koziol, 2021; Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016).

By articulating emotions, dilemmas, and dilemmas in written form, individuals engage in what Frattaroli (2006) calls “cognitive integration” – the synthesis of lived experience into a structured and interpretable narrative. This reflective work moves the writer from raw description (“what happened”) to nuanced interpretation (“what it means”), facilitating what Neimeyer (2006) terms the construction of coherence.

In educational settings, this function of diary writing is particularly pronounced. Reflective writing is used to promote critical self-evaluation, link theory to practice, and support deeper learning (King, 2001; Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005). When used regularly, reflective diaries become longitudinal records of cognitive growth, helping learners track shifts in beliefs, attitudes, and intellectual frameworks over time.

Additionally, the act of returning to previous entries allows for recursive reflection – a process through which prior insights are re-evaluated in light of new experience. This iterative dialogue with the self enables adaptive thinking and epistemic humility, which are central to professional and personal development alike.

Moreover, several studies emphasize the dialectical nature of reflective writing, where the individual simultaneously takes the role of narrator and audience. This internal dialogue supports the development of perspective-taking, self-regulation, and ethical discernment (Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002). Such metacognitive gains may be especially valuable in training contexts for educators, therapists, and medical professionals, where self-awareness is tightly linked to effective practice.

In sum, diary writing functions as a tool for meaning construction, critical reflection, and the integration of fragmented experiences into a coherent worldview. Its cognitive benefits extend beyond therapeutic or academic gains, offering a lifelong skill for thoughtful engagement with the self and the world.

### ***Emotional Regulation and Psychological Containment***

One of the most consistently documented functions of diary writing, particularly in clinical and health psychology research, is its capacity to facilitate emotional regulation. Across diverse studies, journaling is shown to help individuals modulate affective intensity, gain emotional clarity, and reduce physiological stress responses (Smyth & Helm, 2003; Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002). This regulatory process often begins with the act of naming emotions, transforming diffuse inner states into structured language and extends toward reflection, cognitive reframing, and emotional resolution.

Guided or prompt-based formats of journaling can be especially effective in this regard. Hakim and Rajan (2025) demonstrated that targeted writing interventions not only reduced academic stress but also improved self-compassion and sleep quality among students. These findings support the idea that emotional containment – the ability to hold and process distress without becoming overwhelmed – can be actively cultivated through structured expressive practices.

Writing about emotionally significant experiences does more than release affect; it initiates a process of cognitive structuring and meaning integration. Pennebaker and Chung (2011) argue that expressive writing facilitates psychological health by reducing emotional inhibition, enhancing causal reasoning, and fostering a sense of narrative coherence. Their linguistic analyses further show that improvements in well-being are associated with increased use of insight-related language, reflecting deeper self-understanding and emotional regulation. The work of Pennebaker and colleagues has laid the foundation for much of this research. Their expressive writing paradigm shows

that confronting emotionally charged experiences through writing reduces rumination and enhances emotional coherence (Pennebaker & Chung, 2011; Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016). This aligns with broader psychological models of emotion regulation, particularly those emphasizing cognitive reappraisal, the reinterpretation of emotional stimuli in a way that alters their impact. Journaling provides a safe and private context in which this reappraisal can occur gradually and organically.

Moreover, emotional writing often brings to light implicit beliefs and unresolved conflicts, giving the writer an opportunity to externalize, observe, and transform them. This process resembles what Bion (1962) referred to as “container-contained” dynamics in therapeutic relationships – the idea that raw emotional material becomes bearable when symbolized, understood, and mentally ‘held’ in a containing framework. The diary, in this sense, becomes a symbolic container: a space where intense affect can be metabolized into thought. Importantly, while catharsis alone may offer temporary relief, the long-term benefits of journaling appear most pronounced when writing leads to new insight, narrative coherence, or behavioral change. Future research may explore how digital journaling platforms, peer-shared writing, or trauma-informed prompts might further support emotion regulation in diverse populations.

### ***Meaning Making in Times of Disruption***

Beyond insight and emotional processing, journaling often serves as a space for reinterpreting disruptive experiences and generating meaning. Neimeyer (2006) describes this as “constructive meaning-making,” a process particularly salient in contexts of grief, trauma, and existential rupture. In the aftermath of such events, individuals often struggle with fragmentation of the self and incoherence of experience. Writing enables a deliberate return to the site of emotional rupture – not to relive pain, but to reframe it.

Through journaling, especially when guided by therapeutic prompts or thematic focus, people begin to impose narrative structure on what initially appears chaotic. This act of narrative restructuring allows for the transformation of pain into purpose and confusion into coherence. According to Frattaroli (2006), journaling supports “cognitive reappraisal” and fosters emotional resolution by allowing the writer to examine events from multiple perspectives.

Smyth and Helm (2003) further argue that the act of writing about disruption fosters a shift from rumination to reflection. When individuals move beyond mere recounting of events and begin to question, reinterpret, or symbolically re-author them, they create the conditions for meaning to emerge. In this way, journaling becomes a space for what Frankl (1984) described as existential reorientation – a turning toward values and inner clarity, even in the face of loss.

This dimension is particularly relevant in therapeutic and crisis settings, where journaling serves not only as an outlet for distress but as a tool for narrative

healing. Structured writing interventions have been shown to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress while simultaneously increasing coherence in personal narratives (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016). In such contexts, the diary or journal becomes a transitional object, bridging the gap between inner turmoil and restored agency.

### ***Identity Formation and Personal Development***

Personal writing does not merely document experience, it actively participates in shaping it. One of the most compelling insights from the reviewed literature is the capacity of diary writing to serve as a developmental space for identity construction, especially during periods of transition, adversity, or existential uncertainty. The repetitive act of returning to the page enables individuals to engage in self-observation, notice evolving patterns, and test alternative self-conceptions in a safe and private medium (Frattaroli, 2006; King, 2001).

The concept of narrative identity, as introduced by McAdams (2001), positions the self as a storyteller who constructs coherence and purpose through internalized life narratives. Diary writing supports this process by providing a space where personal memories can be reorganized, meanings renegotiated, and future selves imagined. As individuals write, they do not merely recall life events – they author and revise their own identity scripts.

A particularly influential element of McAdams' theory is the distinction between “contaminated” and “redemptive” life stories. Contaminated narratives are those in which initially positive experiences become tainted by negative outcomes, leading to feelings of failure, guilt, or helplessness. In contrast, redemptive stories depict a transformation in which suffering or adversity leads to personal insight, connection, or growth. Through journaling, individuals may begin to reinterpret difficult moments, shifting their life narrative from a sense of damage to one of resilience and meaning-making. This transformative re-authoring is a central mechanism by which diary writing facilitates identity development and psychological integration. Rooted in narrative identity theory (McAdams, 2001), this process underscores the idea that individuals build a sense of self by constructing and internalizing coherent life stories. The diary, as a form of narrative rehearsal, becomes the ground where past, present, and future can coexist – where recollection meets anticipation. Writers often oscillate between autobiographical reflection and imagined possibilities, creating a temporal thread that allows for continuity and transformation. Neimeyer (2006) refers to this as “constructing coherence” – a function particularly relevant when identity is destabilized by trauma or life disruption.

Empirical studies support these theoretical claims. Koziol (2021) demonstrated that students who engaged in values-based diary practices reported increased clarity about personal goals, self-concept, and motivational alignment. Similarly, Baikie and Wilhelm (2005) found that expressive writing not only helped individuals process difficult experiences but also supported processes of post-traumatic growth by facilitating narrative reframing and renewed purpose.

While much of the research focuses on individual change, emerging questions point toward the social dimensions of identity work. Personal writing often reflects internalized cultural narratives, gender scripts, and relational patterns – yet few studies explicitly address how diary practices mediate these influences. Expanding this domain to include collective journaling, dialogic entries, or storytelling within marginalized communities could shed light on the diary as a site of social resistance, cultural affirmation, or relational healing.

In this light, personal writing appears not only as a mirror of the self, but as a dynamic canvas where identity is re-authored, subtly, repeatedly, and in dialogue with both inner experiences and external realities.

### ***Educational and Professional Applications***

Beyond personal insight, diary writing has been widely implemented as a pedagogical and developmental strategy in educational and clinical settings. Here, the emphasis shifts from individual introspection to the cultivation of professional competence and ethical maturity. In academic training, reflective writing supports the development of critical thinking, applied learning, and adaptive decision-making – especially in fields that require high levels of emotional labor and interpersonal sensitivity, such as education, psychology, and medicine (Baikie & Wilhelm, 2005; Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002).

Journals in these contexts often serve as scaffolds for structured reflection. For example, supervised journaling in teacher preparation programs enables prospective educators to document classroom experiences, reflect on teaching practices, and articulate evolving pedagogical beliefs (Larrivee, 2000). In counseling and medical training, reflective entries help practitioners navigate complex ethical situations, examine countertransference, and identify burnout risk. This practical function of journaling aligns with Schön's (1983) concept of the "reflective practitioner," where learning arises from intentional engagement with real-life dilemmas.

What distinguishes journaling in professional domains from purely introspective writing is its integration into feedback systems, supervision structures, and performance evaluation. It is used to document professional growth over time, facilitate formative assessment, and support individualized learning trajectories. In this way, the diary becomes both a personal and institutional tool, bridging inner awareness with external standards of competence.

A compelling example of journaling's impact on academic performance comes from the study by Frattaroli, Thomas, and Lyubomirsky (2011), which demonstrated that graduate school applicants who engaged in brief expressive writing about their exam-related anxieties performed significantly better on standardized entrance exams than those in control conditions. This suggests that journaling may not only foster emotional regulation but also enhance cognitive efficiency under pressure, supporting both psychological well-being and academic

outcomes. These findings have important implications for integrating writing-based interventions in test preparation and academic coaching programs.

Research by King (2001) and Koziol (2021) suggests that structured writing about goals and role-related challenges enhances not only self-understanding but also engagement, retention of knowledge, and resilience. These outcomes position diary writing as a low-cost yet high-impact intervention in training programs aiming to cultivate reflective capacity, emotional regulation, and ethical grounding.

While the reflective aspect is a common thread with more general personal writing practices, its role in professional education is functionally distinct: it operates within relational, supervisory, and evaluative frameworks to support transformation-in-role rather than transformation-of-self. Future studies could further explore how guided writing tools contribute to long-term competence, especially when integrated with mentorship, narrative coaching, or portfolio-based assessment models.

### **Implications for Practice**

The reviewed literature highlights the diary not simply as a therapeutic tool, but as a multi-layered space for reflection, authorship, and identity work, with significant implications across education, professional development, and the humanities.

#### *Personal and Professional Growth through Reflective Practice*

Across academic, caregiving, and artistic fields, diary writing fosters both personal insight and professional maturation. For teachers, counselors, and healthcare practitioners, it supports critical self-reflection, emotional regulation, and ethical awareness, enhancing resilience and authenticity in relational work. Journaling helps practitioners remain attuned to their values, reactions, and responsibilities – qualities central to ethical practice and human-centered professions.

#### *Learning as Identity Formation*

In educational contexts, especially in the humanities and social sciences, diaries function as more than pedagogical tools – they are spaces for self-formation. Students who engage in reflective or expressive writing develop metacognitive awareness, connect theoretical knowledge with lived experience, and begin to articulate their evolving identities. This aligns with humanistic educational ideals that prioritize the cultivation of the whole person, not just the transmission of content.

#### *Cultural Self-Inquiry and Narrative Ethics*

From a humanistic standpoint, diary practices echo traditions of introspection and moral inquiry. They offer individuals a means of exploring

existential themes – meaning, loss, belonging, purpose – within the shelter of personal narrative. Such writing contributes to a form of “narrative ethics” in which the individual bears witness to their inner life and social positioning, an act that may hold political and philosophical significance, especially in contexts of marginalization or change.

### *Creative and Scholarly Inquiry*

In disciplines such as literature, philosophy, and cultural studies, the diary is not only an object of analysis but also a method of inquiry. It may serve as a medium for autoethnography, artistic research, or embodied writing, where the boundaries between subject and scholar, art and life, are intentionally blurred. Journaling in these contexts supports a recursive mode of knowing – writing as a way of thinking, becoming, and contributing to the world.

### *Reclaiming Coherence in Times of Disruption*

Finally, in times of personal or societal fragmentation, journaling offers a low-cost, accessible, and meaningful form of self-care and restoration. It anchors the individual amid uncertainty, inviting slow reflection in a fast-paced world. Whether handwritten or digital, solitary or shared, the diary remains a timeless act of reclaiming voice, coherence, and authorship over one’s experience.

These findings hold relevance for professionals across the humanities and helping fields. Educators can employ reflective writing prompts to support student self-awareness and learning integration; psychologists and therapists may use journaling as a low-cost, client-centered tool for emotional processing and identity reconstruction; art therapists can incorporate written reflection alongside visual expression to deepen personal insight; and social workers may encourage diary practices in community programs that foster resilience and self-agency. In all these cases, writing becomes not merely an introspective act but a structured method for ethical care and human development.

## **Conclusion**

The narrative review explored the diary as a dynamic and transformative space, drawing on interdisciplinary literature in psychology, education, and health. Five interrelated functions were identified: fostering reflective awareness, supporting emotional regulation, enabling meaning-making during disruption, facilitating identity formation, and enhancing professional development. Rather than merely recording events, the diary serves as a structured process for organizing and interpreting lived experience. It enables individuals to externalize emotions, engage in metacognitive reflection, and construct coherent personal narratives. In doing so, diary writing promotes both psychological integration and adaptive self-understanding across personal, educational, and clinical contexts. While the emotional and cognitive benefits of diary use are well-documented, future research should further investigate its long-term effects, neural correlates, and

applications across diverse populations. Questions remain about the differential impact of guided versus spontaneous writing, as well as the role of digital platforms and collective journaling in therapeutic and developmental work. Ultimately, keeping a diary is not simply an act of self-expression – it is a deliberate practice of meaning-making. Through the written word, individuals are able to reflect, reframe, and reclaim their experiences in ways that support resilience, growth, and inner continuity.

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# ЕДИН ЕПИЗОД ОТ БИОГРАФИЯТА НА МАДАМ ДЪО СТАЛ

Стефан Минков

## AN EPISODE OF MADAME DE STAËL'S BIOGRAPHY

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/XOXC3310>

**Abstract:** *The study examines an episode from the life of Anne-Louise-Germaine, Baroness de Staël-Holstein, related to her escape to Russia and her impressions of the Russian Empire and its people. The renowned writer sought refuge from the repressions imposed on her by Napoleon Bonaparte and attempted to defend her personal freedom. Her overall attitude toward Russia is largely positive, though in her diary she also notes certain negative aspects of public life in the empire. She provides an overview of some national characteristics of the peoples living within the empire and meets with prominent historical figures, including Emperor Alexander, his wife, and his close circle. She describes the cities, nature, and local customs, but filters these impressions through the lens of the war of 1812. The study also includes general information about Madame de Staël's biography, as well as her literary and political activities.*

**Key words:** *Madame de Staël, Napoleon Bonaparte, Russian Empire, national characteristics, war of 1812*

На 24 юни 1812 г. „Великата армия“ на Наполеон Бонапарт, водена от самия император, навлиза на територията на Русия и по направлението Ковно – Витебск се насочва към Москва. Двадесет дни по-късно, на 14 юли 1812 г., на руска територия стъпва и група бежанци, в която е известната Мадам дьо Стал – една от ярките личности на епохата, дъщеря на мосю Некер, чието сваляне от поста генерален контролор на финансите става повод на 14 юли 1789 г. парижката тълпа да излезе на протест срещу „заговора на аристократите“ и да шурмува Бастилията (Glushkova, 2025, p. 8). И докато името на Жак Некер присъства на страниците на всички учебници и исторически монографии, които интерпретират събитията, свързани с Френската революция (най-вече с нейното начало), това на дъщеря му се среща епизодично или въобще е пропускано. Няма съмнение обаче, че чрез оставеното за поколенията литературно наследство за формирането

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Article history: Received: 10 May 2025; Reviewed: 30 May 2025; Revised: 9 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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на „новата“ идейна основа, върху която „се изгражда“ модерният ХІХ век, Ан-Луиз-Жермен Некер, баронеса дьо Стал-Холщайн, има съществена роля. Това е и причината личността ѝ да фокусира вниманието на изследователите, особено на тези, които интерпретират не толкова нейния жизнен път, колкото литературните ѝ произведения.

Макар и с репутацията на реформатор, Жак Некер е един от последните представители на Стария режим, докато дъщеря му, въпреки че е родена и възпитана в аристократичните среди на предреволюционна Франция, е свързвана с либерализма и с романтизма на ранния ХІХ век. Връзката ѝ с известни личности на епохата, особено с Бенжамен Констан, конфликтът ѝ с Наполеон Бонапарт, яркото ѝ описание на „Германия“, превърнало се в своеобразен апотеоз на ранния немски национализъм, я поставят ако не в центъра на събитията от Наполеоновата епоха, поне във фокуса на изследователския интерес.

На следващите страници ще представим факти от престоя на Мадам дьо Стал в Русия, отразени в спомените ѝ, издадени след смъртта ѝ от нейния син и публикувани на български език през 1992 година. Самото обстоятелство, че известната със своите либерални възгледи баронеса е принудена да търси убежище в консервативната Руска империя; наблюденията ѝ върху обществените порядки, върху живота на руския елит и руския селянин, срещите ѝ със знаменити исторически фигури, в т.ч. и с император Александър І, предполагат своеобразен сблъсък на идеи, „културен шок“ от ретроградния политически и социален ред. Нищо подобно не се случва – тя е приета с „отворени обятия“ вероятно защото олицетворява антинаполеоновата съпротива във Франция, а от своя страна, макар и в рамките на краткия си престой, се вписва в живота на руския елит, чувства го като свой, близък до житейския опит, който е придобила, пречупва го през романтичния поглед на дама от висшето френско общество, привикнала да получава необходимото внимание и с присъщата си интелигентност, образование и съсловна принадлежност да отразява заобикалящата я действителност.

Кратките бележки за биографията ѝ ще обяснят до известна степен причините, поради които се налага тя да търси убежище далеч на североизток.

Родена на 22 април 1766 г. в Париж в семейството на банкера Жак Некер и Сюзан Кюршо, и двамата с произход от Швейцария, Ан-Луиз-Жермен от малка е включена в живота на френския интелектуален и политически елит чрез салона, който майка ѝ поддържа в своя дом. По това време „салонната политика“ е на мода и това е най-популярната форма на интелектуален живот на елита. В следващите десетилетия политиката в салоните ще се сблъска с политиката в клубовете – интелектуалните обсъждания ще се превърнат в своеобразна антитеза на популизма на

масите, но това вече е в годините на Френската революция. Мадам дьо Стал ще запази привързаността си към тази форма на обществена изява и интелектуално общуване, като сама ще отваря няколко пъти салони – и във Франция, и в чужбина.

Още до 1789 г. младата Ан-Луиз-Жермен проявява своя литературен талант, в който доминира романтизмът, подплатен с блестящия интелект на образована млада дама, имаща възможността да се докосне и да изпита влиянието на Френското просвещение. Свободомислието, което някои автори ще определят и като „ранен“ феминизъм, ще съпътства живота на Мадам дьо Стал като изразителна черта на нейния характер и ще стане основната причина за конфликта ѝ с Наполеон Бонапарт. В контекста на темата, която разглеждаме, предпочитанията ѝ към конституционната монархия като форма на държавно управление я правят привърженик на промените във Франция в началния етап на Революцията, но революционната радикализация след средата на 1792 г. я отдалечава от политическия живот в страната. В този смисъл, интересни са нейните наблюдения върху политическата система в Русия през 1812 г., характеризираща се с единовластие и строга йерархия, далеч от конституционните ограничения на монархическата власт.

Промените във Франция през лятото и есента на 1792 г. налагат Мадам дьо Стал да се дистанцира от политическия живот в родината си. Тя напуска страната след септемврийските кланета, спасявайки свои приятели, и емигрира в Лондон, за да се върне при управлението на Директорията вече като „убедена републиканка“ (Isbell, 2023, p. 78). В следващите години тя на два пъти емигрира – през 1795 г., само няколко месеца след завръщането си, и отново през 1797 г.

Републиканските ѝ възгледи, за които някои от ранните ѝ биографи споменават, трябва да бъдат поставени под съмнение, особено в контекста на по-сетнешните ѝ контакти в различни европейски дворове. По време на Директорията, ако въобще може да се говори за тях като реално съществуващи, те биха били по-скоро ситуационни и в резултат на модно увлечение; бихме определили политическите възгледи на Ан-Луиз-Жермен като либерални, без да сме убедени, че са напълно избистрени. Авторите, които не са настроени позитивно към нейната личност, пишат, че републиканските ѝ увлечения са резултат от „онзи дух на променливост, който сякаш беше в самата ѝ същност“ (Lairtullier, 1850, p. 384).

1800 година е повратна в живота ѝ. Мадам дьо Стал влиза в конфликт с Първия консул (Наполеон Бонапарт), който все по-ясно проявява диктаторските си амбиции, за да се превърне в негов остър критик, за което в следващите години е репресирана и принудена да живее в странство. След 1803 г. тя се установява в имението в Копе за дълъг период от време, обикаля различни страни в Европа, като се завръща в родината

си едва след заточението на Наполеон на о. Елба (1814 г.). Голям удар върху нея е смъртта на баща ѝ през 1804 г. В тези трудни за нея години Ан-Луиз-Жермен дьо Стал често попада под ударите на съдбата и неслучайно търси мъжка опора и утеха. Поредицата от връзки, които има след смъртта на съпруга си, шведския барон дьо Стал-Холщайн, ѝ помага да се справи с житейските предизвикателства.

Ето как тя обяснява конфликта си с императора:

Император Наполеон, чийто характер се разкрива изцяло във всяко действие от живота му, ме преследваше старателно и усърдно, с все по-голяма енергичност и непреклонност; затова отношенията ми с Бонапарт помогнаха да го опозная дълго преди Европа да се справи с тази загадка [...]. Най-голямото обвинение на император Наполеон срещу мен беше, че уважавам истинската свобода, от която винаги съм била проникната (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 11).

Междувременно около нея се формира интелектуален кръг, известен с наименованието Групата от Копе, в който влизат Бенжамен Констан, Шарл-Виктор дьо Бонщетен, Жан-Шарл Сизмонд дьо Сисмонди, Гийом дьо Хумболд, Огюст Вилхелм Шпегел, Албертин Некер дьо Сосюр и др. (Kolarova-Shindler, 2012).

Освен с интелектуалните занимания, този кръг се оформя като своеобразен център на опозицията срещу Наполеон. Ако се доверим на думите на Мадам дьо Стал, противопоставянето на императора не е идеологическо, а между личности с различен мироглед и характер. Независимо от историческия декор, в който се развиват събитията, подобни конфликти са неизменна част от човешката история:

[...] той (Наполеон Бонапарт – бел. моя – С. М.) не вярва в искреността на възгледите на когото и да било: на морала гледа като на израз на вежливост, който няма по-голямо значение от края на някакво писмо [...] Бонапарт счита, че когато някой твърди, че обича свободата, че вярва в Бога, че следва съвестта, а не интереса си, той просто се съобразява с приетия начин на изразяване, за да осъществи амбициозните си намерения или егоистичната си пресметливост. Той не може да разбере онези човешки създания, които искрено се придържат към някакво мнение, независимо какви могат да бъдат последствията; Бонапарт се отнася към тези хора като към глупци или търговци, които искат да се продадат твърде скъпо (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 12).

Представихме този по-обширен цитат, защото в него се дава характеристика на една от знаковите исторически личности, даваща името на цяла епоха в европейската история. Отношението ѝ към френския император е ясно изразено в творчеството ѝ след напускането на Франция в началото на XIX век. Но да се върнем към житейския път на нашата героиня.

Мадам дьо Стал обикаля голяма част от Европа, както бе споменато, има редица любовни връзки, без изключение с мъже със силни характери

и изявени интелектуалци; твори активно, като неизменно на страниците на нейните произведения (литературни, философски и публицистични) присъства политическата проблематика, „оцветена“ с романтичния поглед, либералните възгледи и свободолюбието. Без да изреждаме всичките ѝ произведения, ще посочим тези, които според нас имат най-голямо влияние върху литературата и въобще върху интелектуалците през XIX век: „За влиянието на страстите върху щастието на индивидите и на нациите“ (1796) (*De l'influence des passions sur le bonheur des individus et des nations*); „За литературата, разглеждана във връзките ѝ с обществените институции“ (1800) (*De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*); „Делфин“ (1802) (*Delphine*); „Корин, или Италия“ (1807) (*Corinne ou l'Italie*); „За Германия“ (1813) (*De l'Allemagne*); „Размисли върху основните събития на Френската революция от нейното начало до 8 юли 1815 година“ (1818) (*Considérations sur les principaux événements de la Révolution française, depuis son origine jusques et compris le 8 juillet 1815*); „Десет години в изгнание“ (1821) (*Dix années d'exil*).

Въпреки че това е представителен списък, видно е, че основната част от творчеството на Мадам дьо Стал е от периода на живота ѝ в емиграция. Все пак е необходимо да отбележим, че още преди избухването на Френската революция тя публикува някои творби, включително за творчеството на Жан-Жак Русо, от когото е очарована, а в първите революционни години изпод перото ѝ излизат литературни, философски и политически произведения, част от които са свързани със злободневни проблеми, а друга – с разсъждения върху морални категории и общочовешки ценности. Един автор, живял в средата на „века на национализма“, определя нейния ум като „бърз и прогресивен“, но продължава с противоречива характеристика на личността ѝ:

Сляпата ѝ и почти идолопоклонническа любов към баща ѝ, който първоначално бе издигнат толкова високо, а след това така брутално повален от народните колебания, без съмнение обърка възгледите ѝ и я отклони от пътя, към който природата на нейния свободолюбив и авантюристичен гений би я тласнала неотменно (Lairtullier, 1850, p. 371).

Част от произведенията ѝ са издадени едва след нейната смърт, включително и спомените (дневника) „Десет години в изгнание“, в които са пресъздадени впечатленията от Русия и руснаците. Тази книга носи характеристиките на пътепис, защото не занимава читателя единствено със съдбата на своя автор, с неговите чувства и мисли, а дава пространни сведения за посетените места и за хората.

Периодът между 1810 г. и 1814 г. е поредният поврат в краткия живот на Ан-Луиз-Жермен дьо Стал. Книгата ѝ „За Германия“ е забранена и подложена на унищожение от френските власти, а домът ѝ в Копе е поставен под постоянно полицейско наблюдение. По това време тя е свидетел на възхода на своя непримирим враг, който се разпорежда в цяла

Европа, с изключение на периферията на Стария континент, а принципите на Френската революция са потъпкани. В тези условия Мадам дьо Стал предприема поредната авантюра – отправя се по заобиколен път към Англия, преминавайки през контролираните от Наполеонова Франция територии, през унизената Австрийска империя, през Русия и Швеция, за да достигне до Лондон, където остава до падането на Наполеон от власт. Последните години от живота си прекарва в Париж, където Бурбоните са възстановили властта си. Отваря отново своя салон, в който приема крале, генерали и министри; подема също така кампания срещу търговията с роби (Isbell, 2023, p. 78). През 1817 г. получава инфаркт на един бал и на 14 юли с.г. напуска този свят.

Умира в деня, в който се отбелязва 28-годишнината от началото на Френската революция, но по това време във Франция да се говори за революция, либерални идеи, свобода, равенство и братство най-малкото е въпрос на лош вкус. Реставрацията означава не само връщане на легитимната династия (според принципите, установени на Виенския конгрес от 1814–1815 година), но и опит за възстановяване на предреволюционните обществени порядки, а идеите за свободата на личността за пореден път са маргинализирани въпреки приетата Конституционна харта. Няма сведения Мадам дьо Стал да се е съпротивлявала на тези процеси, а напротив – тя се интегрира в новата ситуация, която ѝ е добре позната; обградена с ореола на непримирим противник на Наполеон, вероятно уморена от тежките преживявания, които е преживявала, довършва някои от започнатите творби, а други остават незавършени. Тук ще си позволим едно предположение – в последните години от своя живот Мадам дьо Стал се фиксира върху антинаполеоновата тема, като идеалите ѝ са изместени от личната борба срещу диктатора. Между впрочем, подобни податки можем да открием и в описанията на Русия, в които прозират съсловната ѝ принадлежност и конформизмът на човек на средна възраст, който отстоява личната си свобода, но не се бори за обществени каузи.

Но да се върнем към 1812 г., когато почти едновременно на руска територия влизат армиите на Наполеон Бонапарт и бягащата от френския император Мадам дьо Стал: „Пристигнах в Русия в момент, когато френската армия беше навлязла твърде навътре в руска територия [...]” (d’yo Stal, 1992, p. 116). Това обстоятелство определя и маршрута на бегълците, които се опитват всячески да избегнат досега с чуждия нашественик, а прекият път към столицата на Руската империя вече е отрязан. Първоначалният маршрут, който е обмислян, е през Одеса и Константинопол, но в крайна сметка е решено през Москва групата да се отправи към Санкт Петербург, откъдето да се прехвърли в Швеция и оттам – в Англия.

Бегълците преминават през Волиния (в полската част на Русия), спират за кратко в Житомир и продължават през Украйна. След известен престой в Киев (не се споменава колко продължителен е той) групата се

насочва към Москва, където пристига преди началото на август, т.е. до този момент пътуването е продължило около две седмици. Мадам дьо Стал рядко споменава хронологически периоди и конкретни дати. Пише, че в първите дни на август разглежда вътрешността на Кремъл, а по това време вече има известни впечатления от Москва, което ни дава основание да предположим приблизително времето за пътуване до старата към онзи момент руска столица. Напускането ѝ също не е датирано, но в контекста на изложените размисли тя заявява, че един месец по-късно „този красив град беше изпепелен“ (d'yo Stal, 1992, p. 133), като според историческите свидетелства пожарът започва на 14 септември и продължава няколко дни. Тези податки ни дават основание да предположим, че престоят в Москва на бегълците продължава някъде до средата на август, т.е. около две седмици, като впечатленията на Ан-Луиз-Жермен за този не особено дълъг престой са многобройни; по-скоро емоционални, отколкото обективни предвид и царящата в града атмосфера на трескаво очакване и напрежение. По-долу ще обобщим част от тези впечатления.

От Москва групата се отправя към Санкт Петербург, преминавайки през Новгород. Пристигането в столицата на Северната империя също не е датирано, като авторката се задоволява да изрази емоциите си (това не само е авторово право, но и предвид жанра на творбата – естествен авторов подход). В тези емоции прозира не само конкретното чувство, но и цялостната нагласа на Мадам дьо Стал към момента. Би могло да се предположи, че авторката си спомня точно чувствата, които са я обземали тогава, защото спомените са писани непосредствено след събитията. Първото ѝ желание, по собствените ѝ думи, е да благодари на Небето, че е на морския бряг, на който вижда да се развява английският флаг:

[. . .] почувствах, че бих могла, доверявайки се на Океана, да се оставя веднага във властта на Съдбата; такава е илюзията, на която човек трудно може да устои – чувството, че е в ръцете на Провидението, когато се е отдал на стихииите, а не когато зависи от хората и най-много от желанията на един-единствен човек, който е сякаш възплъщение на всяко зло начало на тази земя (d'yo Stal, 1992, p. 137).

Облекчението, което изпитва Мадам дьо Стал, е резултат от страха; не атавистичния страх от непознатото, от надвисналата заплаха, а осъзнатия страх, че е слабата страна в един конфликт, от който се стреми да избяга. Това я кара да се фиксира върху Бонапарт и често да го споменава в своите спомени, а след заточението му – да изпита едновременно и облекчение, и умора, и готовност да се примири с новата ситуация.

Престоят на групата в Петербург продължава до края на септември. Тогава тя напуска столицата и през Финландия (тогава вече част от Руската империя<sup>2</sup>) се отправя за Швеция, а оттам – за Лондон. С това приключва последното голямо пътуване в нейния живот.

2 След мирния договор между Русия и Швеция, подписан през 1809 г.

Още в първите страници, посветени на пристигането на групата в Русия, Мадам дьо Стал противопоставя „имагинерния“ на реалния деспотизъм:

Съвсем не бяхме свикнали да гледаме на Русия като на най-свободната държава в Европа; но деспотизмът, който Императорът на Франция стовари върху всички народи на континента, ни караше да чувстваме като република всяка страна, където я нямаше тиранията на Наполеон (duo Stal, 1992, p. 116).

По-долу в текста на спомените нееднократно се подчертава разминаването между представа и реалност, между стереотип на възприемане и личен опит, който постепенно го разрушава. В духа на философията на Русо Мадам дьо Стал противопоставя варварска Русия на цивилизована Европа, като изтъква предимствата на първата – гостоприемството, което получава и на благородниците, и на народа, простотата на нравите и общността на интересите.

Основната плоскост, в която са разгледани социалните отношения в Руската империя, е връзката аристокрация/елит – селяни, но тези отношения не са представени като класово или съсловно противопоставяне, а през призмата на романтичната представа за идилично съжителство и изградена ефективна симбиоза, в която всяко съсловие приема своето място и функции в държавния организъм:

Навсякъде в Европа може да се види контрастът между богатството и бедността; но в Русия, ако мога така да се изразя, не се забелязва нито едното, нито другото. Народът не е беден, а и богатите могат да живеят, когато е необходимо, също като него; смесицата от най-строги лишения и най-изтънчени удоволствия е характерна за тази страна (duo Stal, 1992, pp. 124-125).

Вероятно би трябвало да определим тази констатация като продукт на превратната представа, получена от авторката за краткия престой на руска територия, съчетана с романтичната ѝ нагласа и неосъзнатия стремеж да идеализира страната, оказала ѝ гостоприемство и в която са съсредоточени надеждите ѝ да победи армиите на нейния личен враг.

В хода на изложението си тя дава, макар и фрагментарни, сведения за някои от народите, живеещи в Руската империя – естествено, основно за руснаците, но и за украинците, поляците, калмиците, финландците. Мадам дьо Стал не пропуска да отбележи както положителните, така и отрицателните черти на обикновените руснаци, но вторите са смекчени – невежеството и липсата на образование, кражбите, липсата на морални принципи са противопоставени на гостоприемството, високата степен, „в която е изразено общественото чувство“, гордостта и предаността, енергията, която русите притежават. Самата авторка прави опит да разруши залегналите стереотипи:

Няколко хапливи анекдота за предишните владетели, няколко руснаци, задължени по парижките улици, няколко вернидумина Дидро – и французите

си втълпиха, че Русия се състои от един покварен двор, шамбелани и народ от роби: това е голяма грешка (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 127).

По-нататък г-жа дьо Стал продължава с характеристиките, които градираят към изтъкване на положителните качества. Руснаците ѝ правят впечатление със своята религиозност, като „големите бради подчертават набожното изражение на лицата им“. Външният им вид и облеклото им също впечатляват Мадам дьо Стал:

Повечето от тях носят дълги сини ризи, пристегнати в кръста с червен шнур; в облеклото на жените също има нещо азиатско, то издава вкус към ярките цветове, характерен за страната, където слънцето е толкова красиво, че се радват да улавят блясъка му с предметите, които осветява. За късо време толкова много свикнах с източните дрехи, че ми беше неприятно да виждам руснаци, облечени като всички останали европейци [...] (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 119).

Непрекъснатият контакт с религиозността на местните, с религията и с храма като нейна материална еманация предизвикват Ан-Луиз-Жермен да сравни православието с католицизма, като я впечатлява по-голямата толерантност на православната религия. Пространно тя описва церемониите и ритуалите, на които е била свидетел, облака тамян, който се носи около свещеника, „среброто, златото и скъпоценностите“, напомнящи за страните, „в които обожават слънцето“. Впечатлена е от религиозния дух и от поклонничеството. На страниците на дневника е представена и обобщена характеристика на руския народ:

За този народ е присъщо да не се бои нито от умората, нито от физическите изпитания; това е нация търпелива и действена, в нея има и веселост, и меланхолия. Могат да се срещнат най-поразителни контрасти, а това означава, че е предопределена за велики дела, защото обикновено само възвишените същества притежават противоположни качества; тълпата в повечето случаи е едноцветна. [...] Според мен русите имат повече връзки с южните народи, или по-скоро с източните, отколкото с тези на Север (dyo Stal, 1992, pp. 121-122).

[. . .] За този народ е присъща широтата във всяко нещо; обикновените измерения тук са неприложими. Това не означава, че не се срещат нито истинско величие, нито истинска устойчивост; но дързостта и въображението на русите не познават граници, у тях всичко е по-скоро колосално, отколкото пропорционално, по-скоро дръзко, отколкото обмислено и ако целта не е достигната, то е защото е надмината (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 125).

Неизменно присъства надеждата, на която авторката се уповава, за мисията на руснаците, призвани да победят Наполеоновите армии. Именно поради това на места в текста се открива интересът към военната история, към личността на отделни пълководци като Суворов и Кутузов, с когото Мадам дьо Стал лично се запознава няколко дни преди знаменитата битка при Бородино. Няма как да не се признае на авторката наблюдателността и аналитичните способности да обобщава, макар че не може да се прецени доколко дадените оценки не са продукт на вече придобити знания и резултат

от несъзнателно компилиране на чужди мнения. От друга страна, дори това да е така, най-малкото тези мнения се потвърждават от нейните наблюдения, за да ги изложи тя в спомените си.

На други места в текста г-жа дьо Стал отново се спира на руския национален характер, на *благородството и вежливостта* на обикновения руски селянин, противопоставян на градския чиновник и на всички, „които очакват да успеят с помощта на гъвкавост и интриги“. Доколкото открива корените на проблемите в руското общество, Мадам дьо Стал ги свързва с липсата на трето съсловие, което е „голяма пречка за развитието на литературата и изящните изкуства“ и причина за „отсъствието на посредник между князете и народа“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 128).

Поляците и „полският въпрос“, един от основните проблеми в международните отношения още от 70-те години на XVIII век<sup>3</sup>, са в периферията на интереса на Мадам дьо Стал, доколкото за това може да се съди от страниците, отделени за тях в спомените ѝ. Когато пише за престоя си в Галиция, тя отделя място или на личните си прежеждия, или на унизителната за Австрия роля на съюзник на Наполеон Бонапарт<sup>4</sup>. Прехвърляйки се на територията на руска Полша, Мадам дьо Стал се задоволява единствено с формално описание на отношението на поляците към Империята, като е подчертана славянската принадлежност на двете нации и взаимното им почитание, въпреки че са били „неприятели“. Констатацията, че „общо взето поляците предпочитат руснаците пред австрийците“ и че германците, „по-напреднали от славяните в европейската цивилизация, не умеят да бъдат справедливи към тях в други отношения“, отново цели, съзнателно или не, да подчертае положителния образ на Русия, като и дума не е спомената (естествено!) за политическата ангажираност на Наполеон с решаването на „полския въпрос“. Точно обратното, госпожа дьо Стал подчертава, че „никой не ги (поляците – бел. моя – С. М.) подлагаше на това ежедневно преследване, което не потиска омразата, а само я разбужда“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 117).

В края на своето пътуване Ан-Луиз-Жермен има възможност да наблюдава и да изрази своите впечатления и за финландците:

3 През 1772 г. е извършена първата подялба на Полша, а в периода 1793 – 1795 г., вече в условията на Френската революция и на сближаването на Руската империя с Австрийската и с Кралство Прусия, полските територии са поделени за втори и трети път. Руската императрица Екатерина Велика е един от инициаторите и двигателите за подялбата на полските територии. „Полският въпрос“ и възстановяването на независимата полска държава е една от картите, на които Наполеон Бонапарт залага в своята европейска политика, като в армията му се включват многочислени полски подразделения, а въстанието, ръководено от Тадеуш Косцюшко, е показателно за стремежа на поляците към независимост.

4 Унизителните поражения и мирните договори, които Австрийската империя сключва с Наполеонова Франция в началото на XIX в. (Пресбургски, 1805 г., и Шонбрунски, 1809 г.), както и женитбата на Наполеон Бонапарт с австрийската принцеса Мария-Луиза (1810 г.), която цели да укрепи династията, са причините виенската политика поне за известен период от време да се движи във фарватера на френската политика.

Във Финландия всичко говори, че това е една друга страна, където човек се среща с раса, различна от славянската [...] финландците приличат на немци; русите им коси и бяла кожа нямат нищо общо с буйните руски лица; но и нравите им са по-кротки; у хората от народа се среща някаква разумна честност, която идва от протестантското им възпитание и от чистотата на нравите (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 159).

Калмиците Мадам дьо Стал среща в двореца на Нарийскини в руската столица. Тях тя определя като полудиви хора с плоски лица:

Те са много приятни, докато са деца, но прехвърлят ли двадесет години, загубват целия чар на младостта си; макар че са роби, те са опърничави и забавляват господарите си със своята съпротива, подобно на катерички, които се блъскат в решетката на клетката си. Тази оскотяла човешка раса е мъчителна за гледане; сред цялото луксозно разточителство ми се струваше, че виждам образа на това, в което може да се превърне човек, ако не притежава достойнството на религията и законността [...] (dyo Stal, 1992, pp. 147-148).

Евреите са споменати само на едно място при описанието на Волиния: „това е плодородна земя, залята от евреи като Галиция, но много по-малко нещастна“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 117).

В последните два абзаца се отразява мирогледът на човека от XVIII – началото на XIX век с неговите предразсъдъци, включително расови и религиозни; човек от висшата класа, претендиращ да отстоява своята свобода (конкретно за Мадам дьо Стал), но като индивидуален маркер на достойнство, а не като общочовешка ценност. Между впрочем, и в други пасажии от спомените – при описанието на положението на руските селяни например – се долавя смътното или ясно осъзнатото съсловно превъзходство на героинята на настоящия разказ, продукт на възпитанието и епохата.

При честите описания на природата и климата на Русия се усеща, че Мадам дьо Стал е попаднала в среда, която ѝ е чужда, и това единствено ѝ причинява дискомфорт или, както се изразява, „усещане за кошмарен сън, който понякога нощем ни завладява и в който си мислиш, че вървиш, а всъщност стоиш на едно място“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 123).

За нея „Украйна е много плодородна страна, но не е никак красива [...] пътищата не са в по-добро състояние; селските къщи не издават, че областта става по-гъсто населена“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 119). Еднообразният пейзаж, липсата на разнообразие в местната флора, в която „тъжната бреза се появява все отново и отново в тази слабо изобретателна природа“, желанието погледът да срещне „хълмове и долини“ са подчертавани нееднократно от пътешественичката, обиколила до този момент голяма част от Европа. По север, по пътя между Новгород и Петербург, тя описва блатата, а във Финландия, независимо от разнообразната природа (по нейни наблюдения), в която присъстват „скали, планини и гори“, човек си дава сметка, „че тези

планини са еднообразни, а в горите растат едни и същи дървета [...]“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 159). Впечатлена е единствено от реките, които са „най-красивото нещо в руската природа“ и „лекуват въображението от скуката“.

Градовете са описани детайлно, доколкото Мадам дьо Стал за краткия си престой получава възможност да се запознае с тяхното устройство и архитектурата. Все пак може да се констатира, че руските градове създават противоречиви впечатления у нея, като преобладават положителните, но се усеща изненадата от разликите с европейските градове. Неизменно Мадам дьо Стал вмъква в разказа си исторически сведения за съответния град. Първото по-подробно описание е на Киев:

Повечето от къщите в Киев приличат на палатки и отдалеч градът напомня на лагер; натрапва се мисълта, че използват за модел татарските катуни и затова строят дървени къщи, които не изглеждат твърде солидни. Малко време е необходимо, за да се построи такава къща; честите пожари ги разрушават и хората отиват в гората, за да си поръчат къща, както другаде отиват на пазара за зимни припаси. Но сред тези колиби се издигат дворци и най-често църкви, чиито зелени и златни кубета по особен начин привличат погледа (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 119).

Златните кубета са първото нещо, което впечатлява благородната дама и в Москва, като в описанието на градския пейзаж отново доминира описанието на църквите и дворците, на къщите, които са „бойдисани в зелено, жълто и розово и изящната им резба прилича на украшения за торта“. Тук според нея *Азия и Европа се бяха събрали*, а „съчетанието на пустото поле с великолепните дворци, големината на града и безбройните храмове придават на този азиатски Рим облика на европейския“. За „азиатския“ облик допринася и Кремъл, чиито кули „със странната си форма [...] напомнят по-скоро турски минарета, отколкото укрепления, каквито сме свикнали да виждаме на Запад“, а също и търговските дюкяни, уредени по „азиатски образец“, около които „мъже с тюрбани и други, облечени в разнообразни костюми на всички източни народи, разстилаха най-редки стоки [...]“ (dyo Stal, 1992, pp. 130-132).

Дворците и църковната архитектура привличат интереса на Жермен дьо Стал и на други места в нейните спомени: църквите, които „напомнят по-скоро турските и арабските минарета, отколкото нашите храмове“ и катакомбите, „които напомнят малко римските“ (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 121).

Столицата Санкт Петербург е характеризирана от Мадам дьо Стал като „един от най-красивите градове на света, сякаш някой магьосник с вълшебна пръчица изтръгва от царството на пустинята всички чудеса на Европа и Азия“. Любопитен факт е, че тя се настанява в къща срещу „статуята на Петър Първи, [...] изобразен на кон, който изкачва стръмна планина сред змии, които искат да спънат коня му“ (dyo Stal, 1992, pp.

136-137). Това е известният „Меден конник“, един от символите на Санкт Петербург, разположен на Сенатския площад, чийто автор е френският архитект Етиен Морис Фалконе, а самият паметник е отчасти връстник на Мадам дьо Стал – създаден е в периода 1768 – 1778 г. и официално е открит през 1782 г. През 1812 г. Александър I заповядва, под заплахата от френска окупация на града, паметникът, заедно с други произведения на изкуството, да бъде демонтиран и изнесен извън столицата. Монархът обаче е разубеден от свой приближен, на когото му се присънил Петър I и му казал, че докато е на мястото си, градът няма от какво да се опасява (Medniy vsadnik<sup>5</sup>).

Неколкократно в своите спомени Ан-Луиз-Жермен дьо Стал споменава името и дейността на Петър Велики със симпатия към неговите модернизаторски усилия и разсъждава за положителната му роля в руската история. Спомената е и императрица Екатерина Велика, по чието време е издигнат паметникът:

Тези две велики личности издигнаха много високо гордостта на русите; а да внушиш на някой народ, че е непобедим, означава да го направиш такъв, ако не другаде, поне на собствена територия (dyo Stal, 1992, p. 137).

Впечатленията от града са допълнени от новите и ослепително бели сгради, красотата на река Нева, лукса на островите, на които са изградени дворците и вилите на местните аристократи, и най-вече от срещата на Мадам дьо Стал с императорското семейство – с императрица Елисавета, „ангелът хранител на Русия“, и с император Александър I, описан като „човек със забележителен ум и образование“ и с „желание да подобри положението на селяните, които все още живеят в робство“. Възхищението от монарха е предадено с няколко силни думи:

Колко добродетел е необходима, за да осъдиш деспотизма от позицията на деспота, и колко много добродетел, за да не се злоупотреби никога с тази позиция, след като самият народ, който е управляван, се учудва от една толкова непривична умереност! (dyo Stal, 1992, pp. 142-144).

Въпреки положителния тон по отношение на Русия и руснаците и оптимизма, който струи от текста по отношение на руската нация и нейното бъдеще, конкретните източници на този оптимизъм са монарсите – бивши и настоящ, тяхното обкръжение и руският елит. От друга страна, Мадам дьо Стал изразява определен скептицизъм към настоящото ниво на руската литература и култура, смята, че русите са се проявили като „гении само в областта на военното изкуство; във всички останали изкуства те са само подражатели“, а образоваността е на елементарно равнище („Селяните броят само с помощта на сметало, а и самите пощенски чиновници използват

5 <https://web.archive.org/web/20090705084110/http://stud.ibi.spb.ru/142/karptat/text/legendi%20pamiatnikov.html>

същия метод“ и „[...] в Русия духовенството не е годно да просвещава народа както в други страни на Европа.“) (duo Stal, 1992, pp. 154-155). Независимо, че тези наблюдения са почерпани от личния опит, те до известна степен обезсилват генерализациите, свързани с оптимизма.

След като напускат Петербург и преминават през финландските гори и планини, Мадам дьо Стал и нейните спътници достигат до Швеция, където тя остава осем месеца. По това време, преди да отпътува за Лондон, написва своя дневник, представяйки и времето, преживяно в Русия. Не успява да го довърши и, както пише синът ѝ, ръкописът остава в чантата ѝ, докато той не решава да го публикува (duo Stal, 1992, p. 162). Това се случва едва през 1821 г., годината, в която на о. Света Елена умира Наполеон Бонапарт – непримиримият враг на Мадам дьо Стал, която обаче си е отишла от този свят четири години по-рано. С това се изличават емоциите от един конфликт – между император, владял Европа, и жена, стремяща се да отстои личната си свобода. После са изличени и спомените за конфликта, за да остане той единствено на страниците на историческите изследвания като отражение на отминали страсти.

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През 1822 г. Сенатската типография в Санкт Петербург публикува малка книжка (48 страници) под заглавие „Биографическое похвальное слово Г-же Сталь-Гольштейн“, в която се прави преглед на литературното ѝ наследство и се дават сведения за нейната биография. Още в началото Мадам дьо Стал е определена като „незабравим феномен, велика със своя Гений, прекрасна със своята душа“ (Biograficheskoe, 1822, p. 3). В няколко реда е описано и посещението ѝ в Русия през 1812 г., на която тя гледа с любов, но не и с пристрастие. Споменава се, че в Стокхолм г-жа дьо Стал продължава да си кореспондира с император Александър I, макар че това твърдение е в условна форма (Biograficheskoe, 1822, p. 36). Когато книгата е публикувана, руският монарх е все още жив.

Един от биографите на Ан-Луиз-Жермен, баронеса дьо Стал-Холщайн, пише, че тя има огромен успех в руското общество и омагьосва всички, прекалено оптимистична е и склонна към прекомерни обобщения, но с бързина улавя съществените моменти и ги описва с изключителна сила (Duffy, 1887, pp. 175-176). В дневника ѝ тези констатации се потвърждават напълно.

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**ROMANCING THE SELF:  
MARY ROBINSON'S MEMOIRS AND THE SENTIMENTAL TRADITION**

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/DZU1376>

**Abstract:** *Mary Robinson began writing her Memoirs to vindicate herself from the backlash that tarnished her reputation. The reason for her notoriety was her status as a former mistress of the Prince of Wales (future George IV), her various alleged liaisons, radical sympathies, and camaraderie with political figures such as Charles James Fox. All these factors contributed to the scathing criticism directed at her, transforming her into an object of derision in caricatures and period satirical writings. The Memoirs aimed to present a truthful account of her life and counter the persona that society has constructed for her as a fallen woman. However, what is peculiar about Robinson's life writing is her decision to narrate her story through the lens of sentimental fiction, portraying herself as a sentimental heroine, thus blurring the boundaries between fact and fiction. This article focuses on the Memoirs' appeal to readers as seeking to engage their sentiments, not only to garner sympathy but also to encourage a moral understanding that would legitimise Robinson's virtuous character through familiar literary and cultural tropes. It positions Robinson's autobiographical writing within the context of moral sentimentalist theories, such as David Hume's Treatise of Human Nature, to demonstrate how Robinson's self-representation as an autobiographical subject in the Memoirs is narrativised in a way that produces a textual self which is to be construed via the reading habits of her audience.*

**Key words:** *Mary Robinson, Memoirs, Sentimental Tradition, autobiographical subject, self-fashioning*

"Respecting the circumstances of the preceding narrative, every reader, as influenced by his preconceived habits and opinions, must be left to form his own reflections. To the humane mind, the errors of the unfortunate subject of this memoir will appear to have been more than expiated by her sufferings."<sup>2</sup>

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**Article history:** Received: 25 May 2025; Reviewed: 8 June 2025; Revised: 9 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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<sup>2</sup> "Continuation By a Friend", *Memoirs of the Late Mary Robinson, Written by Herself. With Some Posthumous Pieces. In Four Volumes*. London: Printed by Wilks and Taylor, 1801, p. 373 (p. 167). All quotations are from Sharon Setzer's 2007 edited volume, *Women's Theatrical Memoirs*. Part I, Vol. 1. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Routledge: London & New York, using the pagination of this edition and not the original.

An actress, fashion icon, poet, novelist, periodical contributor and editor, Mary Robinson was, as Judith Pascoe (1997) describes her, “a cultural chameleon” (p. 1). Robinson’s private life was a public affair: “Perdita,” as she was called because of her role in a 1779 staging of *The Winter’s Tale*, the performance that infatuated the Prince of Wales, the future King George IV, was a target of satirical caricatures and contrived autobiographies that sought to spice up the gossip surrounding her life. These helped to mythologise her image as a woman of easy virtue even when she became one of the leading woman writers of the period.<sup>3</sup> Robinson’s reputation as a more liberated woman and a poet closely associated with Robert Merry and his Della Cruscan network – of which she was a part early in her poetic career – was under threat of calumny due to her notorious fame as a former royal mistress which haunted her career. Likewise, Robinson’s extravagant life and intimacy with Whig political figures such as Charles James Fox and Lord Malden, her liaison with Colonel Banastre Tarleton, and her being a devotee of Marie Antoinette made Robinson an obvious target of satire and critical opprobrium that portrayed her as a woman of moral ambiguity.<sup>4</sup> A decade after her adulterous affair, Mary Robinson began writing her *Memoirs* to counter her negative image and refute the fabrications of her private life that proliferated during the heyday of her notoriety. The *Memoirs* thus shows Robinson’s “desire to claim narrative authority over a life that had already been written numerous times before” (Setzer, 2009, p. 42). Considering that auto/biographical writing in the period was gaining traction, it is unsurprising that Robinson would attempt to vindicate herself by resorting to an autobiographical mode of self-representation, which could assist her in reclaiming respectability.<sup>5</sup> As a review in the *Monthly* (1801) noted, “That she had herself a favorable opinion of the effects of these memoirs, in clearing her fame, is evident from the solemn injunction which she imposed on her daughter, Miss Robinson, a few days before her death, to give them to the world” (p. 345). The anticipated favourable reception noted by the reviewer can also be attributed to Robinson’s awareness of popular tastes and the reading habits of her audience, which informed her choice of form to narrate her autobiographical account.<sup>6</sup>

3 Some of these satirical prints include the anonymous *Florizel and Perdita* (1783), James Gillray’s *The Thunderer* (1782), and the anonymous *Scrub and Archer* (1783). For a discussion of these 18th-century prints, see Anne K. Mellor (2000, pp. 233-235). The literary fabrications include *Poetical Epistle from Florizel to Perdita: With Perdita’s Answer* (1781) and *Letters from Perdita to a Certain Israelite, and his Answers to Them* (1781), *Memoirs of Perdita* (1784), “A Sketch of the Life of the Celebrated Mrs R-----” (1782) (Setzer, 2009, p. 33, p. 35, 7135).

4 For a biographical account of Robinson’s life, see Paula Byrne (2004), *Perdita: The Literary, Theatrical, Scandalous Life of Mary Robinson*. Random House.

5 In a letter to John Taylor written over a decade after the affair, dated 5 October 1794, Robinson voiced her indignation at how her reputation suffered as a result: “I, who sacrificed reputation, an advantageous profession, friends, patronage, the brilliant hours of youth, and the conscious delight of correct conduct, am condemned to the scanty pittance bestowed on every indifferent page who holds up his ermined train of ceremony?” (as cited in the introduction to *Memoirs of Mary Robinson, “Perdita”*, edited by J. Fitzgerald Molloy. London & Philadelphia, 1895, p. xiii).

6 Although theorists often distinguish between the formal characteristics of autobiography and memoir, this article treats both as forms of life writing, that is, as retrospective narratives concerned

With the rising interest in women's life writing over the past decades, Robinson's *Memoirs* has been a focus of extensive research from multiple and varied perspectives: it has been examined in the context of confessional autobiography, scandalous memoir and appeal memoir, anti-adultery campaigns, commodity culture, the Gothic tradition, Romantic authorship and literary celebrity, among others.<sup>7</sup> More recently, Susan Civale (2019) has suggested that the text's fragmentary nature is strategic, arguing that its "formal and rhetorical gaps" demonstrate "a strategy of self-representation that allowed Robinson to straddle the contradictory identities of the victimised heroine of sensibility and the titillating actress" (p. 141). Such gaps, especially those that show ineptitude in describing heightened emotions (since these exceed language), were common in sentimental fiction: as John Brewer reminds us, "true sentiment was a phenomenon beyond language" (2009, p. 24). While scholarship on Robinson and the *Memoirs* has emphasised the ways the author engages in self-fashioning by capitalising on her victimhood to vindicate her reputation, it would be interesting to explore Robinson's self-representation as revealing how she positions herself to be construed via the reading habits of her readers. Robinson's *Memoirs* highlights the significance of sentimental feelings in validating the autobiographical self and her moral sensibility, even if such practice may be interpreted as a performative act of self-fashioning.<sup>8</sup> This article, therefore, seeks to add to the discussion on Robinson's *Memoirs* as a blur between fact and fiction by looking into how Robinson explored narrative possibilities of representation that her readers would easily recognise. Specifically, how she portrayed lived experience through the lens of the sentimental tradition to evince her moral character through familiar sentimental tropes, such as pronounced sensibility shown in responsiveness to natural and artistic forms and sympathy for fellow

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with the author's private life. In this light, Sharon Setzer writes that the *Memoirs* shows "[h]ow Robinson's narrative destabilizes the traditional distinction between autobiography, associated with "exemplary fame," and memoirs, associated with "inglorious notoriety";" (2009, p. 45).

7 See Linda Peterson (1994), "Becoming an Author: Mary Robinson's *Memoirs* and the Origins of the Woman Artist's Autobiography," in *Re-visioning Romanticism, British Women Writers, 1776-1837*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Hafner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), pp. 36-50; Caroline Breashears (2010), "The Female Appeal Memoir: Genre and Female Literary Tradition in Eighteenth-Century England," *Modern Philology*, 107 (4), 607-631; Diego Saglia (2009), "Commerce, Luxury, and Identity in Mary Robinson's *Memoirs*," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 49 (3), 717-736; Amy Culley (2014), "The Literary Family and the 'Aristocracy of Genius' in the *Memoirs* of Mary Robinson," *British Women's Life Writing, 1760-1840: Friendship, Community, and Collaboration* (Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 103-115; Whitney Arnold (2014), "Mary Robinson's *Memoirs* and the Terrors of Literary Obscurity," *Women's Studies*, 43 (6), 733-749. For a survey on studies in women's life writing in the long eighteenth century, see Amy Culley (2015), "Women's Life Writing in the Long 18th Century: A Critical Survey," *Literature Compass*, 12 (1), 1-11.

8 For discussions on Robinson's practices of self-fashioning, see Sharon Setzer (1996), "Mary Robinson's Sylphid Self: The End of Feminine Self-Fashioning," *Philological Quarterly*, 74, 501-520; Anne K. Mellor (2000), "Mary Robinson and the Scripts of Female Sexuality," in *Representations of the Self from the Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. by Patrick Coleman, Jayne Lewis, and Jill Kowalik (Cambridge University Press), pp. 230-235; Eleanor Ty (1995), "Engendering a Female Subject: Mary Robinson's (Re)Presentations of the Self," *ESC: English Studies in Canada*, 21 (4), 407-431.

creatures, the “virtue in distress” plot, the portrayal of the domestic sphere as a site of emotional repression, neglect and confinement, among others. Paying attention to Robinson’s appeal to her readers’ sentiments in the context of moral sentimentalism, the article argues that Robinson presents herself in a manner that would not only garner sympathy but can be legitimised by readers through well-known literary and cultural tropes.

In *The Rambler*, Samuel Johnson (1801) stressed the importance of biography as a type of writing that sparks an “irresistible interest,” is both “delightful” and “useful,” and can be instructive to readers (vol. 2, No. 60, p. 36). Johnson’s praise for biography also articulates the significance of inherently shared sentiments that help readers imaginatively embody the emotions described for the duration of the reading process. He wrote, “We are all prompted by the same motives, all deceived by the same fallacies, all animated by hope, obstructed by danger, entangled by desire, and seduced by pleasure” (1801, p. 37). Although Johnson’s claim is made in favour of biography, it could be extended to other forms of life writing. Both biography and autobiography focus on personal narratives and, while purporting to be factual and truthful, can still embellish, distort, or deviate from truth by including fictional elements or literary narrative approaches. Significantly, reliance on fact to verify identity compromises the authenticity of the self and its complexity, as its truth overrides factual evidence (Marcus, 1994, p. 3). Patricia Meyer Spacks (1976) noted that “[a]utobiographies affirm identity,” but although the practitioner of autobiographical writing seeks to corroborate the authenticity of their experiences by the testimonies they give, they still “exis[t] on the page by virtue of [their] story, [their] shaping of the events of [their] experience” (p. 1). Autobiographical writing is, moreover, as Paul de Man contended in his appraisal, a “figure of reading” rather than a mode or a genre, suggesting that “the autobiographical project may itself produce and determine the life and that whatever the writer *does* is in fact governed by the technical demands of self-portraiture and thus determined, in all its aspects, by the resources of his medium” (1984, p. 70). This perspective implies that writing one’s life is already predicated on the author’s intention and how this intention shapes the narrative techniques the autobiographical subject will employ to construct a life story and a self that will ultimately be read as fiction, which also anticipates its reception.

In *Auto/biographical Discourses*, Laura Marcus (1994) argues that the concept of “intention” is fundamental to autobiographical writing: “it not only refers to an authorial motive governing the production of the text, but becomes an elaborate structure which apparently defines the ways in which the text should be received” (p. 3). Approaching her life as the stuff of the novel, Robinson subtly collapses the distinction between fact and fiction. The editor’s preface to the 1895 edition of the *Memoirs* acknowledges “some little negative disingenuousness in the writer,” thus pointing out the fictitious character of the truthfulness that the writing avows to communicate, although “sufficient of uncoloured matter

of fact remains to show the exposed situation of an unprotected beauty” (p. v). Misleading the reader is only one possible way of overriding fact; events may also be presented solely from the subject’s perception of these events and even deliberately embellished to achieve a greater impact on the reader. As Setzer has pointed out, “Robinson might well have felt at liberty to fabricate detail that would support her version of the essential “Truth” better than factual details ever could” (2009, p. 39). Significantly, this draws attention to the process of self-narration as reader-oriented and reader-guided identity construction.

Robinson began working on her *Memoirs* in January 1798 but left them unfinished due to her death in December 1800 (Setzer, 2009, p. 33). The *Memoirs* was published posthumously by her daughter Maria Elizabeth Robinson, who, as the quote from the *Monthly* states, dutifully honoured her mother’s wish to publish her memoirs and collected works. Significantly, Maria Elizabeth is also credited with the “Continuation By a Friend” that follows the abrupt termination of Robinson’s text.<sup>9</sup> The importance of moral and filial duty emphasised in the preface – “the solemn injunction of a dying parent, and the promise pledged by a child in the circumstances so awful and affecting” (Setzer, 2007, p. 10) – implies the moral pathos that Robinson’s story seeks to provoke. The editorial advertisement that Robinson’s daughter prefaced to the volume clarifies that the *Memoirs* sought to vindicate Robinson from the allegations that tarnished her reputation even though they might be considered indecent due to prejudiced views. The filial love and sentimental appeal in the para-text foreground Robinson’s portrayal of her autobiographical self as a victim of circumstance that the narrative promotes: “the world will be little disposed,” the note says, “to sympathize with an unprotected and persecuted woman [...]. Yet there are some feeling hearts and candid minds to whom she dares appeal!” (Setzer, 2007, p. 9). The preface implies a specific community of readers to whom Robinson appeals: “feeling” readers whose sympathy and moral sentiments the story will elicit. It is in the preface that Robinson’s daughter shapes expectations and offers herself as a model reader whose cue other readers should follow: “it is impossible that she can feel indifferent to the vindication of a being so beloved and ever to be lamented, whose real character was little known, and who, in various instances, was the victim of calumny and misrepresentation” (Setzer, 2007, p. 10). Maria Elizabeth’s sympathetic response to her mother’s appeal to audiences articulates her ability to sympathise and encourages them to perform a sympathetic reading of the text.

Yet it can also be seen as a challenge testing readers’ capacity for compassion or sympathy, implying that if the tragic story of her mother cannot affect and move readers, then they might not be equipped with the ability to respond to the feelings of others. She later writes in “A Continuation By a Friend” that these memoirs will be “appreciated by the reflecting and candid reader,

<sup>9</sup> Maria Elizabeth published her mother’s works in three volumes, *The Poetical Works of the Late Mrs. Mary Robinson: Including Many Pieces Never Before Published. In Three Volumes*. London: Printed for Richard Phillips, 1806.

whose sympathy they could not fail to awaken” (Setzer, 2007, p. 259). In this light, sentimental philosopher David Hume argued in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), “No quality of human nature is more remarkable, both in itself and its consequences, than that propensity we have to sympathize with others, and to receive by communication their inclinations and sentiments, however different from, or even contrary to our own” (Part II, Book XI, 1960, p. 316). As Hume’s and Adam Smith’s theories show, this propensity for sympathetic engagement is necessary as it is the foundation of forming social bonds and social order. John Mullan contends that period novelists recognised that habits of social interactions were unique, given that the world was driven by malice and sympathy was seldom acknowledged; however, such novels allowed readers to feel exceptional, suggesting that each reader could identify admirable sentiments and, by doing so, imply that these readers understood the communication of emotions and the strengths of sensibility. It appeared, Mullan argues, that the form of the novel established a kind of agreement, whereby the reader was dissociated from the anti-social tendencies or indifference represented in the narratives (1988, pp. 13-14). The *Memoirs* can be approached from a similar perspective, since it draws upon literary and cultural conventions, employing the “language of feeling” to invite readers to act as moral witnesses and to recognise their social sensitivity by responding to Robinson’s pitiful story.

Although sentimental fiction had fallen into disrepute by the end of the century, largely due to its perceived formulaic patterns and the pejorative connotations of “sentiment” associated with emotional excess and insincerity, it remained popular with readers in the 1790s (Mullan, 1996, p. 236; Rivero, 2019, p. 1, 2). As an actress, Robinson had a natural penchant for drama and an awareness of her audience, therefore, narrating her life through the lens of fiction seems not an unlikely decision. This suggests that Robinson’s *Memoirs* would have catered to readers’ reading preferences even if they had initially been drawn to them by a voyeuristic curiosity to reveal more about her affair with the Prince of Wales. Robinson continually reinforces her sensibility in a fashion similar to the depictions of heroines in sentimental fiction, where sentiment and sensibility testify to their virtuous character. In this way, Robinson’s writing evokes associations with some of the most popular heroines, such as Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740) or Burney’s *Evelina* (1778). The *French Encyclopedie* (vol. XV, 1765, p. 38) provides the following definition of sensibility:

Tender and delicate disposition of the soul which renders it easy to be moved and touched. Sensibility of soul, which is rightly described as the source of morality, gives one a kind of wisdom concerning matters of virtue and is far more penetrating than the intellect acting alone. People of sensibility because of their liveliness can fall into errors which men of the world would not commit; but these are greatly outweighed by the amount of good they do. [...] sensibility makes a man virtuous. Sensibility is the mother of humanity, of generosity; it is at the service of merit, lends its support to the intellect, and is the moving spirit which animates belief. (as cited in Brewer, 2009, p. 25)

The entry outlines key meanings of sensibility and its implications for one's character that were prevalent during the period. It emphasises that sentiment and emotion are linked to morality while also highlighting the dangers that such a lively predisposition could present and that human fallibility does not necessarily undermine one's virtuous character. Robinson's portrayal of her life and self is premised on such understandings: to counter the unflattering accounts in the press that proliferated at the beginning of the 1780s, she crafts a narrative that follows the life of her young self as an innocent, inexperienced, and vulnerable heroine who endures domestic abandonment – first as a daughter whose adventurous and adulterous father leaves the family to pursue opportunities in America and subsequently abandons them for another woman, and then as a young wife suffering the deception and neglect she is subjected to by a profligate and libertine husband, at the same time as she tries to navigate the threats posed by society. Robinson stresses that it was her “heart, which was the source of all [her] succeeding sorrows” because her acute sensibility and credulity exposed her to the duplicity and selfishness of scheming individuals (Setzer, 2007, p. 73). Her story depicts her as, in her own words, “the most wretched of mortals” (Setzer, 2007, p. 84). Robinson's sensibility is, therefore, a source of moral virtue as well as suffering: a trait that heroines in sentimental novels possess and that serves as a cue to readers.

From the beginning, Robinson presents herself as a young woman of distress whose turbulent life seems to have been presaged. For instance, she writes that the storm which occurred during her birth foreshadowed the tragic events that were to mark her life: “Through life the tempest has followed my footsteps, and I have in vain looked for a short interval of repose from the perseverance of sorrow” (Setzer, 2007, p. 16). Likewise, she later interprets a storm “as an ill omen, but little thought that at future periods of my life I should have cause to regret that *I had not perished!*” (Setzer, 2007, p. 98), amplifying the dramatic effect of the utterance. Such early cues to the readers foreshadow the emotional and psychological turmoil Robinson will later recount, inviting them to engage empathetically with her retrospective narration. Robinson highlights her sympathy, pointing out people's perception of her as an angelic, kind, and selfless creature. In addition to her keen sensibility, Robinson stresses her proficiency in the so-called female accomplishments: she plays the harpsichord, recites poetry, and even attempts to write verse. Robinson writes:

As soon as I had learned to read my great delight was that of learning epitaphs and monumental inscriptions. A story of melancholy import never failed to excite my attention; and before I was seven years old I could correctly repeat Pope's Lines to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady; Mason's Elegy on the Death of the beautiful Countess of Coventry, and many smaller poems on similar subjects. (Setzer, 2007, p. 26)

These feminine qualities typical of sentimental heroines promote Robinson's natural virtues and talents. The persistent reiteration of her pensive and

melancholy disposition, here exemplified in her choice of literary readings, further attests to her natural genius and delicate sensibility.

The theme of virtue is introduced early on as a leitmotif in the *Memoirs*. Laura L. Runge (2004) has argued that the *Memoirs* was Robinson's attempt to dissociate herself from labels such as "prostitute," whereby she partook in the so-called anti-adultery campaign. According to Runge, Robinson deliberately drew upon this discourse and "revises her history, not as the repentant whore, but as the embodiment of the virtues and contradictions that drive the discourse against adultery" (p. 564). However, what further transpires in Robinson's narrative is her prescription of the "virtue in distress" plot and its relation to the representation of sexuality in the *Memoirs*. The "virtue in distress" scenario contrasts markedly with the scandalous image associated with Robinson's persona in the public imagination, which turned her reputation into a marketing tool and a commodity for public consumption through the unflattering satirical accounts. Robinson establishes her claim to virtue and moral decency by stressing that she is the descendant of a family of virtuous and pious women. Her great-grandmother, Catherine Seys, for example, apart from belonging to a respectable family, was also "a woman of great piety and virtue" (Setzer, 2007, p. 17), and her grandmother possessed "unaffected piety, and exemplary virtue" (Setzer, 2007, p. 19), which, by implication, Robinson also inherited. Her representation as a paragon of virtue when it comes to sexual politics begins with her doubting the true intentions of her husband-to-be, who insists on keeping their marriage a secret to hide his illegitimacy: "I felt an almost instinctive repugnance at the thought of a clandestine marriage" (Setzer, 2007, p. 78). Throughout the story, Robinson emphasises that her mother's primary concern was maintaining her reputation uncontaminated. She also asserts that she regarded chastity as the most significant attribute of the female mind (Setzer, 2007, pp. 91-92).

Robinson describes herself as a precocious child to stress her lack of experience and vulnerability. She writes on marrying Mr. Robinson: "I was yet a child, wholly unacquainted with the manners of the world. Yet, young as I was, I became the traveller of its mazy and perilous paths; – at an age when girls are generally at school, or indeed scarcely emancipated from the nursery, I was presented in society as a wife, – and very nearly as a mother" (Setzer, 2007, pp. 112-113). Robinson's coming out into society is marked by premature exposure to roles and responsibilities that women are expected to fulfil in society, those of a wife and a mother. Her virtue is continually tested as she finds herself at the centre of London society, which is shown to be driven by vice, dishonesty, and secret machinations. Her portrayal of fashionable circles also shows that she must be alert to the dangers of social life and cautiously navigate them since her innocence and vulnerability make her an easy target for the gazes of dissipated men. She writes: "I attribute the snares that were laid for me to three causes. The first, my youth and inexperience, my girlish appearance and simplicity of manners. Secondly, the expensive style in which Mr. Robinson lived, though

he was not known as a man of independent fortune; and, thirdly, the evident neglect which I experienced from my husband” (Setzer, 2007, pp. 139-140). Robinson capitalises on her vulnerability as a woman exposed to the threats posed by the masculine gaze, seeing her as an object of desire, on the one hand, and, on the other, as a wronged and neglected but dutiful wife.

Despite the many threats to her virtue, Robinson manages to withstand danger, relying on her strong moral principles and resilience. Hence, the virtuous aspect of Robinson’s moral character is juxtaposed with the rakish gentlemen and scheming women of high society who try to subdue and corrupt her. Nancy Armstrong (1987) observed, for example, that female protagonists in eighteenth-century fiction relate their “social experience as a series of sexual encounters” (p. 29). Robinson’s approach in the *Memoirs* is similar. The metropolis is presented as the hub of *haut ton*, which offers opportunities to forge connections with the social elite, and as a place where gossip and men of questionable morality prowl on young, attractive women: an image Robinson continually projects. In contrast to profligate and dissipated individuals driven by selfish desires and ulterior motives, Robinson asserts moral superiority by emphasising her strong character and sensibility. The numerous attempts by dubious characters to seduce her are unsuccessful, as Robinson demonstrates her will to resist them, yielding neither to masculine power nor flattery. Her refusal to submit to lascivious gentlemen and strict insistence on her virtuous character mark her as a paragon of feminine virtue.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the predatory atmosphere in public spaces such as Vauxhall Gardens, the scene of her trials is also her home, the domestic space that should secure her against the sexual advances of male invaders. This shows how the position of women in the private sphere is equally threatening as is the public sphere, where they are exposed to the masculine gaze and temptations of the metropolis. As indicated, the domestic sphere and marital relations are presented as oppressive and potentially dangerous. It is in the private sphere that predatory men such as Mr Fitzgerald, Lord Lyttleton, and Mr Brereton, among others, try to impose themselves on Robinson: “It was with extreme regret,” she writes, “and frequently with uncontrollable indignation, that I endured the neglect of my husband and the tauntings of the profligate Lyttleton – ‘The child,’ for so he generally called me, was deserted for the society of the most libertine men and the most abandoned women” (Setzer, 2007, p. 118). Despite the challenges she faces, she strives to maintain her sense of propriety. Robinson consistently reiterates her correct conduct and adherence to her domestic duties and role in society as a dutiful wife and devoted mother despite her husband’s profligacy and brazen affairs with women of low status and ill repute, or, as she

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<sup>10</sup> For example, the Italian Angelina Albanesi, Robinson writes, never failed to take the opportunity to “ridicule my romantic domestic attachment,” and introduce her to the possibility of “the splendid life into which I might enter, if I would but know my own power, and break the fetters of matrimonial restriction” (Setzer, 2007, pp. 190-191).

calls it, “his domestic apostacy [*sic*]” (Setzer, 2007, p. 257). “But Mr. Robinson knows what I endured,” Robinson asserts,

and how patiently, how correctly I suited my mind to the strict propriety of wedded life: he knows, that my duty as a wife was exemplary, my chastity inviolate; he knows that neither poverty nor obscurity, neither the tauntings of the world nor his neglect, could tempt me even to the smallest error: he knows that I bore my afflicting humiliations with a cheerful, uncomplaining spirit; that I toiled honourably for his comfort; and that my attentions were exclusively dedicated to him and to my infant. (Setzer, 2007, pp. 193-194)

Despite her husband’s unfaithfulness, Robinson’s conduct was “exemplary”: she followed her domestic, marital, and maternal duties stoically despite her husband’s indifference. Even when describing her budding affair with the Prince of Wales, which continued in letter form for months before they met in person, Robinson highlights that she did not submit to credulity but prudently questioned the Prince’s intentions and even acted as a guide, warning him against the dangers of passion and a relationship that could compromise the royal family. In this light, to vindicate her reputation as a courtesan, Robinson hints on several occasions that she bore no romantic love for her husband.<sup>11</sup> Robinson intimates:

Alas! I never knew the sweet soothing solace of wedded sympathy; I never was beloved by him whom destiny allotted to be the legal ruler of my actions. I do not condemn Mr. Robinson; I but too well know that we cannot command our affections. I only lament that he did not observe some decency in his infidelities; and that, while he gratified his *own* caprice, he forgot how much he exposed his *wife* to the most degrading mortifications. (Setzer, 2007, p. 215)

Robinson further insists that her infatuation with the Prince was not provoked by wantonness or economic profit but was inspired by sincere affection, which she had not experienced prior to this moment. However, due to her death, her narrative halts abruptly before she goes on to describe the liaison in more detail, but it also appears as if she deliberately omitted the most “scandalous” aspect of her autobiography, the cause of her notoriety, as an act of erasure. In her seminal discussion of the autobiographical subject in the eighteenth century, Felicity A. Nussbaum (1989) comments on women’s scandalous memoirs, which began proliferating in the middle of the century. Nussbaum notes that while such texts sought to vindicate the author by revealing her private life to rectify her public character, they, nevertheless, tried to eschew the “moral and social system” that demanded an explanation (p. 180). Although being linked to the tradition of scandalous memoirs, Robinson’s *Memoirs* seems to deviate from standard practices: instead of defying and resisting moral codes by discussing her sexual autonomy, Robinson invites her audience to read her story against these very systems to form their own moral judgement of her character and conduct.

<sup>11</sup> Robinson also writes: “I had been an example of conjugal fidelity; but I had never known the perils to which the feeling heart is subjected in a union of regard wholly uninfluenced by the affections of the soul” (Setzer, 2007, p. 209).

Significantly, to recover her reputation, Robinson raises important questions about judgement and misjudgement, central to eighteenth-century theories of moral sentimentalism. Theories such as Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739) and Smith's *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759) posit that the moral evaluation of one's character is not grounded in reason but in sentiment and that individuals develop moral understanding through shared feelings, which allows them to imagine themselves in the place of others and to respond with sympathy or indignation. In the *Treatise*, Hume argues that sentiments of approbation and disapprobation must be informed and refined by sympathy to achieve an impartial perspective that helps overcome personal biases. According to Hume, moral approval is grounded in moral sensibility, that is, feelings of pleasure or aversion evoked by observing particular traits or characters. He writes:

In general, all sentiments of blame or praise are variable, according to our situation of nearness or remoteness, with regard to the person blam'd or prais'd, and according to the present disposition of our mind. But these variations we regard not in our general decisions, but still apply the terms expressive of our liking or dislike, in the same manner, as if we remain'd in one point of view. (Book III, Part III, 1960, p. 582)

Hume acknowledges variations in subjective perceptions and responses but claims that these are offset when one applies a general point of view shaped by sympathy and shared sentiment. Continually reinforced by the unflattering accounts in satirical and literary fabrications, Robinson's image as an adulterous woman circulated in society and provoked feelings of moral disapprobation. Robinson compellingly writes, "Indeed the world has mistaken the character of my mind; I have ever been the reverse of volatile and dissipated; I mean not to write my own eulogy; though, with the candid and sensitive mind, I shall I trust, succeed in my vindication" (Setzer, 2007, pp. 90-91). By emphasising the sincerity of her sentiments and the integrity of her moral conduct, Robinson sought to challenge these biases and elicit a sympathetic response, encouraging her readers to set aside personal prejudice and adopt what Hume describes as a "common point of view" (Book III, Part III, 1960, p. 591).<sup>12</sup> Further in her story, Robinson similarly exclaims: "Ah! how little has the misjudging world known of what has passed in my mind, even in the apparently gayest moments of my existence! How much have I regretted that ever I was born, even when I have been surrounded with all that could gratify the vanity of woman!" (Setzer, 2007, p. 94). The sentimental mode of her narrative and detailed description of the private events and felt experiences narrow the distance – the sense of remoteness – allowing her readers a more intimate look to engage their feelings. In this way, "[w]riting and reading become performances of affect" (Brewer, 2009, p. 30).

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<sup>12</sup> Hume writes: "In order, therefore, to prevent those continual *contradictions*, and arrive at a more *stable* judgment of things, we fix on some *steady* and *general* points of view; and always, in our thoughts, place ourselves in them, whatever may be our present situation" (Book III, Part, III, pp. 581-582).

Significantly, Robinson's *Memoirs* also draws attention to the nature of life writing and its connection to truth, simultaneously inviting us to think about the instability of autobiographical writing. Well into her narrative, Robinson states: "These pages are the pages of truth, unadorned by romance, and unembellished by the graces of phraseology; and I know that I have been sufficiently the victim of events, too well to become the tacit acquiescer where I have been grossly misrepresented" (Setzer, 2007, p. 134). While she leverages facts and objectivity to reclaim her authorial voice over her personal story and self-representation and to establish her credibility, what immediately draws attention is the assurance that what she presents to readers is "truth, unadorned by romance" and unwarranted figurative language and fanciful imaginings. This misplaced, even suspicious, claim is, in fact, contradictory, considering that from the beginning of her story, she portrays her life in a manner evoking novels of sentiment, highlighting what de Man argues in his essay: namely, that self-representation is a form of figuration since the subject who writes and the subject written about are not one and the same (1984, pp. 70-71). Robinson's text calls attention to its fictionality, on the one hand, and, on the other, points to the fact that the reader participates in interpreting its meaning, conditioned by her use of the "language of feeling" as a literary and cultural convention. Accordingly, a review of the posthumously published volume in the December issue of the *Monthly Magazine* (1801) pointed out Robinson's tragic fate to which her inexperience greatly contributed, adding that "[s]he may have been one 'more sinned against than sinning' in her matrimonial connection" but shows a degree of scepticism, noting that her husband should have been given a right to tell his version of the story since although Robinson claims to have told the truth, it cannot be "the *whole truth*" (p. 345). Importantly, the reviewer draws attention to Robinson's fictionalised life narrative: "The beautiful, ingenious, and unfortunate Mrs. Mary Robinson has thrown over the present account of herself all the air of a novel. She labours to touch the feelings and to melt the heart of the reader" (1801, p. 345). The comment's perceived criticism rather confirms that Robinson's fictionalised account is deliberately constructed to elicit readers' emotions, aligning with contemporary notions of sympathy and sensibility and their importance as markers of sociability.

In making her story public, Robinson sought to win the sympathies of her readership and, in doing so, regain control over her personal truth and reputation. Robinson's sensibility provides a source of narrative credibility, enabling her to reclaim her moral virtue, which was undermined by the cultural status of a fallen woman she acquired following her public affair with the Prince of Wales. Robinson projects herself in familiar roles: a dutiful daughter, a young but morally strong woman, a sympathetic observer, a faithful yet wronged wife, and a caring and affectionate mother. These are female roles reprised in sentimental novels that readers have been conditioned to respond to with pity and admiration, thus establishing bonds of sympathy with fictional characters.

Most significantly, Robinson's narrative techniques in the *Memoirs* call attention to the fragile boundary between fact and (re)presentation, thereby complicating the question of truth as an unequivocal factual proposition in autobiographical writing. Despite Robinson's insistence on objectively recounting her life, the modes of representation and narrative strategies she employs to mediate her identity and to place particular emphasis on specific traits of her character and social conduct reveal an intention to fictionalise experience and present it in a form that is recognisable, and that will regulate readers' responses and fellow feelings. This underscores the inherent instability of autobiographical writing and reflects how the authorial self is constructed and construed through the act of reading.

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**GENRE CHARACTERISTICS AND TRANSFORMATIONS IN  
19-TH-CENTURY RUSSIAN WOMEN'S DIARY WRITING:  
A. P. KERN (1800–1879) AND E. A. STAKENSHNEIDER (1836–1897)**

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/MEJZ6704>

**Abstract:** *For a long time, the diary was the only literary space accessible to women. For them, it was not just a kind of text that collected their daily records. It was a means of creating their self-image, expressing their literary talent, and reflecting on the cultural codes that marginalized them to the periphery of society. These functions and the close connection between diary writing and the female universe were also relevant in 19th-century Russia. This article aims to analyse the genre and thematic constants and transformations in Russian women's diary prose of the time. The study examines and compares the life journals of Anna Petrovna Kern (1800–1879) and Elena Andreevna Stakenshneider (1836–1897), written respectively in the first and second half of the 19th century. Anna Petrovna and Elena Andreevna are best known for their connection with some of the most significant figures of Russian literature. The name of A. P. Kern is always associated with A. S. Pushkin, while E. A. Stakenshneider was a friend of F. M. Dostoevsky. However, the two women were also the authors of interesting diaries. This article highlights the similarities and differences in the narrative strategies and in the treatment of various themes (family, literature, self-portraiture, role of the women) in these ego-documents. At the same time, the analysis shows the role of the diary in the diarists' lives. They used their journals to conduct their existential self-exploration and to record their protesting voice against the "unjust" (patriarchal) reality surrounding them.*

**Keywords:** *Women literature, diary, A. P. Kern, E. A. Stakenshneider, 19-th century Russian literature*

In the past, literature had been an almost inaccessible world for the so-called fair sex. Being relegated to the role of wife and mother, women could at best pretend to become the inspiring muse of poets and novelists. To see their

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**Article history:** Received: 30 April 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 2 June 2025; Accepted: 9 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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works published, they often had been forced to hide themselves behind male pseudonyms<sup>2</sup>. The only literary space that allowed them a certain freedom of expression was represented by autobiographical prose. According to the patriarchal society, since autobiography, memoirs, and diaries were thought less subject to the risks of the use of imagination, these types of texts were considered to a lesser extent dangerous literary forms for the female “weak minds”. As a result, over the centuries a close bond has been established between womankind and autobiographical genres and, nowadays, women’s literature<sup>3</sup> is often associated with life writing.

Not only are women the main authors of ego-documents, but they are responsible for their significant “rediscovery” in the academic field as well. In fact, the recent “autobiographical turn” in the humanities is largely due to feminist criticism. The representatives of this interpretative current have not limited themselves to give voice to the many forgotten women writers<sup>4</sup>. They have also radically questioned canons, attributing a new importance to peripheral literary phenomena such as autobiographical prose<sup>5</sup>. Gender and feminist studies recognize a pivotal role to the latter: “If women have been categorised as ‘objects’ by patriarchal cultures, women’s autobiography [and the other autobiographical genres give – R. G.] an opportunity for them to express themselves as ‘subjects’, with their own selfhood” (Cosslet & al., 2001, pp. 5-6). In other words, according to feminist criticism, life writing has been the main means through which women have attempted to oppose their marginal position in society and to claim their own space in it.

Among the various autobiographical genres, the diary has been the privileged literary form used for these aims<sup>6</sup>. Although the life journal was born as a form of control and educational instrument for young girls, soon it became a written refuge in which women could express their own selves regardless of social conventions<sup>7</sup> (Duby, Perrot, 2015, p. 325).

2 In Russian literature, the first women writers used a similar stratagem. For example, it is famous the case of Ekaterina Aleksandrovna Knyazhnina (1746–1797), who published her verses under the name of her father and poet Alexander Petrovich Sumarokov or her husband and writer Yakov Borisovich Knyazhnin.

3 Another popular label to indicate women’s literature is “*Écriture féminine*”. The term was introduced by H. Cixous in her famous article *Le Rire de la Méduse*, in which she provocatively invited women to reclaim their space in literature and talk about themselves as women, see (Cixous, 1975),

4 Feminist criticism asserted itself in the 70s in America. Its aim was and still is to demonstrate that linguistic and narrative solutions are closely linked to the gender identity of a given author. Feminism criticism continues to be very productive. For example, we can mention some recent publications on the subject relating to the Russian literary context: (Stroganova, 2019) and (Gendernye issledovanya, 2019).

5 For an overview of the main theoretical contributions on women’s life writing, see (Watson, Smith, 1998, pp. 3-52) and (Savkina, 2007, pp. 38-52).

6 Several researchers have dedicated to the study of the diary as a significant form of female writing, see (Bunkers, 1996).

7 Just a few decades ago, Ph. Lejeune still felt the need to defend the diary from the accusation of being “feminine” (Lejeune, 2009, p. 148).

It should be added that, despite its apparent simplicity, the definition of the diary as a genre is problematic and full of challenges. Frequently, the life journal is defined in opposition to autobiography. In *Le pacte autobiographique* (*The Autobiographical Pact*), Ph. Lejeune states that the diary lacks the narrative retrospective point of view, typical of autobiography (Lejeune, 1975, p. 14). Years later, the French researcher gives the following definition:

A diary is a series of dated traces [*série de traces datées*]. [...] An isolated dated trace is a memorial rather than a diary: the diary begins when traces in a series attempt to capture the movement of time rather than to freeze it around a source event. (Lejeune, 2009, p. 179)

As the quote points out, most scholars have reflected on the peculiar existing relationship between time and diary writing. Unlike autobiography, the diary does not deal with a whole life. In a strange interplay between continuity and discontinuity<sup>8</sup>, this type of text is a titanic endeavour to record the present, which turns out to be already (although very close) past. According to I. Paperno, a further temporal perspective should be added:

As a serial text written continuously on a chronological grid, the diary mediates between the past, the present, and the future<sup>9</sup>. Concurrence of experience with the act of writing calls for presentness. But every entry is the past in relation to the ones that would follow. [...] The diary is best read not as a book with a beginning and end, but as a process (Paperno, 2004, pp. 572-573).

Hence, the complex temporal matrix of a life journal requires a different approach from the reader. This aspect is also underlined by B. Didier, who states that “in a journal, it is the spectator, more than the painter, who is called upon to do the work [of reconstructing the self-image of the author – R. G.]”<sup>10</sup> (Didier, 1983, p. 182) Day after day, the diarist obsessively and fragmentarily gives sketches of himself in his text, inviting the reader to grasp his identity in its entirety from the written daily notes. This existential nature of the diary is another of the non-secondary aspects that has attracted the interest of scholars.

This brief overview shows that the journal is a complex literary construction aimed at leaving a testimony of one’s life experience and at finding a meaning to one’s own individuality. Therefore, it brings into play philosophical, social, cultural, and identitarian issues. Moreover, it implies the use of compositional and narrative strategies. These assumptions are at the core of the present research, which focuses on the diary writing of Anna Petrovna Kern (1800–1879) and Elena Andreevna Stakenshneider (1836–1897), who are mostly known for their connection with some of the most important authors of Russian literature.

<sup>8</sup> The diary presupposes constant daily writing. Nonetheless, the act of writing is interrupted every day to be resumed the following one.

<sup>9</sup> On the contrary, Ph. Lejeune affirms that the future is a temporal category completely absent in the journal: “The diary’s value lies in its being the trace of a moment. If I begin fixing things the next day, I do not add value to my diary: I kill it.” (Lejeune, 2009, p. 182)

<sup>10</sup> Quotations from non-English sources and the analysed texts are translated by the author of the article.

The name of A. P. Kern is inseparably associated with A. S. Pushkin. She was the woman to whom the famous poet dedicated his verses, entitled *Я помню чудное мгновенье* (*I remember a wonderful moment*)<sup>11</sup>. Instead, E. A. Stakenshneider was a close friend of F. M. Dostoevsky, and the probable source of inspiration for the character Liza Khokhlakova in the novel *Brothers Karamazov* (Viktorovich, 2017, pp. 89–90). However, they did not lack literary talent and were the authors of interesting diaries as well. The analysis of these texts, written respectively in the first and second half of the 19th century, allows us to highlight general functions and characteristics of the genre. Moreover, their close reading permits to identify constants and evolutions of the practice of women's diary prose in the Russian culture of the period.

Anna Petrovna Kern (after her second, marriage Markova-Vinogradskaya) came from an aristocratic family. Her father, Pyotr Markovich Poltoratsky, was a court adviser, while her mother, Ekaterina Ivanovna Vulf, was the daughter of the governor of Orel. Anna Petrovna spent all her youth in the Ukrainian province, where her grandfather had some landed estates. Despite the provincial environment, the girl showed a keen interest in literature from an early age. Her destiny radically changed in 1817, when her father decided to give her in marriage to the much older, but with the prestigious title of general, Ermolaev Fedorovich Kern. The wedding turned out to be very unhappy and a source of constant sorrow for the woman. In 1842, after her husband's death, Anna Petrovna married her cousin Aleksandr Vasil'evich Markov-Vinogradsky. This marriage was based on love and not on economic or social interests. Nonetheless, it provoked discontent among relatives and financial difficulties for the couple<sup>12</sup>. Anna Petrovna's unhappy life was not an obstacle to her intellectual development. She was in relation with A. S. Pushkin, M. I. Glinka, A. A. Del'vig, and several other noteworthy literary figures. She left interesting memoirs about many of them, which were published and attracted the public's interest. Moreover, she was the author of the diaries *Дневник для отдохновения* (*Diary for Relief*, 1820) and *Рассказ о событиях в Петербурге...* (*An account about events in St. Petersburg...*, 1861). For the aims of this study, the focus is on the former. Anna Petrovna began writing it on her own initiative between 23 June and 30 August 1820, while she was in Pskov with her husband, who commanded a brigade there. The text was published for the first time in 1929 and a second time in 1989. Critics have not shown much interest in it. As the same preface to the text of A. M. Gordin shows, the diary has been mainly read as an interesting written testimony of the everyday life of a 19th-century woman. The first important contribution to its literary reevaluation belongs to I. Savkina who dedicated a broad analysis to it in her monograph on Russian women's autobiographical prose (Savkina, 2007, pp. 100–116).

11 The title is usually rendered as such in English. However, V. V. Nabokov pointed out the difficulty in translating the beginning of this Pushkin's renowned poem.

12 A. P. Kern had to renounce her title and her widow's pension, while Aleksandr Vasil'evich was disinherited.

The life of Elena Andreevna Stackenshneider and the literary and critical fate of her diary were not very fortunate either. She was the daughter of the talented architect Andrei Ivanovich Stackenshneider, who built some of the most iconic buildings in St. Petersburg. Her mother was Mariya Fedorovna Kholchinskaya, known at the time for her prestigious literary salon, frequented by the most brilliant contemporary writers, such as I. S. Turgenev, I. A. Goncharov, and F. M. Dostoevsky. This stimulating cultural family environment allowed her to become a prominent figure on the late 19-th-century Russian cultural scene, despite the illness that disabled her throughout her life<sup>13</sup>. Following her mother's example, Elena Andreevna created her own literary salon and was among the first activists for the Russian women's emancipation movement. She also devoted herself to literature. She translated literary and journalistic texts and wrote a family chronicle, travelogues, and memoirs. An important place in her prose is occupied by her original diary. Following the advice of the poet N. F. Shcherbina<sup>14</sup>, E. A. Stackenshneider began writing her journal in 1855 and continued to keep it until 1888. Although some of the pages of the diary were published as early as 1893 in the *Русский архив* (*Russian Archive*) and at the beginning of the 20th century in the magazines *Русский вестник* (*Russian Gazette*) and *Голос Минувшего* (*Voice of the Past*) (Rozanov, 1934, p.24)<sup>15</sup>, the integral text has not been printed so far<sup>16</sup>. The most complete version of the diary can be considered the edition prepared and edited by I. N. Rozanov in 1934 (Stackenshneider, 1934). The difficult accessibility of the diary is the likely explanation for the few scholarly publications devoted to it. In addition to I. N. Rozanov's preface to the aforementioned edition, only A. Vacheva (Vacheva, 2017) and V. A. Viktorovich (Viktorovich, 2017) analyse the work in more detail<sup>17</sup>.

Having remained on the fringe of academic attention, the two diaries offer interesting interpretative perspectives.

A first element to comment on is the language in which the two diaries are written. A. P. Kern's diary is in French. Its use is not surprising, as French was very widespread among the Russian nobility of the time, for whom it was the everyday language of conversation. Unlike men, even in their autobiographical texts, women usually expressed themselves in the foreign idiom. In the choice of Anna Petrovna, additional reasons can be identified. Her use of French was a way to state her distance from the backward provincial reality in which she was forced

13 She had a bone malformation of her thigh that prevents her from walking normally.

14 N. F. Shcherbina (1821–1869) was a poet, known at the time for his collection of poems *Греческие стихотворения* (*Greek Poems*, 1851).

15 Excerpts from E. A. Stackenshneider's diary were also used by V. V. Stasov for his book *Надежда Василевна Стасова* (*Nadezhda Vasilievna Stasova*), dedicated to this representative of the nascent Russian women's movement (Rozanov, 1934, 24).

16 V. A. Viktorovich has announced the preparation of a full edition of the text (Viktorovich, 2017, p. 72), but the project has not yet been realized.

17 To these sporadic publications we can add the articles by A. I. Indzinskaya, in which the researcher analyses the diary and letters of E. A. Stackenshneider to reconstruct her relationship with Dostoevsky and his wife, see (Indzinskaya, 2015; Indzinskaya, 2019).

to live. Furthermore, it was a precaution against possible unwanted readings of the text by her husband, who did not know the language (Gordin, 1989, p. 22). It should be highlighted that *Дневник для отдохновения* contains passages in Russian as well. A. P. Kern several times translates quotes from foreign novels into her mother tongue, or she relies on it in the account of events in which her emotional involvement is more evident.

At the end of the century, the use of Russian was increasingly widespread in female ego-documents. Elena Andreevna's diary is a demonstration of this tendency. However, as she constantly emphasizes her patriotic feelings, in her decision to keep a diary in Russian, one can also glimpse her desire to underline her Russian identity despite her foreign origins.

Even from a structural point of view, the two authors use different narrative strategies. A. P. Kern writes her journal in the form of letters addressed to her great aunt Feodosiya Petrovna Poltoratskaya. Epistolary diaries were not an exception in the early-19th-century Russia<sup>18</sup>. In the cultural climate of sentimentalism and early romanticism, the Russian writers of ego-texts frequently mixed the characteristics of autobiographical genres, by imitating the then popular epistolary and pseudo-autobiographical novels<sup>19</sup>. A further confirmation of the novelistic matrix of A. P. Kern's diary is the assignation of a title to her work. Instead, E. A. Stakenshneider's journal is structured in a more traditional way. The descriptions of the day's events are presented after the date, and sometimes the place, when the given diary page was written. The temporal indication is also present in A. P. Kern's diary. In this regard, it should be underlined that, although the diary presupposes daily writing, an author rarely writes every day. There are often pauses and interruptions. From this point of view, Anna Petrovna is a more systematic diarist. Intervals in the keeping of the journal are almost absent. On the contrary, over a single day she frequently returns to write in her diary to add new details. Instead, in E. A. Stakenshneider's text, there are long time gaps between one note and another. Interestingly, both the authors feel the need to explain the infringement of their diary practice:

*Вы удивитесь, мой ангел, что я пропустила целый день, не писавши вам, я вчера была в отчаянном положении [...], целый день я почти была в беспомощности* (Kern, 1989, p. 185)<sup>20</sup>.

[...] в городе буду прилежнее писать, здесь [в деревне – Р. Дж.] все мешают<sup>21</sup> (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 70).

18 E. Grechanaya and K. Viollet list many other authors who use the epistolary form to narrate the story of their lives day by day (Viollet, Grechanaya, 2006, pp. 73-76).

19 For example, the autobiography of A. T. Bolotov, one of the most significant autobiographers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, is written in the form of letters to his children.

20 "You will be surprised, my angel, that I have let a whole day pass without writing to you. Yesterday, I was in a desperate state, [...] I was almost senseless all day." The passages of the diary written in Russian are indicated in italics.

21 "[...] in the city I will write more diligently, here [in the countryside – R. G.] everyone disturbs me."

As we can see from the quotations, many times external factors are given as an explanation for the ellipses in the narration. In other cases, A. P. Kern and E. A. Shtakenshneider confess other reasons:

Зачем нет у меня такого дара слова, чтобы я могла передать вам все, что я испытываю? Мой язык слишком беден, перо мое отказывается это выразить (Kern, 1989, pp. 231-232)<sup>22</sup>.

Я скоро тебя заброшу, дневник мой, за то, что ты не можешь вместить в себя всего, что я вижу и слышу (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 109)<sup>23</sup>.

The authors' awareness of the difficulties and challenges that the description of their own life poses to them leads them to question the usefulness of continuing the enterprise of keeping daily notes. The felt inability to find words to describe their rich inner world results in the inclusion of metaliterary passages in their texts. It could be said that these pages of the journals play the role of the autobiographical pact<sup>24</sup>. In them, the two women declare their intents and justify their narrative choices. By doing this, they demonstrate the sincerity of their words despite the possible shortcomings. Their need to assert their reliability as narrators reminds us that also the diary has its reader, whether real or fictitious<sup>25</sup>.

In A. P. Kern's diary, the very choice of the epistolary form presupposes the presence of a receiver of her text. As mentioned, the young aristocrat addresses her letters to her great aunt F. P. Poltoratskaya. Nonetheless, leafing through the pages of her diary, it is evident that Anna Petrovna writes with the idea that her audience could be wider. In fact, she asks her aunt to read her diary pages to her platonic lover or to other family members. For instance, "У меня большое желание самой написать папеньке и просить его защитить меня [...]. Впрочем, можете показать ему в моем дневнике те места, какие сочтете подходящими." (Kern, 1989, p. 235)<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the confidential and pathetic tone that characterizes A. P. Kern's diary not only is dictated by her emotional closeness with her great aunt<sup>27</sup>, but it is motivated by her effort to gain empathy from other readers as well.

This game between intimacy and publicity of diary writing is also present in the text of E. A. Shtakenshneider. On the one hand, the author openly declares that her journal is private: "Кто будет читать этот дневник! Никто."

22 "Why don't I have the gift of words to convey to you everything I feel? My language is too poor, my pen fails me."

23 "I will soon abandon you, my diary, because you cannot contain everything that I see and hear."

24 The autobiographical pact is a peculiar agreement between the author of an ego-text and his reader. Ph. Lejeune identifies it as one of the distinctive characteristics of autobiography (Lejeune, 1975).

25 Although in the past it was believed that the absence of an addressee was one of the distinctive features of the journal, today scholars agree on the key role of the reader in this genre.

26 "I have a great desire to write to my daddy myself and ask him for protection [...]. By the way, you can show him those places in my diary that you consider appropriate."

27 After A. P. Kern's second marriage, these good relations with F. P. Poltoratskaya came to an end.

(Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 127)<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, in her daily notes, she admits the opposite desire: “Мне бы хотелось, чтобы через много, много лет, если уцелеют эти страницы, в них бы живо и верно отражалось нынешнее время.” (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 175)<sup>29</sup> These contradictions show the opposite stimuli at the base of female diary writing. The female diarist seeks a place where she can externalize her most hidden emotions without the judgement of other people. At the same time, the act of writing itself is her means to fight oblivion. In any case, both writers fear a possible reading by an “unauthorized” addressee:

Его [его мужа – Р. Дж.] низость до того дошла, что в мое отсутствие он прочитал мой дневник, после чего устроил мне величайший скандал, и кончилось это тем, что я заболела (Kern, 1989, p. 158)<sup>30</sup>.

Не помню, как, [в разговоре – Р. Дж.] коснулись дневников. Шелгунова ведет дневник; мама рассказала о моем, и вдруг потребовали его. Вот страх-то был! Но было уже слишком поздно, и меня оставили в покое. (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 110)<sup>31</sup>

The unwanted reading is presented and perceived by Anna Petrovna and Elena Andreevna as a form of violence and transgression of their intimacy, which causes dismay and disappointment in them. These feelings are exacerbated by the fact that, in their diaries, Anna Petrovna and Elena Andreevna express their individuality and form their own alternative female identity, ignoring canons and stereotypes of the patriarchal society. In this construction of their self, the selection of topics to include in the narration is significant. Feminist critics have emphasized how the thematic repertoire of female ego-texts is mainly centred on the domestic sphere. The narrower range of subjects does not result in a lack of originality in their treatment. In the following paragraph, attention is paid to the specific way in which A. P. Kern and E. A. Stakenshneider interpret and elaborate the themes of parents, their female identity, and literature.

In women’s life writing, the problematization of the relationship with the parental figures is crucial. Regarding the mother, C. Gamberi comments: “Women [...] need to reconsider ‘their’ mothers critically, in order to emerge as independent subjects.” (as cited in Crisafulli, Golinelli, 2019, p. 6) It is interesting to note that, in A. P. Kern’s text, the mother is not a dominant figure. The daughter presents her as a benevolent parent, whose love is unconditional towards her. Nonetheless, in the journal, Anna Petrovna comments with apprehension on the colder tone of one of the maternal letters:

*Маменька меня огорчила сегодняшним письмом, она никогда так не начинала [...].  
Попросите мою родную маменьку, чтоб она меня (Анной Петровной) не огорчала,*

28 “Who will read this diary? Nobody.”

29 “I would like that in many, many years, if these pages survive, they would vividly and accurately reflect the present time.”

30 “His [of her husband – R. G.] vileness went so far that in my absence he read my diary, after which he made a big scene, and it ended with me falling ill.”

31 “I don’t remember how they started talking about diaries [in the conversation – R. G.]. Shelgunova keeps a diary; my mother talked about mine, and suddenly they demanded it. What a fear it was! But it was already too late, and they left me in peace.”

а называла бы всегда *Анетушкой*. Она, верно, это сделала от рассеянности, а для несчастной и такая *малость много значит*. (Kern, 1989, p. 221)<sup>32</sup>

A simple change in the way of addressing the daughter immediately leads the author to doubt her mother's affection for her. Thus, the overall romanticized representation of the mother in the journal is rather a testimony of the adoption of rhetorical poses by the diarist.

In Russian women's literature the figure of the loving mother is a rarity. Much more often the mother is seen and represented as an antagonist by her daughters. E. A. Stakenshneider's diary falls into this trend. Elena Andreevna presents her relationship with her mother as almost conflictual. For example,

Сейчас принесла мама и положила мне на стол мои бриллианты, серьги, брошку, браслеты – все атрибуты моей пытки. Сегодня бал у Бруни. Она их принесла с таким видом, точно знает, что обрадует меня; точно слезы, которые навертываются на мои глаза, – слезы радости. Она смотрит на меня и улыбается. Слепая она, что ли, или хочет не видеть? (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 117)<sup>33</sup>

The mother does not accept and denies her daughter's health condition, insisting on behaving with her as with the other "normal" girls. The impossibility of responding to her mother's expectations causes the diarist's exasperation. The lack of a total relationship of trust with the maternal figure induce A. P. Kern and E. A. Stakenshneider not to follow the female model, represented by their mothers.

Regarding the father, the psychologist and philosopher E. Fromm observes that the love of the latter must be won by the child (Fromm, 2023, pp. 69-70). In both diaries, the search for paternal consensus and approval is glaring. Not only do the two writers idealize their fathers, but they try to behave according to their expectations. Despite this, A. P. Kern, with her unhappy marriage, and E. A. Stakenshneider, with her poor health, are unable to fully embody their father's ideals:

Я, может быть, приеду прямо к вам, если только буду уверена, что отец меня не выгонит: ведь сказал же он однажды мужу, что, если бы я его оставила, двери родительского дома были бы для меня закрыты. В своем ослеплении он уже заранее готовится сделать свое дитя несчастным. (Kern, 1989, p. 185)<sup>34</sup>

Удивительно, как я переменялась за эту зиму, сама замечаю [...]. Но будет ли лучше, если я буду молчать и повторится то, что было прежде, когда я ждала,

32 "Mama upset me with today's letter, she never started like that [...]. Ask my dear mama not to upset me (Anna Petrovna), but to always call me *Anetushka*. She probably did it out of distraction. However, for the unhappy one, even such a *small thing means a lot*."

33 "Mama just brought and put on the table my diamonds, earrings, brooch, bracelets; that is all the attributes of my torture. Today there is the ball at Bruni's. She brought them with such an air, as if she knew what would make me happy. For her, the tears welling up in my eyes were tears of joy. She looked at me and smiled. Is she blind, or does she want not to see?"

34 "I will perhaps come straight to you, if only I am sure that my father will not disown me. After all, he once told my husband that if I left him, the doors of my parents' house would be closed to me. In his blindness he is already preparing to make his child unhappy."

чтобы ко мне обратились, и никто не обращался, и я сидела со скучанными губами, и папа так грустно смотрел на меня. (Stakenshneider, 1934, pp. 57-58)<sup>35</sup>

The paternal refusal is depicted as a tragedy by Anna Petrovna, while Elena Andreevna internalizes a sense of guilt for her condition. On the other hand, the quotations show that the diarists claim their right to be considered worthy daughters, even if they do not answer to the roles imposed on them.

Another way women build their own self-portrait is by comparing themselves to the Other. For A. P. Kern and E. A. Stakenshneider, the confrontation with the female and male universe is an opportunity to reflect on their gender identity and to question cultural stereotypes.

According to S. Friedman, over the centuries women have developed a sense of sisterhood that has led them to feel part of a universal female community (as cited in Savkina, 2007, p. 42). Nonetheless, in the analysed texts, the diarists rather seem to emphasize their distance from other women. If A. P. Kern repeatedly declares her certainty in the mutual understanding of the women in her family, the diary contains several letters, which testify the contrary: “Только посоветуйте, как мне быть, все, что вы скажете, будет для меня священным, и я немедленно последую вашему совету.” (Kern, 1989, p. 187)<sup>36</sup> The requests for the consent, opinion, and judgment of her interlocutor serve her to adapt her behaviours to avoid disapproval and exclusion from the female collective. The sense of estrangement from the women’s community is even more accentuated in the case of Elena Andreevna:

Как бы я желала иметь приятельниц, как все мои знакомые имеют; у меня нет никого. Все знакомые девицы меня чуждаются, и неудивительно: кому я интересна? Я не могу ни в чем, что их занимает, принимать участие; не могу ни танцевать, ни наряжаться, ни кокетничать. (Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 53)<sup>37</sup>

The impossibility of fully fitting into the feminine matrices of other women worsens the state of loneliness of the diarists. The journals assume the role of a lifeline to their isolation, collecting their pathetic statements of discomfort<sup>38</sup>.

The two women are no less marginalized by men. This does not prevent them from recognizing their value as individuals and challenging patriarchal society. Some contemporary researchers write:

35 “It’s amazing how I’ve changed this winter. I can see it myself [...]. But will it be better if I remain silent as when I waited for someone to consider me, and no one paid attention to me, and I sat with my lips bitten, and Dad looked at me so sadly.”

36 “Just advise me what to do. Everything you say will be sacred to me, and I will immediately follow your counsel.”

37 “How I wish I had friends, as all my acquaintances have; I have none. All the girls I know ignore me, and it is not surprising: who could be interested in me? I cannot take part in anything that interests them; I cannot dance, nor dress up, nor coquet.”

38 For example, “Какая тоска! Это ужасно! [...] Представьте себе мое положение - ни одной души, с кем я могла бы поговорить” (“What a pain! It is terrible! [...] Imagine my situation: not a single soul I could talk to”, Kern, 1989, p. 150) or “Тоска, тоска! Теперь я вижу, как я мало похожа на других.” (“Pain, Pain! Now I see how little I resemble others”, Stakenshneider, 1934, p. 89).

Russian women, authors of memoirs and diaries, present themselves as women, but in no way inferior to men and even superior to them, in any case capable of assimilating their interests and values, fulfilling male roles, and thus going beyond the limits prescribed for the female sex. (Viollet, Grechenaya, 2006, p. 43)

Indeed, the analysed authors denounce the hypocrisies of the male perspective. Anna Petrovna almost with disgust describes her husband and his acquaintances as uncultured and soulless people who look at her only as an object. Similarly, Elena Andreevna scornfully notes that men often make fun of women and their cultural aspirations. Therefore, like Virginia Woolf<sup>39</sup>, they claim a space for themselves:

Я хочу затвориться в своей комнате, никого решительно не видеть, только писать вам. (Kern, 1989, p. 196)<sup>40</sup>

Сидеть одной в нашей маленькой квартире, имея перед собой ряд свободных часов, которые знаешь наверное, что никто не нарушит, в настоящее время самое живое мое удовольствие и даже единственное. (Stakensneider, 1934, p. 460)<sup>41</sup>

Anna Petrovna and Elena Andreevna understand that only away from public life have they the opportunity to criticize oppressive and often unjust cultural codes. It is striking that the two diarists even contest the meaning that motherhood should have in a woman's life:

Вы знаете, что это не легкомыслие и не каприз; я вам и прежде говорила, что я не хочу иметь детей. [...] Это исповедь. (Kern, 1989, pp. 211-212)<sup>42</sup>

[...] если бы могла я сделаться женою или матерью, я бы не стала писать. (as cited in Indzinskaya, 2015, p. 37)<sup>43</sup>

For both, maternity should not be a burden that inevitably ties one to a despotic husband or prevents from fulfilling oneself as a woman outside the family context.

The Lecarme couple state: "The female writer most often finds her real identity in the depiction of her emotional and intellectual life, which outlines the stages of a progressive emancipation." (Lacarme, Lacarme-Tabone, 1997, p. 97) This explains the central role that literature plays in the lives and diary narratives of Anna Petrovna and Elena Andreevna<sup>44</sup>. In their daily records, they

39 In *A Room of One's Own* (Woolf, 1929), Virginia Woolf points to domestic life and the lack of a personal space as the main reasons that have long prevented women to dedicate themselves to literature. With this text, the English author can be considered a forerunner of the critical reflection on the relationship between women and literature.

40 "I want to shut myself in my room, without seeing anyone, and just write to you."

41 "Sitting alone in our little apartment, with several free hours ahead, in which you know for sure nobody will disturb you, is at present my greatest pleasure, if not my only one."

42 "You know that this is not frivolity or a caprice; I have told you before that I do not want to have children. [...] This is a confession."

43 "[...] if I could have become a wife or a mother, I would not have start writing."

44 Like autobiography, diary writing raises the problem of the boundary between reality and fiction. In the article we leave aside the cases of literariness present in the two texts. We limit ourselves

note down their opinions and impressions on a wide variety of literary works. At the same time, the diarists affirm:

Я по-прежнему много читаю, – что бы я без этого стала делать! Читаю романы, дабы рассеяться. [...] [Я] считаю, что ничто не может лучше успокоить мои страдания. Соболезнуя героине романа, ее любви, я занимаю свой ум и отвлекаю себя от мыслей, которые завладели мной целиком. (Kern, 1989, p. 145)<sup>45</sup>

Но ведь книга – мой единственный друг, который мне объясняет непонятное, или разгоняет мучающие мысли и заменяет их другими, иногда такими новыми и чудными. (Stakensneider, 1934, p. 57)<sup>46</sup>

In the passages it could be observed that literature alleviates the diarists' sufferings. Moreover, it always starts an investigative process on their own self and on their surroundings. For them, literature is an interpretative key to their reality. It is interesting to note that, for both, it is significant the reading of *Hamlet*, probably for the existential questions at the centre of the theatrical piece. This brings us once again to one of the main functions of the diary, that is the effort to “answers to one of these questions: “who am I?” (introspection) and “what should I be?” (deliberation).” (Lejeune, 2008, 180) The difficulty in finding the solution to this enigma is the reason that prevents the authors from abandoning their diary writing: “Я хочу и дальше писать свой дневник” (Kern, 1989, p. 239)<sup>47</sup>, “Лето прошло, я ни разу не заглянула в свой дневник. Думала, что уже совсем его забыла, но вдруг сегодня он вспомнился. Отчего? Сама не знаю.” (Stakensneider, 1934, p. 159)<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the present analysis shows that at the formal level, women's diary writing in Russia undergoes evolutions, while the role of the journal in women's lives remains unchanged. The latter is the only means by which they can express their own alternative female identity and give voice to their protesting cry against a society in which they do not recognize themselves.

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here to observing that *Дневник для отдохновения*, especially in the representation of A. P. Kern's relationship with her Platonic lover, shows the clear imprint of the epistolary novels of the period. In E. A. Stakensneider's journal, we can find literary motifs mainly in her descriptions of nature.

45 “I still read a lot – what would I do without reading! I read novels to distract myself. [...] [I] believe that nothing can soothe my suffering better. By sympathizing with the heroine of the novel, her love, I occupy my mind.”

46 “Indeed, the book is my only friend, which explains to me the incomprehensible or dispels tormenting thoughts and replaces them with others, sometimes so new and wonderful.”

47 “I want to continue writing my diary.”

48 “The summer passed; I didn't look at my diary even once. I thought I had forgotten it completely, but suddenly today I remembered it. Why? I don't know myself.”

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# TIME, MEMORY, ILLNESS AND DEATH IN THE DIARY WRITING OF TWO ROMANIAN DIARISTS

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/WZOI2883>

**Abstract:** *Keeping what the French call a journal intime, writers of all cultures and ages write against the ticking of the clock, the passage of time, and disappearance. It is in the intimate space of the diary that they record their experiences while those are fresh and immediate. This paper purports to look into the diaries of two Romanian diarists whose main purpose was to explore the subtlest transformations and nuances of their own perceptions of time. Matei Călinescu's *Un altfel de jurnal. Ieșirea din timp* (Another Kind of Diary. Escaping Time) (Humanitas Press, 2016) and Radu Vancu's *Boala & războiul. Jurnal, 2020-2024* (Illness & War. A Diary, 2020-2024) (Polirom Press, 2024) are troubling testimonies of what it means to literally write against the clock, while a terminal illness eats at your body (Matei Călinescu's situation) or the suffering, isolation and death brought about by the COVID epidemic is a constant reminder of one's mortality and impending death (Radu Vancu's situation shared by a whole planet).*

**Keywords:** *diary, time, memory, apophrades, illness, death*

## Introduction to the Genre of “Ego-documents”

The diary, alternatively called journal, is a confessional type of writing in the first person. Cuddon's statement that “on the face of it, [it] is a self-revelation” (Cuddon, 2013, p. 151) is extremely relevant for my approach to the two diaries I tackle in this study, namely Matei Călinescu's *Un altfel de jurnal. Ieșirea din timp* (Another Kind of Diary. Escaping Time) (Humanitas Press, 2016) and Radu Vancu's *Boala & războiul. Jurnal, 2020-2024* (Illness & War. A Diary, 2020-2024) (Polirom Press, 2024).

Starting with a taxonomy that distinguishes between “intimate” and “anecdotal” modes of diary writing (Cuddon, 2013, p. 151), Cuddon provides a diachronic survey of the genre since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when it became a literary habit, and covering the most important female and male diarists in the 18<sup>th</sup> and

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**Article history:** Received: 4 May 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 31 May 2025; Accepted: 2 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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19<sup>th</sup> centuries, with a few examples of 20<sup>th</sup> century diaries (Katherine Mansfield's *Journal*, 1927; C. E. Montague's *A Writer's Notes on His Trade*, 1930; Arnold Bennett's *Journals*, 1933-34; Somerset Maugham's *A Writer's Notebook*, 1949; Graham Greene's *In Search of a Character*, 1962). To these, especially in the context of my approach to the diaries written by two writers who are also professors of literature and literary critics, I would add the significant contributions to the genre of two well-known 20<sup>th</sup> century writers: Virginia Woolf, who kept her diary almost daily and whose twelve volumes of diaries and letters are now acknowledged to be part of her *oeuvre*, and *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath* (2000). An important aspect that the writers' diaries have in common is the particular blending of mundane topics, reflections on ideas and matters of the day, and reading impressions and ideas or even theories generated by those reflections. They are, in Cuddon's words, "part diary, part journal and part notebook" (Cuddon, 2013, pp. 200-201), which makes them invaluable sources that shed light on their authors' personalities and times, on their struggles with writing, on their choices of topics, style, etc.

Bruce Merry argues that, contrary to the belief that "the diary is an intimate journal, a personal dialogue between the writer and his private *persona*, in which anything can be discussed outside the push and pull of editorial fashion" (Merry, 1979, p. 3), diary writing is as much molded by literary fashion and subject to rigorous editing as any other literary genre. Merry also points out an aspect that is crucial to my analysis of the two diaries in this study, namely that "Nearly all diarists list their reading, their own reaction to classics, their slow mastery of world literature and immediate response to art" (Merry, 1979, p. 4). These two aspects of the diary as a literary genre practised by creative writers have the potential to make both academics and the larger reading public reconsider the significance and position of the diary and its dynamic evolution in what Even-Zohar calls the literary polysystem.<sup>2</sup> Polly North argues that while before the 1970s very few academics considered life-writing worth-studying, "Post 1970, academic recognition for diaries and their significance has been on an upward curve. Criticism, terms, and approaches evolve, but the desire to pick over the nature and content of human experience remains a constant" (North, 2023). My writing of an article on two Romanian authors' diary writing for an academic journal issue on this topic is an evidence of this late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century re-consideration of the previously unacknowledged significance of the genre in academia.

As Lejeune aptly notes, "discontinuity is part and parcel of the diary's rhythm" (Lejeune, 2009, p. 193). Nonetheless, this stylistic discontinuity and apparent fragmentariness of the diary as a genre are thematically inscribed into the unifying structure of the volume(s) and counterpointed by recurrent images and details, as I will argue in what follows.

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<sup>2</sup> Even-Zohar formulated his Polysystem theory in the 1970s and he has continued to develop it to the present day.

Since the two diaries under scrutiny in this study are written in times of intense suffering, it is particularly relevant to add that keeping a diary may have a therapeutic role. In some cases, diaries may be written “at the invitation of a clinician to provide relevant data for a specific study, or a therapist to facilitate self-exploration and understanding” (Pennebaker, JW & LA King, 1999, p. 1296). On the same note, Susan Sontag reveals a truth nobody could deny: that “Two diseases have been spectacularly, and similarly, encumbered by the trappings of metaphor: tuberculosis and cancer” (Sontag, 1978, p.5). Writing, and more specifically keeping a diary, with its tone of immediacy and intimacy, is a way of leaving the traces of one’s existence-on-the-edge in words to endure beyond one’s physical disappearance. Sontag also argues that cancer, recorded so punctiliously by Matei Călinescu in his diary, draws our attention to the stark material aspect of our condition, by mercilessly showing us “that the body is, all too woefully, just the body” (Sontag, 1978, p. 18). Did Călinescu “aestheticise” (a possibility Sontag challenges us to (re)consider) cancer when he wrote his diary? Maybe not as such, but his alternation of very accurate descriptions of the stages of the biological degradation he undergoes, the treatments and tests he is subject to, with entries recounting the spiritual and intellectual experiences he has in the same interval, can be read in the key of a transcendence of physical pain into the ethereal realm of the aesthetic. And, as Sontag remarks, “Diseases - and patients - become subjects for decipherment” (Sontag, 1978, p. 45) in the writers’ letters, journals, prose, poetry and drama.

North notes that “The memoir, compilations of private letters, and autobiography (even biography) are also closely linked to the diary. This family of forms, including diary, have been dubbed life writing or ego-documents” (North, 2023). As much as these forms have in common “a perspective on events the authors were part of or observed,” North argues that the diary differs from them in its spontaneity. While the diary is characterised by this immediacy, the other ego-documents “are usually carefully considered and retrospective; they are often written with hindsight, tackle longer periods of time, and/or have a predesignated focus” (North, 2023).

The diaries written by Matei Călinescu and Radu Vancu respectively combine characteristics of both categories of ego-documents: the spontaneity and immediacy of the diary, on the one hand, with the longer chunks of time they cover and the thematic focus their authors choose (an impending death counterpointed by a turning back of time through memory in the case of Călinescu’s diary; illness and war, in the case of Vancu’s), which are typical of the memoir, on the other. The retrospective approach is very poignant in Călinescu’s diary, which is the writer’s *recherche du temps perdu*, with recurrent meditations on the rich imagery and symbolism of Proust’s novel. This blending of forms makes them read as a hybrid genre between diary and memoir, to which the characteristics of notebook mentioned by Cuddon are added.

In the following sections I will argue that the diary is a literary genre that enjoys a great success with the reading public, which has simultaneously gained importance and prestige as an academic field of study. In order to do so, I will highlight the stylistic devices and narrative techniques used by Călinescu and Vancu to bestow literariness onto their diaries, which both diarists planned to publish from the moment when they set out to write them. Time, a theme explored in both diaries, is also the mortar that binds the bricks of their masonry together, and in close connection with it there is memory, the frailty of the body in times of epidemic or in one's personal experience of a terminal illness; there are also mortality and death, and the compensatory role of art, with its transcendence and long duration.

### Romanian Diarists and Diary Writing

In the Romanian literary landscape, there is a rich line of creative writers whose diaries established the genre in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A notable diarist of that period is Mihail Sebastian, an outstanding chronicler of the growing power of the Nazi regime in Europe and of the persecution of the Jews before and during World War II (1935-1944), whose diary was published in 1991, fifty years after being written. Sebastian's diary remains a sample of Holocaust diary no less touching than Anne Frank's. Nicolae Steinhardt's book *Jurnalul fericirii / The Diary of Happiness* (1991) also waited for more congenial times to be published. Translated and published in France, the United States, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Germany and England, Sebastian's diary was a revelation. No less of a revelation was Steinhardt's book, considered by the famous Romanian critic Nicolae Manolescu "a splendid book, an inextricable blend of quotidian notation, memory, confession, hermeneutics (in the literal sense, because the Bible is often an object of interpretation /.../), humour, tragedy, history, universality, metaphysics, physiology, reading quotes a.s.f." (Steinhardt, 2008, p. 706).<sup>3</sup>

Matei Călinescu (15 June 1934, Bucharest – 24 June 2009, Bloomington, Indiana) was a poet, prose writer, essayist, literary critic and theorist, and professor of comparative literature. In 1973 Călinescu left Romania for America. He started his academic career at Indiana University Bloomington, initially as a Visiting Professor and Fulbright scholar, and later as a tenured professor at the Department of Comparative Literature, whose head he was for two years (1996-1998). He authored numerous academic books, a novel, two diaries, the biography of his son Matthew who died before he turned 26, and a volume of poems. The Humanitas Press issued a series of Matei Călinescu's books, in keeping with the author's testamentary will. As Raluca Dună, the editor of *Another Kind of Diary. Escaping Time* states in her preface to the volume, Călinescu envisaged his work as "a global autobiographical project" (Călinescu, 2016, p. 7) completed by the last piece, which was a diary written by its dying author. Even if its first entries date from 2004, the diary seen as an escape from time, i.e. earthly existence, begins in 2007, when he found out that he suffered from cancer in the terminal phase. Dună

<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise mentioned, all the quotes in Romanian are my translation into English.

aptly considers Călinescu's journal "his little Aleph', in which he sees his own reflection and which reflects his visage, a world in miniature, containing, besides the visible, the invisible, besides the said, what's left to be unsaid..." (Călinescu, 2016, p. 7).

Radu Vancu (13 July 1978, Sibiu) is one of the most outstanding Romanian writers of the present, also a professor at the Faculty of Letters in Sibiu and a translator, whose civic activism makes him a conscience of our times. He wrote three academic books, one on Mihai Eminescu and another on Mircea Ivănescu, and a volume tackling the relationship between poetic modernity and our essentially human nature. Since 2002 he has published nine volumes of poetry, which won several prestigious national and international prizes, while his poems have been translated into approximately twenty languages. He has also published two novels (his latest, *Paradis / Paradise*, has just come out), a diary in three volumes, two children's books and a collection of civic writings. His recently published *Illness and War. A Diary, 2020-2024* documents the suffering, isolation and death brought about by the COVID epidemic as a constant reminder of one's mortality and impending death. This suffering is of the diarist's own body and mind as much as it is of the whole planet, but Vancu's way of transforming and transcending it is through the beauty of art and human relations. The confessionally incandescent tone of the diary allows Vancu to connect with the whole humanity of all times in the deepest way. One notices the leitmotif of the diarist's kinship of spirit with the Romanian writer and translator Mircea Ivănescu, his mentor and father figure, who opened him up to most of the philosophical and aesthetic perceptions of time and the surrounding world. Through Ivănescu, Vancu is connected with Matei Călinescu, whom he briefly met for an interview facilitated by his mentor, and to whom Călinescu dedicated his last book, *Another Kind of Journal*. One feels here, very poignantly, E. M. Forster's epigraph "Only connect" translated by Vancu from an urge (in *Howards End*) into a *raison d'être* in writing and in life.

For Matei Călinescu, the autobiographical nature of the diary is not altogether different from fiction. Accounting for his title and the kind of writing his diary is, Călinescu reflects:

*Another Kind of Diary*, a diary that is, in which experiences felt in the past, those "print-outs" of an old memory prevail, and that memory still has the force to fight futility. The more recent memories melt into nothingness and vanish into the murky waters of the passing days. I'd much rather pass my time writing fiction - this page you're reading should have been the opening of a short story written in the first person -, but isn't everything I might be writing fiction? (Călinescu, 2016, p. 119).

Vancu has a very keen perception of the incorporeal blueprint of his diary writing:

Somehow I wanted to put to a test the hypothesis that literature might do its job even after the body has ceased to be; and I wrote them [my first diary and my novel *Transparency*] as if I no longer had a body (Vancu, 2024, p. 134).

Like Călinescu, Vancu reflects on the relation between diary and fiction writing. Starting from the readers' ingrained assumptions that fiction is about *personae*, i.e. constructs or invented fabrications, while the diary is its opposite, i.e. the real-life person writing it, Vancu deems the diary to be "the most uncomfortable of all the exposures to which writing commits you" (Vancu, 2024, pp.134-135). Diary writing further challenges him with the Stendhal versus Flaubert dilemma:

I have this Stendhalian bogey, according to which the diary makes sense only if it is your unmitigated, unrevised & unadulterated emission. But then I also have the Flaubertian bogey - of prose as a tissue of sentences, as a syntactic trawl where beauty gets caught. I'm well aware that the two bogeys clash - but I do find comfort in saying to myself: well, that's literature for you, a collection of clashing bogeys (Vancu, 2024, p. 135).

In the last entry of 25 June 2024, Vancu returns to ponder on the point of writing the diary, reminding himself of the diaries written by other Romanian writers (Sebastian's, which is "one of the greatest European documents of the inter-war period"; Radu Petrescu's post-war diary, which is "of the most keen obsession with beauty I've ever come across"; Cărtărescu's, who "documents the way in which true literature is more than literature - i.e. a way of having a full experience of the real & of going beyond it") (Vancu, 2024, p. 438). Vancu started keeping a diary in 2012, when his inspiration had dried up and he hoped that this kind of writing would help him escape from the impasse. The strategy worked: the diary showed him the way towards three other poetry books and two novels. "In a way," Vancu candidly confesses, "the diary is my literature teacher. A kind of ChatGPT that I invented for myself, an interlocutor I can converse with about the literature in my brain & in my heart. And which, from a certain point onwards, started to invent me" (Vancu, 2024, p. 438).

### **Time, Memory, *Apophrades* and Art**

My own experience of reading Radu Vancu's Journal was of the nature of successive epiphanies and discoveries. The book is, to quote Cuddon again, "a self-revelation" (Cuddon, 2013, p. 151) in the first place, but it is a self-revelation as much as it is the reader's own. At the same time, being a writer's diary, Vancu's journal is very largely a reading notebook. Thus, reading it I found Matei Călinescu's referenced there, among hundreds of other writers and their writings. Călinescu's thoughts and ideas are referenced in different places in Vancu's Journal, but the most galvanising reference to *Another Kind of Diary* is occasioned by Vancu's epiphanic experience of listening to Matei Ioachimescu's flute solo, which triggers a cavalcade of ecstatic connections in his mind:

*Electric*, in which the music was visually translated by lasers that sliced the air into coloured beams, hypnotic prisms, incandescent semi-plants. When Matei's flute was melancholic, the air would flicker, almost dying out; when life shot through the flute again, silver threads would glare up in the air - like luminescent bones - and the entire resurrected body of music, returned from the dead, stood there erect on their skeleton. This reminded me of Matei Călinescu's way of visualising music in his

diary that records the last years before he died: Matei C. (another Matei!) knew he had cancer, that his days were numbered, he kept the diary as a record of his escape from time (its very title is that), and he would also listen to music as an escape from time; quite often, he would have this same image of it as a descent from above of some silver threads, which I (while reading his diary) understood obviously as a staircase. A staircase one can ascend & descend at will, as one does the staircase of literature, which is actually the same staircase (Vancu, 2024, p. 161).

The whole truth of the Latin aphorism *ars longa, vita brevis* lies in this passage, completed by a parenthetical reflection in a later entry: “Art is what’s left alive beyond life” (Vancu, 2024, p. 251). Vancu, the unfictionalised protagonist of the book, embeds this moment in his experience of physical pain. In the wake of an accident, one of his legs is lame, and walking back home from Ioachimescu’s concert at the Gong theatre, he lets art do its magic trick of allowing him to transcend the aching body into another dimension of time and reality. There, in art, the staircase is invisible, though “one can trip and fall badly off it too – with horrible and life-crippling fractures – like falling off any staircase” (Vancu, 2024, p. 161).

In the face of rampaging epidemic, followed by the outburst of the war in Ukraine, Vancu’s diary entries are replete with meditations on mortality, suffering, disease and death. One may find it striking that Vancu takes the times of epidemic and war as the backdrop of his daily sorrows, joys, epiphanies, disappointments and elations, especially considering Sontag’s remark that in the Middle Ages “Epidemic diseases were a common figure for social disorder” and “From pestilence (bubonic plague) came ‘pestilent’, whose figurative meaning, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* is ‘injurious to religion, morals, or public peace – 1513’; and ‘pestilential’, meaning ‘morally baneful or pernicious – 1531’” (Sontag, 1978, p. 58). In the face of his own imminent death, Matei Călinescu’s diary is a Proustian *recherche du temps perdu*, obsessively referencing Proust’s *roman-fleuve* in which the past intersects with and illuminates the present. Vancu’s and Călinescu’s endeavours of making the beauty of art triumph over the ravaging passage of time chart a confessional space of maximum intensity and urgency in the two diaries, and both seem to converge into Vancu’s, which succeeds Călinescu’s in time. Thus, Vancu’s diary opens itself up, aware of repeated moments of *apophrades*, to the dead authors that return to visit and inhabit it. Two of those dead authors are Mircea Ivănescu and his friend Matei Călinescu.

When they are not occasioned by mundane miracles like a dog and a frog playing together, a cat plucking up the courage to let itself caressed for the first time, a hedgehog paying its routine visits, Vancu’s reflections are triggered by stimulating conversations and interviews or by extremely intense experiences of art. One of those interviews is Horia Roman Patapievič’s about the genesis of the 20<sup>th</sup> century literary modernity, whose idea is that “modernity means the invocation of some dead forms of beauty and their coming back to life, the

borrowing of some dead voices and revivifying them in new molds of language” (Vancu, 2024, p. 64). Patapievici’s reflection reminds Vancu of Harold Bloom’s *apophrades* in *The Anxiety of Influence* and *A Map of Misreading*. Vancu argues that what Bloom does is to translate the old belief in the darkening days of the *apophrades*, when the dead would return to dwell in the houses they used to inhabit. In Vancu’s reading of Bloom’s reinterpretation of the old Greek term, the *apophrades* is “that form of the anxiety of influence in which the writer deliberately opens up their poem to the great dead [authors] before them” (Vancu, 2024, p. 65). Where Bloom states that “the covert subject of most poetry for the last three centuries has been the anxiety of influence, each poet’s fear that no proper work remains for him to perform” (Bloom, 1997, p. 148), Vancu contends that the *apophrades* is “truly seminal and iconic for modernity” (Vancu, 2024, p. 65). Reinforcing the idea, Vancu concludes the entry of 28 October 2020:

...making sense of literature as the resurrection of the dead. Making sense of words as bricks of the houses where we’re desperately & hopefully trying to lure our beloved dead. Both those of the past and those of the future - in equal measure. There is no other way this can be (Vancu, 2024, p. 65).

Throughout the journal, Vancu reflects upon time in its myriads of manifestations, dimensions and perceptions. He accounts for the second volume of his journal as a way of recording and perceiving time that typifies an interval before the pandemic. The third volume captures “another quality of time, a Dantesque ‘time imposed by force’ which our brains found difficult to metabolise - hence the planetary depression in those first months of the pandemic” (Vancu, 2024, p. 134). Dante’s *Divina commedia* read in Italian is a recurrent underlayer of the diary, and while reading Dante’s *Paradise* with its descriptions of dazzling light, his mind engages in a simultaneous (re)reading through involuntary association of Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* and Rilke’s poetry (Vancu, 2024, p. 20), which is a reshaping of time into a sphere. In 2021, lying in a hammock chair on the beach in Neptun, he tries “to kill time,” (Vancu, 2024, p. 142), and he discovers that consuming the beauty around and the beauty in art is the most efficient way of doing so. Travelling from place to place (from Croatia through Tuscany and ending the journey in Milan, for instance) adds a new perception of time: one finds that the writing gains momentum, “perhaps also because it has to navigate through times of varying densities” (Vancu, 2024, p. 143).

Being written by a dying writer, Călinescu’s diary is totally absorbed into memory time. Its first pages, as well as its later pages, are a painful reconstruction of the portrait of M, his late son, whose death two years before 25 May 2004 (the first entry date) made time feel different. Călinescu’s model is Proust’s *A la recherche du temps perdu* which, like Dante’s *Divina commedia* that gives meaning and substance to Vancu’s diary, is the recurrent underlayer of Călinescu’s palimpsest. Proust gives Călinescu a narrative strategy, and so the diarist opens up his text to the dead French author, who returns to inhabit the dwelling house (i.e. the text) of his *ephebe*. Starting from the thought of his

dead mother who lost her memory because of Alzheimer, and confessing that his memory of her is a form of her continuing to live (i.e. also dwell!) in him, “in images that cleave and overlap in an ever-changing way,” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 42) Călinescu ends the entry with the final image of the narrator’s own body on high stilts in Proust’s novel. Those stilts metaphorically keep the subject connected with their past, but it becomes more and more difficult and problematic for one to keep walking on those stilts and maintain the connection. Călinescu reads the image as “connected memories” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 43). The image returns two pages later, when the diarist broods about the significance of 100 years and the distance between the epochs lived in his lifetime. Memory preserves those stretches of lived time, and its loss through Alzheimer, which revisits the thinking mind, erases it. That erasure of time is at the same time the erasure of the self before the physical death strikes.

Commemorating M on 24 August 2006, Călinescu sees time as “a space without dimensions, though no less real in its own unreality,” where his dead son’s presence “is an unnoticeable thread, which becomes luminous now and then, thus giving the meaning of an enigmatic smile to the whole day” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 22). Along with those recurrent memories of M, the diarist is revisited by memories of Borges, whose “imagination imitated memory” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 48); the houses of his childhood, also part of “a particular unreality, an inexistence” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 60) because they belong to a different time and space; his grandmothers, whom the diarist’s “retrospective imagination” places in a space-time that is now lost, Proust’s paradise (Călinescu, 2016, pp. 105-107).

Călinescu is troubled (almost like Lockwood, who is troubled by his “solitary neighbour” in *Wuthering Heights*) by the same distinction between diary and fiction writing that Vancu considers in his own diary:

No matter how ‘sincere’ he might be – no matter how skillful a writer might be in ‘the rhetoric of sincerity’ –, a reader cannot help fictionalising what he [the writer] writes - be it autobiographical or invented - before they adjust their inner lenses for the reading of the self brought about by the literary text. For whatever we might be doing, the only kind of writing we can read is fiction... (Călinescu, 2016, p. 60).

Călinescu’s reflection here sheds light on the fictitious nature of any text. The personal experiences recorded in writing, the spontaneous and sincere tone (that can after all be contrived) confer literariness upon the diary. Considering this, the diary is no less literary than the novel, especially when its author’s intention is to give shape to their impromptu thoughts and impressions and to publish them. Wondering why the diary enjoys huge popularity, Peter Zimmermann puts this success of the genre in the publishing world down to its literary and aesthetic value when he argues that “**Max Frisch’s** diaries are on a level par with his novels and plays. The diaries are even **Paul Nizon’s** main work. The same now applies for **Karl-Markus Gauß. Siegfried Unseld’s** diaries are regarded as key texts of post-war literature” (the author’s emphasis) (Zimmermann, 2015).

For Călinescu, diary writing and in particular the writing of “another kind of diary”, which he knows is the last volume of his *oeuvre*, his “escape from time,” with its promise of beyondness, is an “apparent temporal zigzag of rummaging through memory” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 271), a task of reconstituting snappy moments of the layered past and putting them into “a narrative syntax, a succession resembling the succession of words in a sentence with subordinate clauses and brackets, in a paragraph, etc.”, while “in the memory, time is abolished” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 272): those moments are fresh and colourful and complete. For a book-learned person like Călinescu, the languages in which he did his readings (English, French, Romanian), in translation or in the original, preserve their “semantic identity” (Călinescu, 2016, p. 272) intact. Călinescu scrutinises these tricks of memory, admitting the inaccuracy of the process, and therefore the transformative nature of the whole endeavour. He concludes the entry of 8 August 2008:

A satisfaction hard to describe ensues. The visual name and image *in tandem* may start telling stories, inserting chronology into memory, organising the episodes in keeping with this chronology (starting, for instance, *in medias res*, and then committing a prior event to the foreground, and then foreshadowing, etc.) - all the strategies alien to the oceanic world of memory (Călinescu, 2016, pp. 272-273).

Thus, diary writing becomes “what the writer self-construes” (Zimmermann, 2015). Nonetheless, when he advances this approach to it Zimmermann admits that

this sounds brutal if one considers **Wolfgang Herrndorf**'s work and structure – his co-writing with death, the attempt to find a language for a life with an illness leaving no chance for the individual. Yet this is the case: in the quest for language one stumbles across form. And form is not reality; it is merely a surrogate for the unmentionable (the author's emphasis) (Zimmermann, 2015).

The point Zimmermann makes of the construed nature of the text has a bearing on Călinescu's diary, which is, like Wolfgang Herrndorf's, a text written by a dying person for whom writing is literally a way of giving shape to an amorphous reality of pain. Writing is, in this extreme case, the diarist's way of re-organising the nebulae of memory, the bookish experiences of the past and of the present in order to give some meaning to one's life and approaching death through a coherent and contained narrative.

### **Body, Illness, Death, Beauty, Transcendence**

The two diarists keep their diaries in an acute awareness of an inevitable, and in Călinescu's case, impending death. Invoking Socrates, who stated that we do not know anything about death, we do not know whether it is a good or a bad thing, or whether it is a complete cessation of being or just a transformation and a journey of the soul from here to another realm, Călinescu concludes his entry of 15 March 2008 in admiration of Socrates's “sublime” closing line, which he quotes: “Which of us walks towards something better nobody knows except for the [supreme] God!”. The entry is a dramatic record of the clock's merciless

ticking, in spite of the diarist's titanic endeavour of reversing its advancing hands in his Proustian narrative:

I am also sentenced to death - not unjustly; as a matter of fact, beyond good and evil, beyond my own destiny – but the only thing I know vaguely is that the moment is not very far (Călinescu, 2016, p. 157).

Four days later in the chronological measurement of time and in the next entry of the diary, which skips those days, Călinescu proclaims a truth he shares with Vancu and so many other writers and artists across ages and cultures, a truth so definitively contained in the *ars longa, vita brevis* dictum. Both Călinescu and Vancu, and the whole league of other believers in this truth add an eschatological dimension to it: the beauty of art is not only enduring beyond an individual's existence; beauty can also save the world, a might it shares with love (and its corollaries) and with theological faith. In our modern times, most poignantly since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more and more of us (writers, artists and art consumers) have turned art into our religion, putting our faith in its eschatological might. Realizing that, in the shock of the news that he suffers from terminal cancer, he has forgotten to resort to the soothing effect of music, Călinescu resonates with Dostoevsky in the thought that beauty will save the world. He admits that actually it is saving the world now:

...whenever you come across it or approach it, in rapture. It reveals a mysterious dimension of the present, and yet another one, even more mysterious, of expectation. Listening to Mozart, I often stop writing, in the rediscovered joy of listening in awe, for minutes on end, to the exquisite purity of the sounds and rhythms that materialise his music, to the stairs made from thin silver threads, fluttering their wings in a flight to my ears (only in Bach's music are these of gold) (Călinescu, 2016, pp. 158-159).

Vancu chooses to read Călinescu's gesture of keeping on reading and writing literature and listening to music not in an eschatological key, but as:

a support that might help him to build sense in the midst of nonsense. He asks the beauty in literature and in music, for he would listen to a lot of music in those terminal years, to work as some kind of angels – who do not save anything, but herald one meaning or another, sometimes a terrifying one, in Rilke's words, and sometimes soothing (Vancu, 2024, p. 86).

Nonetheless, it is the stairs in Călinescu's description that Vancu echoes in his own diary, referencing Călinescu. Vancu's and Călinescu's diaries are replete with passages of such rapture, and with reiterations of the eschatological, transcendental and soothing role of beauty.

More anchored in the postmodern mindset, Vancu seems to live a lot more in the body than Călinescu, who more often than not records his cancer treatments and his worsening health condition and physical degradation in a tone of sad detachment. Although he tries to transcend his bodily condition confessing that he has “always been touched by the art that transcends the

body” (Vancu, 2024, p. 150), Vancu realizes that the body can be and ultimately is an aching attachment. He reads the Romanian poet George Bacovia (as a person) and Bacovia’s poetry in terms of alienation. With Rimbaud’s lines in mind (*La vraie vie est absente. Nous ne sommes pas au monde*) and at the same time thinking of Bacovia, Vancu argues:

In the most obvious way, Bacovia was not of this world; not only in the habitual sense that no poet is *of* this world - but in the hard-factual, physical, concrete sense in which nothing of what his body did occurred *in* this world. His life was not present here - there is no one poem written by him that would fail to make you feel that he regards everything with the astonishment of an alien body, brutally thrust in an environment which is not his (Vancu, 2024, p. 151).

Heartbroken by Bacovia’s desperate gesture of clinging to his poems because for him they were “the only real objects in his life” (Vancu, 2024, p. 152), Vancu undergoes a series of epiphanies that reveal to him the unreality of the world and of ourselves. This is an eerie sense shared by Vancu and Călinescu, and it is in close connection with the aching of the body in the case of somebody who suffers from cancer (Călinescu’s case) and somebody who records his living in times of the pandemic and of war, which infallibly take their death toll after causing terrible pain to the body (Vancu’s case, who adds his own pain to the collective pain in the wake of an accident which incapacitates him for a long interval). After the accident, Vancu confesses:

I have been neglectful of my body, more neglectful than of poetry anyway. ‘It’s just a body’, I said to myself so oftentimes, in silly arrogance. (I hadn’t come across that passage in Plotin that states, assertively & plainly & in the accurate terms of an essential equation: “The body is within.”) And the body punished me, it taught me it was an impudence on my part to want it to be transparent. /.../ In a way, modernity can be read as an entrance of the body into literature (Vancu, 2024, p. 145).

Poets and artists know that since the physical body is subject to decay, art is an embodiment *and* a way of transcending the body at the same time. Bringing to memory a moment when he saw Sappho’s saying “Mere air, these words, but delicious to hear” in a museum in Athens, poet Edward Hirsch reflects that “Writing fixes the evanescence of the sound. It holds it against death” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 9). The body of the text (the shape of its words with their rhythm, and structured into the syntax of the poem) are then felt “coming off the page into my own mouth – in transit, in action. I generate – I re-create – the words incantatory, the words liberated and self-reflexive. Words rising from the body, out of the body” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 10). What Vancu adds to this sense of simultaneous embodiment and transcendence is the intensity of poetry, which “has to be intensified soul; as a form of goodness, it has to be intensified soul – so intense that it changes you forever in the wake of the experience of it” (Vancu, 2024, p. 171).

An anecdote written in the entry of 2 May 2022 is of the nature of an epiphany. It was selected (by the press? by the diarist?) to essentialise Vancu’s message about our need of beauty and our restlessly eager search for it:

2 May. A little story of the other day, Ioana Marghita was keen on calling me up to share it with me: one day last week, an elderly man from the Titan district walked all the way to the radio station to find out what the musical piece with which I had concluded my dialogue in a music programme was called - he'd been ravished by it. As the elderly person did not know how to google it up, the radio was his only source. The piece was *Insan Insan*, composed by Fazil Say on a 16<sup>th</sup> century poem by Muhyiddin Abdal. I can understand what might have been in the soul of the man from Bucharest: the first time I heard it was in Istanbul, in Gökçenur's car, some ten years ago - and it tears my soul to shreds every time I listen to it. That's all I wanted to report here: that somebody can still walk across the whole city just to gain knowledge of a musical piece that was wonderful & haunting & healing. There is hope left (Vancu, 2024, p. 226).

Likewise, literature, and poetry in particular (which is more intense than any other genre) has the role of building communities and nations, and “preserving these scraps of humaneness [even in communities destroyed by war]” (Vancu, 2024, p. 113). Written in moments of “inspiration in the presence of death” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 38) as Hirsch accounts for it drawing on Lorca's “duende”, poetry is a message against death and forgetfulness.

### On Reading and A Few Conclusions

Vancu's reflection is that the role of literature is “to hallucinate your life. And, only in doing so, to pour large amounts of light that were lying somewhere within you down upon your life, amounts of light you wouldn't have been able to release if literature hadn't unlocked them” (Vancu, 2024, pp. 183-184).

Hirsch's reflections find a good context here again, since what he argues in *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry* can read as a prelude to the book Călinescu finished writing sixteen days before he died. Hirsch states in one of the book's sub-chapters that “It Is Something of an Accident That You Are the Reader and I the Writer” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 28). Hirsch quotes Emerson, who wrote about “creative reading” in “The American Scholar” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 29), and of course Harold Bloom's “misreading” is one more voice in this chorus. With its connective and liberating impact, “a poem enacts what it is about, it creates a way for itself to live dramatically inside the reader” (Hirsch, 1999, p. 45), which is another kind of embodiment.

Echoing Mallarmé's opening line in *Brise marine*, Călinescu ponders on it: “Hélas, j'ai lu tous les livres” (Călinescu, 2016, pp.436-437). In that particular moment and circumstance, this lament translates not so much a sense of *ennui* as a sense of disappointment that reading (any book) can no longer give the reader the surprise of a new discovery that is so characteristic of youth. For the writer who is writing this, the meaning is also that he has read all the books he could read, since this is literally the end of his life. To Lejeune's question “How Do Diaries End?” that gives the title of a chapter in a book that tackles diary writing, Călinescu's answer is no contrivance: his kind of diary ends on the note of the writer's last days on Earth, in a tone of dissolution, which is also

the dissolution of the style itself. It is strikingly significant that Lejeune quotes Michel Leiris's diary entry of September 26, 1966, in which Leiris contemplates a kind of writing that will not be halted by one's cessation to exist:

A book that would be neither an intimate diary nor a fully formed work, neither an autobiography nor a work of imagination, neither poetry nor prose, but all of that at once. A book conceived so as to be able to constitute an autonomous whole at whatever moment it is interrupted (by death, of course) (Leiris quoted by Lejeune, 2009, p. 192).

Like Philip Quarles – Huxley's novelist in *Point Counter Point* – and like Huxley himself who designed the book, the solution to this creative conundrum lies in getting the writing as close as possible to the sense of proliferation in music: Leiris found it in variation; Huxley found it in counterpoint; Călinescu found it in the evocative descriptions of the music he was listening to, which counterpointed in the text's body the proliferation of anaplastic cells in his own dying body.

Zimmermann's last blog passage on the diary as a literary genre encapsulates Călinescu's plight in a metalanguage that resonates with the Romanian writer's Proustian text:

'Co-writing' or Mit-Schreiben (**Peter Handke**) with the day, with daily impressions, accomplishments and encounters only exists as a process of transformation and redrafting. The sentence is never identical to the subject that it describes. Thought in itself already corrupts reality. The sentence corrupts the thought in a second step, and thus to a certain extent it expresses a double untruth. Basically, nothing is wrong with this. Yet one should know that when I say 'I', another subject is always intended and that this 'now' refers to a different time than the present. The fact that diaries are nonetheless favoured as examples of experienced reality may be explained with the following sentence from **Marcel Proust**, "Time passes, and little by little everything that we have spoken in falsehood becomes true" (the author's emphasis) (Zimmermann, 2015).

Vancu's reflections on poetry are abundant in the diary, but his statement that "from my point of view, the one who reads poetry is also a poet - because they also take part, with the same zest the poet does, in this admirable & dreadful beauty. [A beauty] that we build & inhabit together" (Vancu, 2024, p. 146) is of particular relevance in this context of reading. The image of the masonry built and inhabited by authors and readers hypertextually connects (in Genette's terms) Vancu's diary with the Epic of Gilgamesh and with all the houses, palaces, mansions, cottages, huts, rooms, parlours, halls, etc. in world literature since the dawn of writing to the present day.

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**ANSWERING THE KING. CONTEXT AND TONE OF  
COMMUNICATION IN NEO-ASSYRIAN LETTERS**Kiril Mladenov<sup>1</sup>, Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”, Bulgaria<https://doi.org/10.46687/IHNU3134>

**Abstract:** *The aim of this article is to examine and analyze the tone of communication in selected examples from the Neo-Assyrian state archive, published in the State Archives of Assyria series, through the lens of Searle’s Speech Act Theory. Participants in this communication include Assyrian kings who reigned during the 8th–7th centuries BCE, high-ranking officials and administrators, as well as members of the scribal elite, also known as scholars, at the royal court. The period of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (10th–7th centuries BCE) marks a turning point in world history due to a number of significant innovations in administration and social regulation introduced by the Assyrian monarchs. The study of written communication sheds light on a more specific aspect of state governance, revealing essential elements of the hierarchical relationships between the ruler and his subordinates. These communications define the boundaries of what is permitted, but they also delve into issues such as professional conflicts and competition. Last but not least, they have the potential to reveal typical patterns of response in specific situations that remain hidden in more concise types of sources, such as Assyrian royal inscriptions.*

**Key words:** *Neo-Assyrian period, Assyriology, letters*

**Introduction**

The Neo-Assyrian Empire (c. 900–612 BCE), one of the most formidable powers in the ancient Near East, left behind an immense and diverse textual legacy, encompassing royal inscriptions, legal decrees, diplomatic correspondence, and literary and ritual texts. These texts were not merely records of events or declarations of facts. Parallel to that, they were instruments of action, wielded by kings, officials, and scribes to command, persuade, intimidate, and legitimize their authority. This is primarily evident in the large number of letters stored in the royal

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**Article history:** Received: 30 April 2025; Reviewed: 3 June 2025; Revised: 9 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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palaces of the Assyrian capitals. In the territories governed by the Assyrians, a highly sophisticated Imperial postal system existed, which functioned through an extensive and well-organized network of interconnected roads collectively referred to as the *royal road* (*harrān šarri*). This infrastructure served as the primary communication artery of the empire, ensuring swift and reliable transmission of official messages and orders (Radner, 2015, p. 63-66). At regular and strategically chosen intervals along these roads, there were garrisoned relay stations known as *bēt mardīāte*. This relay system allowed for the continuous and expedited movement of imperial correspondence across vast distances, demonstrating the imperial administration's logistical capabilities and centralized control.

Working with the information in the Assyrian letters is a complex task nowadays. It is challenging for modern scholars to establish a precise chronological framework. The absence of explicit dates or fixed temporal markers means contextualizing the letters within broader historical developments, often requiring speculative reconstruction. Fales points out that evidence suggests a specific conception of time governed the Neo-Assyrian letters (Fales, 2010, p. 94).<sup>2</sup> The letters were written, sent, received, and read *now*. In this way, Fales explains the high occurrence of the words *uma* ('now') and *annurig* ('right now') in the texts. When read, the letters were kept as long as their topic was current.

This study aims to analyze the tone of communication in some Neo-Assyrian state archive letters using John Searle's *Speech Act Theory* as a theoretical framework (Searle, 1998, p. 135-163). This theory proposes a linguistic and philosophical approach that defines language understanding. According to Searle, language is not merely a tool for describing reality or conveying factual information, but it is also performative in nature. When people speak or write, they are not just saying things but *doing* them with their words. They issue commands, make promises, forge relationships, express intentions, or assert authority. By applying this perspective to Neo-Assyrian texts, the functional role of language as a means of action, rather than merely a means of communication, can be revealed. Searle's framework enables the analysis of the illocutionary force behind statements, including the kind of act being performed, the speaker's intention, and the desired effect on the audience. By organizing and interpreting Neo-Assyrian texts following Searle's theory, the paper aims to reveal the communicative intentions and political strategies embedded in the high-ranking correspondence, providing new insights into how power, diplomacy, and ideology were enacted through language.

Radner notes that the tone and formality of communication in the Neo-Assyrian letters varied significantly depending on the recipient's status and function (Radner, 2015, p. 61f). In particular, correspondence between the king and his magnates – leading officials who held key administrative, military, and often territorial authority – tended to be highly formal and structured. These magnates,

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2 The author compares the letters to the spontaneity of phone calls nowadays, which happen in real time.

including governors, generals, and trusted royal advisors, played a crucial role in controlling the empire's vast territories. Their duties included tax collection, military command, local governance, and enforcing the king's decrees across distant territories, thereby deeply entwining their relationship with the monarch in the kingdom's governance. In contrast, communication between the king and the court scholars was often more informal in tone. The scholars were learned men responsible for interpreting omens and organizing rituals, composing and copying texts, advising on ritual and cultic matters, and maintaining the vast intellectual traditions of Mesopotamian knowledge. They occupied a crucial position within the royal court, serving as intermediaries between divine signs and the royal decision-making process. They are sometimes represented even as the king's counselors on political matters. The difference in tone between these two groups reflects the distinct nature of their roles as executors of royal authority and interpreters of the divine and intellectual order. The physical aspect – the scholars usually lived close to the king's reach – was also crucial for this difference in the attitude. In the following sections, selected Neo-Assyrian texts will be categorized according to the five types of speech acts identified by Searle.<sup>3</sup> The tone of these texts will be examined in terms of their illocutionary force and communicative intention.

### Assertives and Expressives

Assertives are dominant and relatively easy to catch in the texts since many of the letters from the king's magnates are reports. For example, in SAA 5 002 Nashir-Bēl, the governor of the provinces Amedi and Sinabu during the late reign of king Sargon II, describes to the king the situation on the northern border against the kingdom of Urartu for which he is responsible:

[To the k]in[g, my lo]rd: [your servant Nashir]-Bel. Good health t[o the king], my [lord]! [The land] of [the ki]ng is well; the for[t]s are well. The king, my lord, can be glad. As to the news of the Urartians, the messenger of mine [wh]om I sent [to] the governor opposite me has come back; he spoke to him as the king, my lord, wrote me, saying: "Why do you capture our forts, while we are at peace?" He said: "What should I do? If I have trespassed on your territory or your forts, call me to account. His troops are assembled with him; he is keeping watch in Harda. This was the news about them.

After his successful campaign against Urartu in 714 BCE, Sargon no longer conducted military operations deep within the territory of his northern neighbor.

<sup>3</sup> These five categories are Assertive (statements, descriptions), Directive (commands, requests), Commissive (promises, commitments), Expressive (gratitude, apology), and Declarative (official announcements). An Assertive is when the speaker commits to the truth of a proposition, such as stating facts or making reports; a Directive aims to get the listener to do something, like issuing orders or making requests; a Commissive involves the speaker committing themselves to a future action, such as making a promise or offering assistance; an Expressive reveals the speaker's psychological state or emotion, often through greetings, congratulations, or complaints; and a Declarative is an utterance that, under the right institutional conditions, enacts a change in the external world simply by being spoken. In many cases, a specific Neo-Assyrian letter may contain more than one of these types (Searle, 1998).

Consequently, Urartian king Argishti II stabilized his authority in the kingdom and reclaimed lost territories as Assyria shifted its focus elsewhere. Nonetheless, the response from the Urartian governor seems overly provocative and impertinent. It could be that Nashir-Bēl presents the opponent's statement in a Thucydidian manner, highlighting political provocation and instability on the border. There is a contradiction in Nishir-Bēl's letter – the forts are secure, yet some of them appear to have been captured by foreign armies. The governor is likely attempting to mask recent failures, emphasizing the necessity of future conflicts in which he believes he could prove himself before the king. Observing the exchange of information between Nishir-Bēl and the king (SAA 5 001-020), one notes that the situation on the northern border is tense, making the governor's position both essential and delicate. From SAA 5 003, it can be inferred that numerous border garrisons also existed on the opposite Urartian side, and border conflicts frequently occurred. Salvini notes the expansion and aggression of the Urartian kingdom during the reign of Argišti, particularly in the north-northeast direction. Still, such an attitude can also be observed in its uneasy relationships with Assyria (Salvini, 2009). The following letter details previous military actions culminating in an Assyrian victory.

I went [t]o Ša-Aššur-dubb[u]; the ci[ty] was taken in [my] presence, and they brought garrison troop[s] into it. (SAA 5 004)

It appears that Nishir-Bēl skillfully plays his cards to persuade the king of his competence and reliability in managing the situation. By downplaying potential losses and amplifying the significance of his successes, he presents himself as a capable and effective official, carefully shaping the narrative to maintain royal favor and authority. Probably this gives him the confidence to assert his rights in a situation where he is disadvantaged or treated unfairly. The same governor is shocked or scared (*palāhu*) when he is alarmed that the king ordered him to give up some of his vast land holdings, possibly due to a claim by one Aššur-Remanni:

[As to] the fields of the patrimony of Aššur-remanni, about which the king, my lord, wrote me, the royal bodyguard shocked me when he said: "Give up the pro[perty], the well, and the arable land!" (SAA 05 015)

A long explanation follows, reminding the king of the actual status of the lands, which serves as an answer to the king's bodyguard Directive. This letter is an example of a revelation of dissatisfaction from an official who strongly relies on the king's goodwill. Similarly expressed fear can be observed in the story of Esarhaddon's official in northern Phoenicia, Itti-Šamaš-balatu (SAA 16 127).<sup>4</sup> In his letter, the author alerts the king that the monarch of Arwad, Ikkilû (Iakin-Lû), does not permit boats to come to the king's port but has monopolized the entire trade for himself. According to the letter, Ikkilû claims they have written to him from the palace to do only what is good for him. The Assyrian official states further that many people from the king's entourage are part of Ikkilû's schemes and that the merchants are systematically scaring him. As a liaison between Arwad's court

4 PNA I, p. 589 ff.

and the Assyrians, one Ilu-ma'adi from Šimirra is mentioned. He is said to have traveled back and forth to Assyria, gathering details about any matters and news, and then reported them to Ikkilū. The poor situation of Itti-Šamaš-balatu is also glimpsed in SAA 16 128 where he complains that:

There is no fr[ien]d of mine here. I put my trust in the king, my lord. I do not give one shekel (or even) half a shekel to anybody but the king, my lord. May the king, my lord, not leave me in their hands.

In the last two examples, the Assertives are generously supplemented with Expressives, showing the official's loyalty to the throne. However, I think the most striking part of the texts is Ikkilū's claim that his actions are already coordinated with the palace. Can we be sure that Ikkilū is lying, or is Itti-Šamaš-balatu unaware of an ongoing communication? In my opinion, it is impossible to give a definite answer, but the fact that Ikkilū kept his position later during Ashurbanipal's reign may be revealing.

It is essential to note that the correspondence should not be considered for canonized literature and should not be analysed as such. The information in the letters often concerns the author's interests, which are often not explicitly mentioned. When the texts are studied, the individual factor must be considered first. Appropriate examples could be observed in the correspondence between the king and his scholars. In the letter SAA 10 051 the scholar Balasi, *ummānu* of prince Assurbanipal, wrote to king Esarhaddon:

Concerning the planet [Venus] about which the king, my lord, [wrote to me: "I am] told that it has [become visible]" – the man who wrote (thus) to the king, [my lord], is in (complete) ignorance. He does not k[now] the [...], the cycle [...], (or) the (synodic) revoluti[ons of Venus] ... Who [is the man that write]s so [to the king, my lord]? I repeat: he does not understand (the difference) between Mercury and Venus

The Assertive *speech act* here is quite an accusation against one of Balasi's colleagues, possibly Issar-šumu-ēreš, because in SAA 10 023 he interprets the appearance of Venus before the king (Verderame, 2014, p. 718).<sup>5</sup> Balasi insists the king disregard the opinions of other scholars and ask him directly instead. It can be speculated that this situation was a private case. Still, when studied in its whole, the tone of Balasi in his letters is, as Verderame puts it, 'a characteristic one, peculiar to his style' (Ibid, p. 715). Verderame writes that Balasi's reaction is an unusual break in the court etiquette, which establishes that questions are directed from the king downwards (Ibid, p. 720). Irritation is often evident in his (and frequently in his colleague Nabu-ahhe-eriba's) responses to the king. Assertive elements are evident in his willingness to contradict the king's interpretation and expressive elements emerge through his irritation, irony and occasional sarcasm. For example, one can easily sense the irony in his tone in Balasi's responses to the king's reactions and questions after a storm and an earthquake:

<sup>5</sup> The argument possibly ends with an agreement: "Concerning Mercury, about which the king my lord wrote to me: yesterday Issar-šumu-ereš had an argument with Nabû-ahhe-eriba in the palace. Later, at night, they went and all made observations; they saw (it) and were satisfied." (SAA 8 083)

As to what the king, m[ylord, wr]ote [to me]: “[In] the city of H[ar]ihumba lightning struck and ravaged the fields of the Assyrians” – why does the king look for (trouble), and why does he look (for it) [in the ho]me of a tiller? There is no evil inside the palace, and when has the king ever visited Harihumba? Now, provided that there is (evil) inside the palace, they should go and perform the (ritual) “Evil of Lightning” there. (SAA 10 042)

Concerning the interpretation of the omen about which the king, my lord, wrote to me: „(It is said that) the king will be vilified amongst his magnates – what losses will ensue?“ – interpretations of monthly omens are like this: one is never similar to another, their interpretations go separately. Was there no earthquake in the times of the king’s fathers and grandfathers? Did I not see earthquakes when I was small? The god has (only) wanted to open the king’s ears: „He should pray (literally, open his fists’) to the god, perform the apotropaic ritual and be on his guard.“ (SAA 10 056)

The scholar responds to the king’s concerns about ominous signs in both letters. In both cases, he is willing to challenge or reframe the king’s interpretation, employing logic and rhetorical questions. In the case of the earthquake, he states that god Ea has created it, Ea can undo it – “He who caused the earthquake has also created the apotropaic ritual against it.” (SAA 10 056) (Westenholz, 1998, p. 12). I find three points in the cited communication that are revealing for the tone. First, the king’s anxiety appears deeply rooted in the importance of place and positioning in Assyro-Babylonian mantic and ritualistic traditions. Ambos notes a close correlation between passing through space and transitioning from one state to another, and that bad omens are mostly related to space rather than a person (Ambos, 2013, p. 41, 47).<sup>6</sup> Secondly, while the situation described is serious – queries from the king about possible divine punishment manifested through natural disasters – Balasi employs irony and perhaps even gentle sarcasm in his response. His suggestion of the appropriate ritual, “Evil of Lightning,” is not offered in a panicked or deferential tone but is delivered with a sense of calm detachment, as if to underscore the king’s overreaction. This rhetorical move functions to downplay the threat’s scale and subtly critique the king’s anxious interpretation, probably based on another scholar’s opinion, thus making the social context similar to the case of the Venus visibility dispute, cited earlier. Still, he stresses the fact that it is only the owner of the field who will potentially suffer:

In case the king, my lord, says: “How is it said (in the tablets)?” – (here is the relevant interpretation): “If the storm god devastates a field inside or outside a city, or if he puts down a ... of (his) chariot, or if fire burns anything, the said man will live in utter misery for 3 years.” This applies (only) to the one who was cultivating the field (SAA 10 042).

Thirdly, the communication reflects a broader intellectual autonomy on the part of the scholar. Balasi introduces a corrective interpretative framework grounded in textual authority. He cites the authority of the tablets and ritual knowledge. In such a way, he is not just a messenger or technician performing rituals on command but a learned advisor who asserts interpretive control. This

<sup>6</sup> Ambos deals specifically with interpreting eclipses, but one can look at the lightning as yet another astronomical cataclysmic event.

is further shown by the complementary explanation in SAA 10 069, where Nabu-ahhe-eriba echoes the idea that divine signs result not from arbitrary wrath but moral or cultic failures – in this case, the farmers' neglect of Adad:

[Concerning] the large field [of the Assyrians [about which the king], my lord, wrote to me: "It was a very productive field; who is removing the grain?" – the farmers who seeded the fields do not revere Adad anymore; that is why he let a lightning bolt strike down (and devastate the field). Since the king, my lord, commanded (so), an exorcist should perform the (ritual called) "Purification of the Field," and he should at the same time [also] perform the (apotropaic ritual called) "Evil of a Stroke of Lightning."

As a result, Balasi and his colleague Nabu-ahhe-eriba managed to convince the king of the local rather than universal hazard of the natural disaster, and together they organized a local purification ritual for the field. However, more than diverting a danger towards the king, their rhetorical strategy, mixing assertive interpretation with expressive reassurance, allowed them to redirect royal anxiety into action and assert their expert authority.

The cited examples show that scholars are far more persuasive and emotionally invested in their communications. This difference is largely due to the nature of court politics. Scholars at the Assyrian court were deeply entangled in intellectual competition and complex interpersonal dynamics. It has already been seen that their letters often reflect efforts not only to interpret omens or advise the king, but also to assert their authority, insight, and prestige. This rivalry led them to adopt more emotionally charged and rhetorically strategic language, especially when responding to sensitive issues such as ominous signs or divine warnings – occurrences that could be differently interpreted. It should be noted, however, that this same competition among scholars largely contributed to the advancement of Assyro-Babylonian science. The need to stand out in a crowded intellectual field encouraged innovation, careful observation, refined methods of divination and exegesis, and increasingly sophisticated interpretive frameworks. During the 7th century B.C., they culminated in official editions of compendia and encyclopedias.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, the governors' letters reflect predominantly bureaucratic matters required for the empire to function correctly.

### Commissives and Directives

Commissives are primarily found in letters related to planning and task management. These actions could vary between the logistics of building materials and an official visit. For example, in SAA 01 054 the chief treasurer Ṭab-šar-aššur

<sup>7</sup> For example, such compendia are the so-called *Nineveh Medical Encyclopedia* (BAM 9), the *Enūma Anu Enlil* series on celestial omens (Rochberg, 2014), and the *Šumma Ālu* collection of terrestrial omens (Freedman 1998). These works represent the pinnacle of Assyrian scholarly efforts to systematize and preserve vast bodies of knowledge in fields such as astrology, medicine, ritual practice, and lexicography. Produced and maintained by highly trained scribes at the royal court, the writing served not only divinatory and ritual functions but also reflected an epistemological approach based on observation, classification, and tradition. The Assyrian scholars operated within a sophisticated intellectual environment where scientific knowledge, cultic duty, and political authority were deeply intertwined.

(PNA 1344) reports to the king his actions and schedule about the transportation of cultic objects to Aššur, including a ritual bed (*eršu*):

The first day after we left the Palace, we stayed overnight in Ubasê. The boats are all right. On the next day, the gods of the king guarding, we shall safely arrive in [the Inner City], and I shall bring the golden [monster]s [...] into the temple of Aššur And [..... the b]ed, th[ere is a ritual] to put together for decorating and washing the bed. If the king, my lord, orders, we shall bring it into the temple of Aššur and perform our rites jointly together. There is room there, and it is suitable for our vigil. (SAA 01 054).

Luckily, we know what happened later, although the beginning, including the name of the sender, is broken:

I arrived at the Inner City on the 18th. The inhabitants of the Inner City acted in the same way (as before): offering tables were set up and sacrifices were being made. They anchored the boats on the river before the Gate of Aššur. My canopy was set up aboard, and I am staying on the river and keeping watch until the day I depart. The king, my lord, can be pleased indeed. As long as the bed is aboard, regular sheep offerings are being made in front of it. Perhaps the king, my lord, [will say]: “[When are you] going to depart from the Inner City [.....]?” I am waiting [... for the] troops; right now [..... the governor] of Arrapha [..... (SAA 01 055)

Nissines connects the letters with the *quršu* love ritual of the goddess Mulissu, mentioned in Assyrian cultic rituals (Nissinen, 2001, p. 96). He notes that cultic use of beds is mainly restricted to two cases – in rituals during sickness and in the ancient sacred marriage ceremonies, aiming to bring fertility to the land. The tasks in SAA 01 055 are measured in a sequence of meaningful ritual and logistical actions – the arrival at the Inner City, setting up the bed, performing sacrifices, and waiting for accompanying troops from elsewhere. The events mark a sacred temporality that runs parallel to and interwoven with the administrative schedule, which describes overnight stops and boat anchoring. Thus, the text resolves into a Declarative, framing a new reality and marking a border between a normal and a festive state and between the physical and the spiritual worlds. In this context, the formed space of the boats carrying sacred objects can be understood as a *heterotopia* in the Foucauldian sense. This space exists outside of ordinary spatial and temporal coordinates yet reflects and inverts them. It is set apart from the mundane world and functions as a transitional zone where the profane and the sacred intersect, temporarily suspending normative structures and allowing for the embodiment of the symbolic order. The interplay between these temporal registers in the letter reflects a broader conception in which ritual efficacy is intimately tied to spatial timing and procedural accuracy. The movement of sacred objects and persons is thus meticulously regulated. Each journey phase must align with bureaucratic order and ritual preparedness, ensuring that sacred actions unfold precisely at the right moment and in the right setting. In my opinion, unrecorded factors stemming from religious perceptions of the topic additionally shape the tone and framing of information in the letters concerning ritual actions. It could be said that for ancient cultures, rituals are characterized as *Mysterium tremendum et fascinans* (“a fearful and fascinating

mystery”), following Rudolph Otto’s definition of religious experience in his *“The Idea of the Holy”* (Otto, 1958, Foucault, 1967). In this way, when considering the tone between the king and his officials regarding spiritual matters, one should consider the unspoken reverence for the godly world expressed by the participants in the communication. They are, however, tough to catch since the cultural context of the civilization is long gone.

Sometimes, the Commissive is put in the form of a Directive, which is especially characteristic of the king’s urgent commands:

700 bales of straw and 700 bundles of reeds, each bundle more than a donkey can carry, must be at hand in Dur-Šarruken by the 1st of Kislev (IX). Should (even) one day pass by, you will die (SAA 01 026).

The threat at the end of SAA 01 126 should not be taken literally but rather understood as a signifier of the immediacy of the situation. Indeed, some of the kings’ letters have a more friendly-sounding command, for example, in SAA 01 022: “Don’t delay; leave your business and come straight away!” From various letters, it is known that missions are sometimes delayed due to different reasons often unspecified, for example in SAA 13 179 (“As for the work of the gods of the king in which I was e[arlier] delayed, I have (now) show[n him] the work.”) and SAA 01 185 (“[I asked him]: “Why were you delayed?” He said: “He detained me for 12 days; Marduk-šumu-iddina will be coming right after me.”).

To the other end of the commissives’ spectrum, letter SAA 10 203 discusses the crown prince’s planned visit after an earthquake.<sup>8</sup> Adad-šumu-ušur writes to the king:

Concerning the crown prince’s visiting the king, my lord, is it because of the earthquake that he has said: “The crown prince should not go outdoors”? It is (already) a fortnight today since the earth quaked, the pertinent ritual has been performed twice, and the king, my lord, knows the relevant interpretation. As they say, what has it to do with this? The visit of [the crown] prince would be [perfectly] all right now.

According to Parpola, the purpose of the question was clearly to express astonishment – the earthquake didn’t obstruct the prince’s freedom to move around since the apotropaic *namburbi* rituals had been performed twice, and the predictions for the crown prince were not sinister (Parpola, 1981, p. 135). This earthquake and its cultic preparations could be possibly linked to SAA 10 010, in which Issar-šumu-ereš cites what is written in the tablets about apotropaic rituals.<sup>9</sup> In Assyro-Babylonian astrology, astral phenomena were important in determining everyday life at the royal court and identified with the court’s realities. For example, the crown prince was identified with the planet Mercury, and, as

8 This letter is possibly connected to SAA 10 190 in which the king, cited by the letter’s author, asks Adad-šumu-ušur: “Is this month good? The crown prince should visit me — when would it be good?”

9 Hemerologies and omens interpretation affect the visit of the crown princes also in letters SAA 10 052 and 10 074.

Parpola puts it, sometimes there is an explicit moral content of displeasure towards the king's conduct (Westenholz, 1995, p. 127; Parpola, 1981, p. 40). Most of the information in the letters comes from the scientific compendia, and its meaning should be adequately understood to correctly assess the tone of communication. Returning to the cited letter SAA 10 203, could the question be understood as astonishment, relief, irritation, or even irony? In my opinion, the answer depends on the reader's choice on which phrase in the text to put a stress: on the expression about the duration ('already a fortnight'), on the reassurance that it is safe ('the pertinent ritual has been performed twice'), on the fact that the king has already received an explanation ('the king, my lord, knows the relevant interpretation'), or on the second question ('what has it to do with this?').

## Declaratives

Declaratives are primarily found in letters concerning the appointment of officials. For example SAA 01 177:

If it is acceptable to the king, my lord, let them send a letter to Nabû-ušalla the prefect, and let me appoint la'iru the deputy as village manager there, and Sin-iddina, the major-domo of Adda-hati in Sazanâ, so they will attend to these road stations and fear the king.

In this letter, the governor of Şupat in the western Assyrian territories Bel-liqbi is organizing the government in one of the post stations in the region. The king has the final decision, although the case concerns matters far from the palace. Interesting documents from the palace – the so-called *appointment queries to god Šamaš* show that the appointment of officials was a procedure that should also have a religious justification. For example, SAA 4 156:

Should Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, appoint [the ma]n whose name is written in this papyrus and placed before your great divinity, [to the po]sition which is written in [th]is papyrus? If he appoints him, [as] long as he holds this position, will he instigate an insurrection and rebellion against Esarhaddon, king of Assyria, and [Assu]rbanipal, the crown prince of the Succession Palace?

Interestingly, the candidate's name and position are not explicitly stated in the text itself, but instead referred to indirectly as being recorded "in this papyrus" accompanying the query. This practice reflects a deliberate choice – likely intended to maintain confidentiality or ritual propriety – especially given the sensitive nature of the question posed to the deity. The omission of the specific identity in the main body of the text and its substitution with a physical referent (the papyrus) suggests an institutionalized method of concealing details that could be politically volatile if publicly known. This structure aligns with the logic of Searle's theory of speech acts in an intriguing way. The query is formally a yes-no interrogative, but functionally it sets the stage for a declarative act – the appointment, contingent upon divine sanction. The speech act only becomes performative when interpreted by the appropriate institutional authority – the king, and also the divinity. This example speaks to Neo-Assyrian statecraft's

broader administrative and religious texts, where divine will and bureaucratic procedure are closely intertwined.

Concluding or breaking a treaty, which usually leads to a military conflict, could also be described as a Declarative. One of the most interesting texts in the royal archive comes from the copy of the original treaty between Esarhaddon and Baal of Tyre:

[The treat]y of Esarhad[don, king] of Assyria, son of [Sennacherib likewise king of Assyria, with Baa], king of Tyre, with [..., his son, and his other sons and grandsons, with a]ll [Tyrians], young and old [...] (SAA 2 005)

The treaty includes elaborate curses and blessings that reinforce the commissive nature of the act. The text highlights the performative power of language within the Neo-Assyrian imperial system, where written texts could describe political realities and actively create and enforce them through ritualized speech. The history of Tyre during this period is very dynamic, ranging between peaceful years and Assyrian military occupation, recorded in the royal inscriptions. The invasion of the Assyrian army was caused by the termination of the contract by the Tyrians:

In the course of my campaign, I set up fortifications against Ba'alu, the king of Tyre, who trusted in his friend Taharqa, the king of Kush, threw off the yoke of the god Aššur, my lord, and kept answering (me) with insolence (RINAP 34:13 f.)

The breaking of the treaty by Ba'al is presented not simply as a political act, but as a ritual and legal rupture – a reversal of the earlier declarative act that bound the two powers. This illustrates how deeply embedded the declarative and commissive acts were within the ideological and religious framework of the empire. In effect, treaties were speech acts with the weight of divine sanction – to violate them was to invite both human and supernatural retaliation.

## Conclusion

From the studied examples in the text, it can be concluded that the Neo-Assyrian state archive letters are more than mere instruments of administrative record. They are dynamic vehicles of power, persuasion, and ritual authority. Applying John Searle's Speech Act Theory to this corpus could uncover the multiple layers of performative meaning embedded in seemingly straightforward correspondence. Assertives and directives dominate the bureaucratic communication with governors and officials, where the primary concern is efficient administration, military control, and logistical precision. Commissives and expressives, though less frequent, reveal emotional tones, personal loyalty, and anxiety, particularly in moments of crisis or uncertainty. This identifies tone as a carrier of emotional nuance, but only in relation to specific speech acts. The declarative acts, most notably visible in appointments and treaties, offer the clearest example of how language was used to bring about change in the real world — not just to describe events but to enact them, usually with both political and religious implications.

A single letter can often contain multiple speech acts, depending on the recipient's status and situation. The contrast in tone between the royal correspondence with provincial governors and that with court scholars reflects the complex socio-political structures in the state. While governors operated within a strict hierarchical framework, scholars enjoyed greater rhetorical freedom to assert influence in matters of ritual and divination. In this context, language was not only a means of communication but also a powerful tool for negotiating identity and constructing political order. The Neo-Assyrian Empire, with its sophisticated communication network and deeply embedded ideology of kingship, provides a fertile ground for exploring the performative function of written language. Speech act theory, therefore, offers a valuable lens through which to analyze ancient texts, highlighting not just what was said but how it was done.

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# THE IMAGE OF A WOMAN IN THE EPISTOLARY STORY “AĞLAYAN KADINLAR”- KOLAJI İÇİN TASLAK<sup>1</sup> BY THE TURKISH AUTHOR ERENDİZ ATASÜ

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/VBDN4959>

**Abstract:** *This paper analyzes the issue of unifying women’s suffering as shown through the letters of two friends, Idil who lives in England, and Sirma who lives in Turkey. Through the letters they send to each other, both women mirror the current time and places in which the determiners of the patriarchal worldview are written, whereby each woman is destined to be in a subordinate position in relation to a man. In the short story titled “Ağlayan Kadınlar” Kolajı İçin Taslak (1997) the author Erendiz Atasü tries to free her heroines from the burden of serving the patriarchal ideology. However, the supremacy of the male over the female gender limits a woman, no matter how successful she might be in the public eye, where one can once again witness gender inequality. The presence of a woman in the space assigned to the male gender means an end to various forms of male domination. By contrasting the feminist/gender perspectives of the two main protagonists, this paper will attempt to demonstrate that the string of letters is arranged in such a way as to present a picture of the world as presented through the eyes of a woman, and a woman’s experience.*

**Key words:** *patriarchy, letter, woman, feminism, Erendiz Atasü*

## Introductory notes

In a patriarchal society, specific character traits are attributed to both women and men, which, in turn, determine their roles within the society itself, and the strict division of gender roles has always placed women in an inferior position. The inscription of patriarchal culture into the traditional Turkish system promoted a strategy of excluding the female subject from the public sphere, while allowing men to establish dominance over women, implying their exploitation and subjugation. The male role becomes the norm for the entire society, and ideological and stereotypical concepts of “femininity” and “masculinity”

1 “Women Who Cry” – Working Version for a Collage

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Article history: Received: 19 April 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 2 June 2025; Accepted: 9 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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stand in the way of raising awareness about gender equality. Gender relations have historically reflected the deeply entrenched nature of patriarchy, which continues to shape contemporary society. This patriarchal system positions women as the 'Other' – a subordinate and devalued category – ultimately leading to their marginalization and ghettoization within the social order. Kos (2021) argues that woman was initially constructed in binary opposition to man. Over time, differences among women themselves became increasingly visible, shaped by geographic, social, and cultural contexts. Ultimately, woman as an individual came to represent a site of internal heterogeneity, reflecting the complexities emphasized in intersectional feminist theory. The marginalization and discrimination of women in all social fields, as well as the dominance of men over women, are consequences of a societal system based on patriarchal foundations. It is the woman who must be a flawless project of the social reality that surrounds her. Her "normality" is maintained through her subordination to men and prescribed norms of behavior, and any deviation from this is punishable. Inferiority, invisibility, oppression, *otherness*, exclusion, and discrimination are just some of the states women have found themselves in, while men have been attributed superiority, prominence, and dominance as socially more valuable beings. Judith Butler, in her work *Gender Trouble* (2000), emphasizes: if you are a woman, that is certainly not all that you are. A woman does not build her identity based on societal expectations nor does she wish to compete with men, but rather to equalize her rights and ensure her freedom. Whether due to women's physical inferiority or the learned pattern of a woman's role in society, women have remained consistent in their primary role of childbirth and child-rearing, as well as household duties. Namely, women (have) performed their tasks in the private sphere, while the public sphere belonged/belongs to men. The philosophy of the binary opposition of mind and body, in which masculinity appears as the bearer of reality, reason, and intellect, and femininity as the irrational, the illusion, the emotional – something to suppress in order for the mind to maintain its integrity – has left deep consequences on the relationships of sexual domination in society (Bećirbašić, 2011, p. 20). This viewpoint was present in the world, but in Turkey as well, until the establishment of the Republic when the rapid development of industry began, and women started to be employed in large numbers, contributing economically to the household budget. However, the question arises of how much this actually helped women, given that in addition to performing household duties, they became workers, which multiplied their responsibilities. Furthermore, they were paid significantly less than their male colleagues in the same jobs and with the same level of responsibility. The term "feminism" emerged in Turkey at the end of the 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th century, during a period when women gained most civil and political rights (Karataş, 2009, p. 1655), but they had been aware of their oppressed position much earlier. Regarding the education of women, a crucial role was played by the period of Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876), when the Ottoman Empire began its modernization at the social, political, and economic levels. In the period following the establishment of the Turkish Republic, a significant

number of female writers emerged, which marked the women's emergence from the shadow of men. However, all of this was superficial, as women were still discriminated against, and the empowerment of women through education did not bring full freedom to all women. Only women from the upper and partially from the middle class enjoyed their rights, while deeply rooted patriarchal relations continued to pose a problem for women from the lower classes. The "woman question," which forms the foundation of feminism, did not go unnoticed in contemporary Turkish literature. Therefore, many advocates of this movement in Turkey sought to highlight the woman as the central figure in their works, portraying a woman with all the problems she faces throughout her life. In doing so, they attempted to liberate the marginalized, neglected, and discriminated woman – the keeper of the hearth – from the "cage with golden bars," symbolizing her confinement within four walls. The female figures in the short stories of Erendiz Atasü<sup>4</sup> reflect the social life of Turkey during the period in which they were written, but it is not impossible to recognize in them women from other cultural environments as well. In her stories, Atasü portrays a woman who, regardless of the modernized state, is still discriminated against and oppressed by her husband as the head of the household as well as the entire social system based on patriarchy. In her stories, Erendiz Atasü presents women from different social backgrounds, of varying social status and education. Through her works she aims to liberate the woman – "the guardian angel of the home" – from such determinism, and open the doors to her freedom. However, she also believes that this is an exceptionally difficult and long process in a patriarchal society in which we live. The short story "Ağlayan Kadınlar" *Kolajı İçin Taslak* by Erendiz Atasü is part of the collection *Onunla Güzeldim*<sup>5</sup> (1997) and falls under the genre of epistolary literature, primarily because it consists of letters exchanged between two friends, Idil and Sirma. This story seeks to unify their lives by generalizing the quiet suffering of women, regardless of where in the world a woman lives or what she does. Idil lives in England and works at a university, while Sirma has left university, married, and lives in Turkey. From the letters they write to each other, we conclude that both women are caught in the mechanism of dominant collectivism, searching for meaning in the unknown, and striving to conquer it. In the context of feminist/gender reading, this short story addresses the processes of marginalization and the production of marginal entities and identities, questioning concepts of sexual/gender difference, which this paper will attempt to illuminate. The author questions the phallogocentric value system, and the strict, oppressive hierarchical relationships that prevail within Turkish society, which this work also aimed to demonstrate.

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<sup>4</sup> She was born in 1947 in Ankara as an only child. Her mother was an English language professor, and her father was a mathematics professor. Speaking about her childhood, Erendiz likes to emphasize that her house was always full of books, and that books were her greatest friends. In 1968, she graduated with a degree in Pharmacy from Ankara University, and in 1971, she received a scholarship and went to England, where at the age of 25, she began writing her first short stories.

<sup>5</sup> *With Him, I Was Beautiful.*

### **Positioning a woman – as a housewife and mother and/or intellectual! Does one exclude the other, and vice versa?**

The supremacy of one gender – male – over the other – female – as well as Erendiz Atasü's desire to liberate her female characters from the burden of serving patriarchal ideology, and her efforts to free them from the confines of the domestic sphere, are critically examined in the short story *"Ağlayan Kadınlar" Kolajı İçin Taslak*. The main heroines, Sirma and Idil, exchange letters from which we can read about gender inhibitions, and the double standards of a patriarchally coded society. Sirma is in a long-term marriage and has a son, and despite finding meaning in her husband and child, and spending her days making herself available to them, she initially convinces herself of her own happiness. From the letters she writes to her friend Idil, asking for postcards from the various places she visits, it becomes clear that she is repressing the actual truth within herself. Marriage, which can sometimes represent a negation of a woman's freedom and autonomy, is her choice, as she states in her letter.

If you ask me, everything is the same as before. Özdemir and Javuz are doing well. They are the meaning of my life. I spend all my days trying to please them. You know how men are – actually, maybe you don't – they are like children. Don't think for a second that I'm complaining. I'm happy. We made our choices a long time ago. I chose family, you chose science. Anyway... Write me long letters about England, about the places you've visited and the people you've met. Send me postcards, pictures of museums and castles (Atasü, 1997, p. 122).

On the other hand, there is Idil, a heroine whose life has been determined by education as a process in which the promotion and advancement of a woman in society takes place, which is also a guarantee of her survival in leading social trends. For this modern woman, marriage did not seem like a good option because it would restrict, subordinate, and imprison her, ultimately rendering her "invisible." Therefore, she found fulfillment in the role of an intellectual, but also in the role of a lover. Since the short story mirrors contemporary times and the places where the worldview is embedded, it is quite clear that Sirma had endured for years in a seemingly happy marriage primarily because she lives in Turkey, a society whose rules are based on patriarchy. It is also clear why Idil, as an intellectual, found herself in England, and why she, as a lover, ventured into the tabooed territory, thus opposing the tradition from which she emerged.

Interestingly, in one of her letters, Sirma boasts to her friend that she has discovered Virginia Woolf and is deeply fascinated by her inner freedom and independence. Even though she does not specify which of Woolf's works she is reading, it is clear that, after this "enlightenment," she gathered the courage to tell her husband that she wanted to take painting lessons.

(...) I discovered Virginia Woolf. I can't describe how impressed I am by her. She lives a life independent of everyone and everything around her! And that is the most important thing, actually, that a woman lives a peaceful life according to her own rules and her own terms (Atasü, 1997, p. 121).

Since she had never dared to reveal her desires before, considering it her duty to be exclusively a wife and mother, this step out of the enclosed space of the home represents her form of resistance to the norm. In the letter, she describes the animalistic expression her husband's face took on when she shared the news, emphasizing that she would pay for the painting course partly with the money that had been set aside for food, which meant meals would be scarcer from then on.

Ah, dear Idil, I can't describe the expression on his face. He turned red, then purple, then yellow, cleared his throat a few times. He looked so ridiculous; I could barely stop myself from bursting into laughter! The mister will humiliate me every day, and I – the poor woman who hardly leaves her four walls – am supposed to bow my head and be content with his selfishness. Let's see what happens now that we've turned the game around (Atasü, 1997, p. 127).

Considering that Virginia Woolf herself advocated for the equal upbringing of women and men, it is very likely that Sirma's action was based precisely on the book she had read. However, Sirma is aware that she will "pay dearly" for this small "victory" she has won in the future. To the letters that Sirma initially sends to her friend, where she completely bares her soul, she rarely receives responses, and Idil justifies this by citing her own overwhelming busyness. When Sirma herself eventually stops writing, feeling betrayed by her best friend, Idil sends a letter expressing concern, stating that she misses her friend. She also mentions that she has discovered the writer Ruth Berlau, Brecht's lover, and promises to write about her and her life. Resigned by the abandonment and infrequent letters, Sirma writes a letter to Idil, informing her that she is getting a divorce and reproaching her for not replying and not writing about her own life. However, in the end, she does not send this letter but instead writes a much shorter one in which she states that she is going through a difficult period and may get a divorce. Idil tries to dissuade her from this decision, believing that Sirma will not be able to live on her own since she has always been tied to a man – first to her father, and later to her husband.

Dear Sirma, what are you talking about? No one gets divorced after so many years of marriage! Don't even think of making such reckless moves! Focus on your painting lessons and stop worrying about Özdemir. Best, Idil (Atasü, 1997, p. 131).

The question of female identity realized through Sirma's marriage to Özdemir stands at a crossroads, and her attempt to break out of the confined identification frameworks is the first step toward self-realization – a step for which she does not even receive support from her closest friend. The happy ending is also absent in the story of Ruth Berlau, whom Idil writes to Sirma about. This young artist falls in love with the married Bertolt Brecht, and blinded by love, she co-authors many plays with him, which were performed by his wife, actress Helen Weigel. However, where Helen shone, Ruth faded. In the end, she turned to alcohol, and was hospitalized several times in a psychiatric clinic. Even Idil, as a representative of the emancipated woman, the intellectual woman, did not fulfill her primordial role – she did not marry nor become a mother, and as such, she

was socially ostracized and incomplete. Speaking of the emancipation of women, Emma Goldman argues that emancipation brought women economic equality with men; they could choose their own profession and trade. However, physically unprepared to compete with men, they are often forced to drain all their strength, all their vitality, and stretch every nerve to prove their worth in the marketplace (Goldman, 1996, p. 29). Contrasting these two heroines from a feminist/gender perspective, one concludes that the storytelling, that is the sequence of letters, is organized in such a way as to allow for a perspective on the characters. The redistribution of perspectives on the characters, and their connection at the level of the primary narrative thought, achieves the effect of a whole with a clear vision of the world presented through the eyes of women and the female experience.

Sirma initially represents the embodiment of a woman who has fulfilled her symbolic role. However, by redirecting her sense of self, she resists the patriarchal system and finds meaning in life outside of the traditional concept. On the other hand, Idil, the intellectual who exists beyond rigid patriarchal boundaries, embarks on a love affair with a married man, but fortunately, she ultimately manages to avoid the tragic fate that Ruth Berlau experienced (Botalić, 2021, p. 113-114).

In this way, both Sirma and Idil challenge the prevailing belief and the dominant stereotype that women have no right to choose. There is, however, a small digression that highlights the fact that (these) women do indeed have the right to choose, but that choice comes at a price. In the short story *‘Ağlayan Kadınlar’ Kolajı İçin Taslak*, two friends – the housewife Sirma and the intellectual Idil – exchange letters, and, as we have seen, this correspondence allows for a revision of the concept of woman and her position within the category of the marginal.

I paint portraits of women who cry. They are scared, humiliated, sad... I paint their curled up bodies that resemble the bodies of frightened animals... All the muscles on these bodies cry!... Hey, you muscles, external and internal, can you hear me?... Dark, gloomy colors... I paint ugly, extremely ugly scenes! I paint the bodies of abandoned and forsaken women twisting... Özdemir and I haven't been intimate for years. Have I told you that lately, he doesn't even want to touch me? (Atasü, 1997, p. 136).

The resistance to repression and dominant ideology evident in both protagonists of this story seems more like a form of disguise than a genuine overcoming of gendered stereotypes.

### **To conclude...**

Equality between men and women in both the public and private spheres is one of the fundamental human rights and freedoms, and equal educational opportunities are the first step toward achieving this goal. In any case, the modern era has brought about a greater number of employed women, which is the result of the continuous pressure from feminist movements. However, women are still significantly less paid than their male colleagues in the same jobs. Thus, dualistic criteria prevail in all fields within the patriarchal social order. A woman, in her constant effort to be equal, not *other*, to be accepted, not ostracized, to have the right to choose, to

have freedom – has placed herself at the center of the struggle, where, oppressed, stigmatized, and silenced by male authorities, she is still searching for a way out of her confinement and invisibility, which is one of the fundamental problems of the main heroines in Erendiz Atasü's short stories. Even in this story, it is clear to see a woman in transition, who at times experiences a revelation, shedding the chains placed on her by patriarchal social order, but then, unprepared for such a shift, falls back into the dangerous web of imposed rules and roles assigned at birth. The deprivation of women in the field of education is visible in the character of Sirma, who, bound by the chains of tradition, tries to break free from the limited space of the private sphere in search of identity. She tries to (re)define her place, and despite the fact that she can choose and build her identity, her freedom is limited because it is not entirely hers, nor does she fully belong to herself. Dependent on many factors, a woman is again condemned to suffer and endure because her identity is a construct manipulated by others. On the other hand, Idil is surrounded by the illusory idea of freedom and emancipation, but societal expectations based on patriarchal norms have condemned her to feel that she has failed in her role as a woman. Idil is a victim of patriarchal (superior) power, even though she seemingly represents a breakthrough from the dominant construct of the female gender identity. The (non)belonging to the male space, as well as the gender inhibitions of the woman, is described by Atasü through the inner state of the women, who in this story are reconciled/conflicted with their fate. Building a female world within the male one is a painful battle that Idil and Sirma face every day. They are, in a way, both within and outside of that world, they are both saints and witches, pushing boundaries, breaking taboos, but still submitting and returning to their world (which again is not their own). They are powerless, but not defeated, because there are countless opportunities to fight. They do not give up, so for them, a lost battle does not mean a lost war.

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# CHAIR'S LETTER: ANALYSING DISCOURSE MARKERS IN BP'S ANNUAL REPORTS

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/SUOB1186>

**Abstract:** *Chair's (also referred to as Chairman's and Chairperson's) letters to stakeholders form part of a typical business communication strategy that is embraced by British Petroleum (further – BP), which is considered to be one of the leading international actors on the fossil fuel and energy markets. Normally, Chair's letters introduce BP's annual reports and provide a very succinct yet informative outline of BP's activities. Due to its compressed discursive space, Chair's letters present an interesting aspect of corporate communication to be investigated from the vantage point of discourse studies. The present paper describes a quantitative study whose aim is to establish the frequency of discourse markers in a corpus of the Chair's letters in annual reports published by BP within the time frame 2015 – 2024. The study uses the concordance program AntConc (Anthony, 2022) in order to identify and quantify discourse markers in the corpus. The results of the corpus analysis reveal that the frequently occurring discourse markers are: (i) and, (ii) as, (iii) but, and (iv) however. The findings are further illustrated in conjunction with the pragmatic roles of the aforementioned DMs. The article concludes with a contention that the findings of the study provide a deeper insight into the discursive space of the Chair's letters and show the way the Chair communicates with the stakeholders and other actors by using discourse markers.*

**Key words:** *British Petroleum (BP), Chair's letter, corporate annual report, discourse markers*

## Introduction

In line with the topic of the thematic issue that focuses on biographies, diaries, and letters, the present contribution introduces a quantitative study that concentrates on the letters written to stakeholders by the Chair of British Petroleum (BP), one of the leading international energy corporations. Particularly, the study seeks to shed light onto the frequency of discourse markers in a corpus of the Chair's letters in BP's annual reports published from 2015 to 2024. The study is

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**Article history:** Received: 5 May 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 1 June 2025; Accepted: 12 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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informed by the view of discourse markers as a crucial part of metadiscourse in corporate communication and, in particular, in corporate annual reports (Hyland, 1998). It should be noted that the literature in linguistics as well as corporate communication posits that discourse markers are used in corporate annual reports, inclusive of the Chair's letters, in conjunction with a number of pragmatic purposes (Flowerdew & Wan, 2010; Handford, 2010; Kapranov, 2017a, 2024; Rutherford, 2005).

Whilst there is a growing body of research on discourse markers (DMs) in corporate annual reports (Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Garzone, 2005; Hyland, 1998; Kapranov, 2016a; Tsai et al., 2016), still not much is known about DMs in BP Chair's letters (Bhuyan & Baid, 2020; Kapranov, 2015; King & Morton, 2025). In an attempt to fill in the current gap in knowledge, the study aims at providing answers to the following research question (RQ):

**RQ:** What are the most frequent DMs in the corpus of the Chair's letters published as part of BP's annual reports between 2015 and 2024?

Guided by the RQ, this paper proceeds in the following manner. First, an outline of the genre of corporate annual reports and Chair's letters as their intrinsic part is given. Second, an overview of the literature on DMs in corporate discourse is provided. Third, the present study is introduced and discussed. Finally, the summary of the study and its conclusions are formulated.

### **The genre of corporate annual reports inclusive of Chair's letters: An outline**

In the literature on corporate management and business administration, corporate annual reports are defined as a public document that is made available by the corporation (Dahl & Fløttum, 2019a, 2019b; Kapranov, 2018a, 2018b),

which enables its stakeholders to understand and analyze the company's financial and economic health. An annual report consists of (a) numeric segments such as position statement, income statement, cash flow statement, including notes to accounts both for standalone and consolidated entities and (b) narrative segments such as director's report, corporate governance report, Chairman's letter, etc. (Bhuyan & Baid, 2020)

Normally, corporate annual reports are published on a yearly basis, both in print and online (Wagenhofer, 2024). Furthermore, corporate annual reports are authorised by the corporation's board, its general management and the chair, who provide data and information concerning the corporation's activities, financial performance, operations, visions, and/or prospects for future operations (Flowerdew & Wan, 2010; Hyland, 1998). Given that corporate annual reports contain vitally important data on the corporate performance, they are argued to be one of the critical means of communicating with the corporation's stakeholders and other actors involved (Kapranov, 2017a, 2017b; Minutiello, 2025; Stanton & Stanton, 2002; Yuthas et al., 2002). From the vantage point of

corporate communication, corporate annual reports manifest a major endeavour to (i) promote the corporation in favourable light (Hyland, 1998), as well as (ii) provide accurate data associated with corporate performance (Kapranov, 2016a). Consequently, the discursive space of a corporate annual report is deemed to be carefully orchestrated in order to convey a positive corporate image to stockholders and other actors, for instance, media, government regulators, and the public at large (Hyland, 1998; Kiwi et al., 2025).

As far as the genre of corporate annual reports is concerned, White and Hanson (2000, p. 305) posit that annual reports involve “discourses directed to the past, future and present of corporate activity; they are addressed to recurrent problems; and they are elements in the system of corporate functions”. Moreover, several researchers (Falco, 2013; Garzone, 2005; Hussain et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024) seem to agree upon the point that corporate annual reports represent a hybrid genre, which combines, or even mixes, factual information and presentational aspects associated with positive corporate image-building and impression management.

The literature indicates that one of the iconic parts of a corporate annual report is represented by the Chair’s letter (Amernic & Craig, 2006). Typically, Chair’s letters, which are also known as Chairman’s and Chairperson’s letters, form an intrinsic part of corporate annual reports (Rutherford, 2005; Vogel, 2010). In this regard, Pool (2016) indicates that a Chair’s letter

is written annually by the Chief Executive Officer/President/ Chairman of a financial institution and normally precedes the more substantial and detailed annual report of financial data from the previous fiscal year. These often several page messages from the leader of the company are particularly important elements of the annual report, as they both explain past performance and also offer a vision for achieving future success. (Pool, 2016, p. 58).

Seen in the aforementioned light, Chair’s letters aim at reducing the information asymmetry between corporate actors and their stakeholders (Bhuyan & Baid, 2020) by providing a human dimension to corporate reporting (Poole, 2016). In other words, the human dimension in corporate annual reports is embodied by “a captivating vision” (Swales & Rogers, 1995, p. 224) of the corporate Chair, who adds a personalised lens to otherwise formal corporate reporting. This is quite often realised discursively by a personalised letter written and signed by the Chair (Hyland, 1998; Merkl-Davies & Koller, 2012). In this regard, Merkl-Davies and Koller (2012) posit that Chair’s letters, as well as annual corporate reports in general, serve a persuasive pragmatic purpose that is directed at manipulating and shaping the stakeholders’ impressions of the corporation and its performance. Similarly, Wang, Xu, and Hu (2024, p. 297) contend that the Chair’s letters are “a powerful tool for corporations to convey stances that project identities”.

Merkl-Davies and Koller’s (2012) views are evocative of the previously published study by Hyland (1998), who demonstrates that Chair’s letters play a

substantial pragmatic role in impression management. According to Blunden and Brodsky (2024, p. 2197), impression management behaviour in corporate reporting is defined as “behaviors — either intentional or unconscious/habitual — which are intended to shape how people are seen by others, with the goal of creating or maintaining a desired image”. Blunden and Brodsky’s definition (2024) is strikingly reminiscent of Hyland’s (1998) argument that the aim of corporate annual reports consists in positive image-building that seeks to impart confidence and convince the stakeholders of the corporation’s successful performance. Furthermore, Hyland (1998) reasons that the Chair’s letters manifest a piece of corporate discourse that performs both promotional and persuasive pragmatic functions (Cheney et al., 2004). In terms of the genre, Chair’s letters are thought to belong to the so-called hybrid genre, identically to the genre of corporate annual reports. According to Falco (2013), the hybridity stems from the mixture of two genres, (i) the genre of governance, which is the strategic and discursive governing of the way commodities, brands, corporations and/or individual corporate actors are promoted and sold, and (ii) the genre of intertextuality, i.e. “the idea that texts are made of other texts” (Shaw & Pecorari, 2013, p. 37), which manifests the relation between different aspects of the perceived and discursive realities (Falco, 2013; Kapranov, 2016b).

Taking into consideration the abovesaid, it seems possible to summarise the present overview of the literature in the following manner. Analogously to the corporate annual reports, the genre of the Chair’s letters could be posited to represent a hybrid genre of corporate communication that involves (i) a personalised dimension afforded by the clearly marked authorial presence of the Chair in it (Hyland, 1998; Merkl-Davies & Koller, 2012), (ii) a promotional dimension, which is manifested by the pragmatic aim of positive corporate image-building (Handford, 2010; Kapranov, 2016a), (iii) a persuasive dimension, which is rendered by the Chair’s pragmatic intention to persuade the stakeholders to embrace the desired view of the corporation (Poole, 2016; Vogel, 2010), and (iv) a factual dimension, which consists in providing the crucial facts and data associated with the corporate performance (Garzone, 2005; Minutiello, 2025; Yuthas et al., 2002). In addition, the genre, or rather, the subgenre of the Chair’s letters can be characterised by recurrent and specialised lexica (Bu et al., 2020; Tsai et al., 2016), stylistic choices associated with the occurrence of certain style-appropriate words (Rutherford, 2005, p. 350), and metadiscursive means (Hyland, 1998), inclusive of DMs (Camiciottoli, 2010; Flowerdew & Wan, 2010).

### **The literature on DMs in corporate communication: An overview**

There seems to be a substantial body of literature that examines the use of DMs in corporate communication (Camiciottoli, 2010; Hyland 1998; Kapranov, 2016a; Vitchalertphol & Sinturat, 2023). Before we proceed to the overview of the literature, however, we should specify that prior studies, at times, operate with different labels associated with DMs (Furkó et al., 2019). Specifically, the literature

on DMs employs such labels as discourse connectives (Camiciottoli, 2010) and pragmatic markers (Furko, 2017), to enumerate just a few of them. Similarly, there are multiple and, quite often, contradictory definitions of DMs. For instance, Schiffrin (1987, p. 31) defines DMs as “sequentially dependent elements which bracket units of talk”, which are non-obligatory, utterance-initial lexical items, such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *that* may occur in oral and/or written types of discourse. In a similar vein, Furkó, Kertész, and Abuczki (2019) indicate that

DMs comprise a functional class of linguistic items that do not typically change the propositional meaning of an utterance but are essential for the organization and structuring of discourse, for marking the speaker's attitudes to the proposition being expressed, and for facilitating processes of pragmatic inferences. We define DMs as a set of syntactically diverse linguistic items (e.g. of course, surely, I think, well, etc.) that meet (all or most of) the following criteria: (1) they are used for either attitudinal or meta-communicative/metatextual functions [...], (2) they lack conceptual meaning, (3) they do not add to the propositional content [...], and (4) their distinctive properties include (discourse) indexicality, context-dependence and multifunctionality. (Furkó et al., 2019, p. 244)

It should be noted that it is beyond the scope of the review to provide a detailed account of DMs given that there is a wealth of prior studies that review the theoretical premises of DMs in detail and provide thorough meta-analyses of the literature (see, for instance, Blakemore (2006)). Instead, the review focuses on a range of published studies that look into the use of DMs in corporate communication. One of the groundbreaking studies on the role of DMs in corporate communication belongs to Hyland (1998), who regards DMs within the framework of metadiscursive means in corporate discourse. Particularly, he distinguishes several metadiscursive functions, which DMs may play in corporate discourse. For instance, DMs may point to semantic relations between clauses (e.g., *additionally*), indicate the sequencing in the flow of written corporate discourse (e.g., *firstly*), and facilitate the reader's understanding of the text (e.g., *in other words*).

Another programmatic study on DMs in corporate discourse is conducted by Camiciottoli (2010). She analyses DMs, which are referred to in her study as discourse connectives, in a corpus of financial disclosures. The corpus of her study is comprised of two parts, namely (i) oral presentations of financial results by corporate management and (ii) written reports on financial performance produced by the management. Camiciottoli (2010) argues that DMs represent an indispensable component of corporate discourse. Accordingly, she analyses the corpus of financial disclosures quantitatively in order to establish the frequency of the DMs and, subsequently, interpret the results qualitatively. Camiciottoli (2010) reports that DMs are more frequent in the written part of the corpus. She demonstrates that DMs in the corpus perform a number of pragmatic functions. One of the functions is associated with the focus on positive aspects of corporate performance.

Identically to Camiciottoli, Kapranov (2016a, 2024) indicates that corporate reporting makes use of a set of frequently occurring DMs. For instance, corporate annual reports by the Bank of England are characterised by such frequent DMs as *and*, *as*, and *such* (Kapranov, 2024). These findings are discussed in the study in line with the classification of DMs into the following categories: (i) contrastive, (ii) implicative, and (iii) elaborative DMs. Kapranov (2024) demonstrates that elaborative and implicative DMs occur frequently, whereas the occurrence of the contrastive DMs is not frequent. The findings are argued to be indicative of the pragmatic strategy of the Bank of England that consists in clarifying, commenting, and specifying the content of its annual reports. Moreover, it has been established that the low frequency of the contrastive DMs (for instance, *but*, *however*, *yet*, etc.) correlated with the pragmatic strategy of the Bank of England to avoid potentially contentious and controversial themes in corporate annual reports.

Fairly similarly to Camiciottoli (2010), a study conducted by Torrevillas and Balones (2024) seeks to establish the use and pragmatic functions of DMs in business communication, specifically in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO). Torrevillas and Balones (2024) assert that the pragmatic use of DMs plays a significant role in facilitating effective communication among the stakeholders and corporate staff. These authors report that corporate communication in the context of BPO involves 22 frequently used DMs, which perform several pragmatic functions, such as (i) interpersonal, (ii) referential, and (iii) structural. Furthermore, Torrevillas and Balones (2024) show that the use of DMs in the BPO discursive contexts contributes to the clarity of communication flow.

Analogously to the quantitative approach to the frequency of DMs found in Camiciottoli (2010) and Torrevillas and Balones (2024), Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023) investigate the frequency of the occurrence of DMs in business communication. The corpus of their study involves business sections of two Thai online newspapers, the Bangkok Post and the Nation, respectively. Interestingly, Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023) show that the frequency of the occurrence of elaborative DMs is higher in the Bangkok Post in contrast to the Nation. These findings are interpreted by Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023) as a manifestation of the in-house publishing style associated with the use of DMs. Just like the study conducted by Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023), Tran and Phan (2021) look into the use of English DMs in business news articles written by Vietnamese journalists. Particularly, their investigation is focused on discovering whether or not there would be gender-related differences in the use of DMs by male and female business journalists. The results of their study reveal that both male and female business journalists employed DMs in their writing in a similar way.

In contrast to the aforementioned studies that involve written corpora, Di Ferrante (2021) investigates DMs that occur in oral business communication. Specifically, the corpus of Di Ferrante's (2021) study involves realistic workplace oral data. The results of the study show that DMs are utilised in oral business communication in order to signal the shift in the topic of conversation. Additionally,

Di Ferrante (2021) observes that there is a group of frequently occurring DMs whose use seems to be preferred by the interlocuters in the context of business communication in the workplace settings.

In summary of the overview of the literature on DMs in corporate communication, it appears possible to posit that there are several research themes that are united by the focus on the frequency of the occurrence of DMs in corporate annual reports, corporate oral communication, and journal/newspaper articles on corporate news. However, as already mentioned in the introductory part of this paper, there are no published studies that analyse DMs in the Chair's letters by BP. Further, a quantitative investigation is presented that aims to shed light onto this less researched topic.

### **The present study: Its theoretical framework, corpus and methodology**

From the vantage point of the theoretical framework, the present study is grounded in the approach to metadiscourse in corporate communication formulated by Hyland (1998) and the views on DMs found in Fraser (1999, 2015). Following Hyland (1998, p. 226), metadiscourse is operationalised in the study as “aspects of a text that explicitly relate to the organisation of the discourse or to the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader”, i.e. “features which are largely independent of propositional content, but which reveal the writers’ conception of audience” (Hyland, 1998, p. 226). In unity with Hyland (1998, p. 227), metadiscourse is seen in the study as “text tokens that do not contribute to the propositional development of a text but which guide or direct readers to how they should understand, evaluate, and respond to that information”. Accordingly, Hyland (1998) indicates that whilst DMs are not involved in the propositional content, they, nevertheless, are one of the tokens that (i) facilitate the manifestation of authorial voices in corporate communication and (ii) guide the stakeholders’ understanding of the textual ties in corporate letters.

In addition to Hyland’s (1998) views on metadiscourse in corporate communication and, specifically, in corporate letters, the present study is anchored in the approach to DMs proposed and developed by Fraser (1999, 2015). His approach could be emblematised by the following definition of DMs, which he regards as lexical expressions that are drawn from various word classes, which share

one common property: they impose a relationship between some aspect of the discourse segment they are a part of, call it  $S_2$ , and some aspect of a prior discourse segment, call it  $S_1$ . In other words, they function like a two-place relation, one argument lying in the segment they introduce, the other lying in the prior discourse. I represent the canonical form as  $\langle S_1. DM+S_2 \rangle$ . (Fraser, 1999, p. 938)

Also, the present study follows Fraser’s (2015) classification of DMs into contrastive (e.g., *but*), implicative (e.g., *so*), and elaborative (e.g., *and*). Guided by Fraser’s (1999, 2015) and Hyland’s (1998) approaches, the present study seeks to establish the frequency of the occurrence of DMs in a corpus of the Chair’s letters

that form part of BP's corporate annual reports (see the RQ in the introductory part of the article). The corpus of the study is comprised of the Chair's letters that are published by BP on its website [www.bp.com](http://www.bp.com) within the period of time from 2015 to 2024.

In order to collect the corpus, BP's website [www.bp.com](http://www.bp.com) was accessed and searched for the annual reports from 2015 to 2024. The reports were downloaded in pdf format. Thereafter, the parts of the reports that were clearly labelled as "Chairman's Letter" and/or "Chair's Letter" were converted to Word documents (total number of files = 10). The descriptive statistics of the corpus were computed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences, or SPSS (IBM, 2011) and summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of the Corpus

#	Descriptive Statistics	Value
1	Total number of Chair's letters	10
2	Total number of words	9 886
3	Mean words	988.6
4	Standard deviation words	172.9
5	Maximum words	1 268
6	Minimum words	684

Then, the corpus of the study was processed in the concordance program AntConc (Anthony, 2022) in order to calculate the frequency of the occurrence of DMs. To reiterate, the study followed the definition of DMs formulated by Fraser (1999, 2015). The frequency data garnered by AntConc were checked manually in order to factor out misclassifications and those cases that did not fit into Fraser's (1999, 2015) approach to DMs. Thereafter, the frequency data were fed into SPSS (IBM, 2011) in order to compute means and standard deviations of the DMs. The results of the frequency analysis are further presented in the following section of the article.

## Results and discussion

The results of the quantitative investigation of the corpus reveal that there are 118 DMs in total (mean 5.4, standard deviation 9.1). The descriptive statistics of each type of DMs in the corpus, inclusive of their (i) total number (N) in absolute values, (ii) number in normalised values per 1000 words, (iii) means (M), and (iv) standard deviations (SD) are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2. The Frequency of the Occurrence of DMs in the Corpus

#	DMs	Total N	M	SD	Normalised per 1000 words
1	Above all	1	0	0	0.1
2	Against this backdrop	1	0	0	0.1
3	Against this background	1	0	0	0.1
4	And	40	4.4	1.8	4.1
5	As	21	2.3	0.7	2.1
6	At the same time	2	1.0	0	0.2
7	Because	3	1.0	0	0.3
8	But	16	2.0	1.3	1.6
9	Finally	3	1.0	0	0.3
10	First	1	0	0	0.1
11	However	7	1.8	0.8	0.7
12	If	4	1.3	0.5	0.4
13	In addition	1	0	0	0.1
14	In fact	1	0	0	0.1
15	In particular	1	0	0	0.1
16	Meanwhile	1	0	0	0.1
17	Of course	2	1	0	0.2
18	Overall	1	0	0	0.1
19	So	3	1.5	0.5	0.3
20	Then	2	1.0	0	0.2
21	Though	1	0	0	0.1
22	While	5	1.0	0	0.5

Returning to the RQ in the study, which seeks to provide answers concerning the most frequent DMs in the corpus, it is evident from Table 2 that the most frequently occurring DMs are *and*, *as*, *but*, and *however*. These findings support Camiciottoli, (2010), Hyland (1998), Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023), and Torrevillas and Balones (2024), who report a high frequency of the occurrence of the aforementioned DMs. Partially, the present findings lend support to the

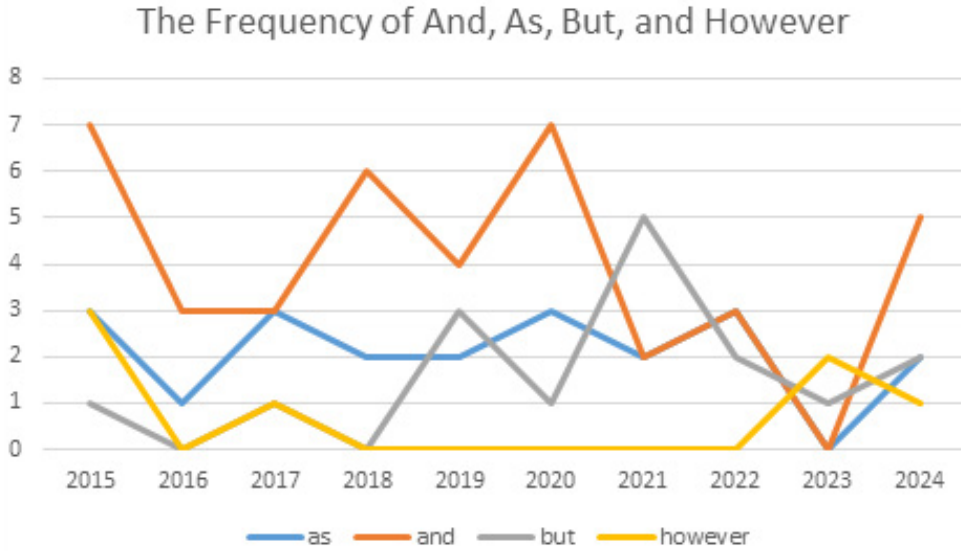
study by Kapranov (2024), who points to the high frequency of the occurrence of *and* and *as*. At the same time, the findings in this study are in contrast to Kapranov (2024), who demonstrates that contrastive DMs, such as *but* and *however*, are infrequent in British corporate reports. Additionally, the findings support Vitchalertphol and Sinturat (2023), who indicate that the DM *but* is frequent in newspaper articles on corporate reports.

Having related the findings to the literature, let us proceed to the discussion of the most frequent DMs in the corpus. To reiterate, they are represented by *and*, *as*, *but*, and *however*. The DM *and* is the most frequent in the corpus (see Table 2). Judging from the data, *and* is typically employed in its elaborative pragmatic role in the corpus, as illustrated by excerpts (1) and (2) below.

- (1) I would like to thank the board for all that they have done. **And** I would like to thank our shareholders for your continued support. We are set to continue supplying energy to help meet global demand while delivering value to you from a great business. (BP, 2016)
- (2) Last year we welcomed Dame Alison Carnwath and Pamela Daley to the board, each with extensive experience gained in a range of executive and non-executive roles in large companies. **And** this year we say farewell to Alan Boeckmann and Admiral Frank ‘Skip’ Bowman. (BP, 2019)

Both in (1) and (2), the DM *and* exhibits its prototypical pragmatic role of elaborating, explaining and specifying the message (Kapranov, 2016a, 2024). We observe in (1) that the Chair expresses his gratitude to the board and, in the next sentence, shows his appreciation of the stakeholders, e.g. “And I would like to thank our shareholders”. Indeed, we may interpret the DM *and* in (1) as a token of elaboration upon the message and, most likely, its expansion to involve the shareholders. Identically, in (2) the Chair uses the DM *and* in order to elaborate and expand upon the message concerning new board members, concurrently with bidding farewell to several former members of the board, e.g. “And this year we say farewell to Alan ...”. Arguably, the use of *and*, which is coupled with the first person singular pronoun in (1) and the first person plural pronoun in (2), renders these passages a clearly marked personalised dimension. This contention is evocative of the arguments put forward by Bhuyan and Baid (2020), and Poole (2016), who posit that the Chair’s letters nowadays tend to provide a human dimension to corporate annual reports. Furthermore, the present findings lend support to Wang, Xu, and Hu (2024), as well as Merkl-Davies and Koller (2012), and Hyland (1998), who demonstrate that the Chair’s letters seem to play a substantial role in corporate strategy to project a more human-oriented corporate identity, which can be argued to represent a corporate identity with a human touch (Camiciottoli, 2010; Vogel, 2010).

Additionally, it should be noted that *and*, unlike the other frequent DMs *as*, *but*, and *however*, occurs in nine out of 10 Chair’s letters in the corpus, as shown by Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. The Frequency of *And*, *As*, *But*, and *However* in Absolute Values

It follows from Figure 1 that both *and* and *as* share a fairly similar distributional pattern, which shows that these DMs are absent in the Chair’s letter published in 2023. It should be mentioned that *as* is the second frequent DM in the corpus (see Table 2). The implicative DM *as* seems to be used pragmatically in its two rather prototypical functions that refer to (i) implicating further information that is inferred and/or understood from the results and consequences associated with a situation, as shown by excerpt (3) and (ii) indicating that a certain piece of information has already been stated and, consequently, known to the interlocutors, as exemplified by excerpt (4).

- (3) At the same time, there has been progress in AI and technology and some signs of growth and prosperity in emerging economies. **As** a result, energy demand continues to rise with the supply of oil and gas, and renewable energy, reaching an all-time high. (BP, 2025)
- (4) Executive remuneration remains a clear issue of focus for shareholders and society. I would like to thank our shareholders for the support which you gave to our new remuneration report at the 2017 AGM. This was an important step forward in regaining your confidence. **As** is clear from Dame Ann Dowling’s letter later in this report, we are implementing this policy in a considered way. (BP, 2018)

Whilst the frequent use of *as* in the present corpus is in line with the prior studies (Hyland, 1998; Tran & Phan, 202; Vitchalertphol & Sinturat, 2023), the literature does not seem to report a high frequency of the contrastive DMs in the

context of Anglophone corporate annual reports (Camiciottoli, 2010; Kapranov, 2016a, 2024). In this study, however, the frequency of the occurrence of contrastive DMs, particularly, *but* and *however*, is rather high (see Table 2). Whereas the high frequency of the occurrence of *but* is mentioned by Vitthalertphol and Sinturat (2023), this finding represents a novel facet of the use of *but* in British corporate reporting, which has not yet been noted in the literature. In terms of its pragmatic roles, *but* in the present corpus seems to manifest a rather stark contrasting point, even the impossibility in a stretch of the Chair's letter, as shown by excerpt (5).

- (5) I believe BP's strategy gets the balance right. **But** recent events have demonstrated why, alongside pursuing its strategy, BP must have the agility necessary to make adjustments. Following Russia's attack on Ukraine, the BP board undertook a thorough review of BP's involvement with Rosneft in Russia. After careful consideration, the board concluded that BP's continuing involvement would be inconsistent with our business and strategy. (BP, 2022)

The pragmatic role of the contrastive DM *however* appears to be associated with a contradiction and, to an extent, less poignant contrast with what has been said, as evident from excerpt (6) below.

- (6) If BP made progress on safety and had a strong operational and financial performance in 2023, there were challenges too, including the change in CEO in September. **However**, for me and for the board, the positive here was the effectiveness of our emergency succession planning, which allowed us to appoint Murray Auchincloss immediately as interim leader, and avoid a leadership vacuum. (BP, 2024)

Interestingly, in (6) we observe a pragmatic use of the contrasting DM *however* in the combination with the pronoun in the first person singular (e.g., *me*) and the reference to the entire board ("the board ...", which allowed *us*"), which are evocative of the Chair's pragmatic strategy to render his letters a personalised dimension. To reiterate, we have noted a similar pragmatic tendency in conjunction with the use of the elaborative DM *and*.

## Conclusions

The present study, whose aim is to shed light on the frequency of the occurrence of DMs in the corpus of Chair's letters published by BP, demonstrates that the corpus is characterised by the frequent occurrence of such DMs, as (i) *and*, (ii) *as*, (iii) *but*, and (iv) *however*. The findings are, predominantly, in line with the literature (Camiciottoli, 2010; Kapranov, 2016a, 2024; Vitthalertphol & Sinturat, 2023), which indicates that the aforementioned DMs form a recurrent part of corporate annual reports. At the same time, however, the findings in this study point to a high frequency of the occurrence of the contrastive DMs, in particular, *but* and *however*, whose high frequency of the occurrence is not reported by the literature in the context of British corporate discourse (Kapranov, 2024).

Furthermore, the analysis of the findings shows that the frequently occurring DMs seem to be employed pragmatically in order to amend an impression of BP's annual reports as a "soulless" piece of corporate writing that is purely factual and data-driven. Together with a host of other metadiscursive means, DMs appear to impart the Chair's letters a personalised dimension, thus amending the information asymmetry (Bhuyan & Baid, 2020) between BP as a corporation that provides facts and performance data and a BP with a human face, which is manifested by the personal presence of its Chair in his letters to the stakeholders. Seen in this light, the most frequent DMs in the corpus can be argued to contribute to a positive and personalised corporate image. This observation is in unity with the literature (Falco, 2013; Garzone, 2005; Hussain et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2024), which posits that the Chair's letters are normally employed, amongst other aspects, as a token of positive corporate image-building and impression management. Agreeing with Hyland (1998) and Poole (2016), we may conclude that DMs in the Chair's letters published by BP as part of its annual reports are an important element of the corporate strategy that consists in presenting BP positively and, even, human-like.

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the present findings concerns the frequent use of the contrastive DMs *but* and *however*, respectively. Judging from the corpus, the frequent use of these DMs can be accounted by BP's strategy to manifest a stark contrast associated with the use of *but* and a milder contrast that is related to the DM *however*. A relatively high frequency of the occurrence of these DMs is reflective, presumably, of BP's pragmatic strategy to foreground certain contrastive points in its policies and visions for the future.

The findings of the study provide a deeper insight into the discursive space of the Chair's letters to the stakeholders and show the way the Chair communicates with the stakeholders and other actors by means of employing DMs. The present findings may serve as a benchmark for future research that, for instance, contrasts the metadiscursive means in the BP Chair's letters with those of other fossil fuel corporations. Additionally, the findings provided by this study may contribute to a better understanding of how BP as one of the leading international corporations uses metadiscursive means, such as DMs, in its corporate annual reports.

### Acknowledgements

The author is thankful to the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on the article draft.

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РЕВОЛЮЦИОНЕР И ДИПЛОМАТ – ДЖОУ ЪНЛАЙ И  
ОФОРМЯНЕТО НА КИТАЙСКАТА ВЪНШНА ПОЛИТИКА

Силвия Александрова

REVOLUTIONARY AND DIPLOMAT – ZHOU ENLAI AND THE  
SHAPING OF CHINESE FOREIGN POLICY

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/LMXD6752>

**Abstract:** Zhou Enlai was one of China's most prominent revolutionary leaders and Communist China's most famous and successful diplomat of the 20th century. He was Premier of the People's Republic of China (PRC) from its founding in 1949 until his death in 1976. His importance, influence and authority as a statesman during this period was second only to that of Mao Zedong. From 1949 to 1958, as the People's Republic's foreign minister he was the main architect of its foreign policy. This article examines Zhou's dual role as a revolutionary leader committed to Marxist-Leninist ideals, and as a diplomat who managed to navigate the complexities of the international situation, successfully leading PRC's foreign policy. He did so during some of the most volatile, uncertain and tension-filled periods of twentieth century's world politics. The article follows Zhou's emergence as a revolutionary, as well as his diplomatic strategies and role in important for China, Asia and the world events. Zhou Enlai's pragmatic approach to diplomacy in establishing China as a key player on the global geopolitical stage is also emphasized. In conclusion it is stated that the charismatic first prime minister of the PRC can be defined in many ways - leader, statesman, politician, communist, fighter, intellectual - and all of them would be true. However, it is Zhou's legacy as a revolutionary and as a diplomat that is still the cornerstone of contemporary Chinese diplomacy and continues to influence China's international relations and position on the global stage today.

**Key words:** Zhou Enlai, China, Chinese Communist Party, Guomindang, revolution, diplomacy, communism, Bandung Conference, Cultural Revolution

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**Article history:** Received: 23 April 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 28 May 2025; Accepted: 2 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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Джоу Ънлай (1898 – 1976) е един от най-изтъкнатите китайски революционни лидери и заедно с това – най-известният и успешен дипломат на комунистически Китай през XX век. Той е министър-председател на Китайската народна република (КНР) от създаването ѝ през 1949 г. до смъртта си през 1976 г. и неговото значение, влияние и авторитет като държавник през този период отстъпват само на това на Мао Дзъдун. В същото време от 1949 г. до 1958 г. той е външен министър на Народната република и един от архитектите на нейната външна политика. Изискан, ерудиран и с изтънчени маниери, в продължение на четвърт век Джоу е лицето на модернизиращ се Китай пред външния свят. Умелата му дипломатия оформя отношенията на Народната република със Съветския съюз и съюзниците му и със Западния свят и останалите страни в една епоха на дълбоки глобални промени и геополитически трансформации. Неговите революционни идеали неизменно „оцветяват“ дипломатическата му дейност, но прагматичният му и недогматичен подход към външната политика му позволява да способства за утвърждаването на КНР като важен, самостоятелен и влиятелен играч на международната арена в трудния период на Студената война в света.

Джоу Ънлай е роден през 1898 г. в китайската провинция Дзянсу. Изграждането му като личност става в един от най-драматичните периоди на трансформация в историята на Китай – крушението на империята Цин и раждането в колизии на младата Република Китай. Семейството му е състоятелно и това позволява младият Джоу да получи добро образование в родната си страна. Училищните му години в Тиендзин (天津), където части от града са превърнати в концесионни територии на западни империалистически държави, Япония и Русия, го сблъскват за първи път с пъстрата и модерна култура на многолюден крайбрежен град<sup>2</sup> от типа на Шанхай. В същото време градът, с привилегированото положение на редица западни търговци и индустриалци, отчетливо демонстрира видимия упадък на Китай и превръщането му в изостанала и зависима от Запада страна. Тук Джоу участва активно в дискусии в клубове с други млади китайци, които по-късно стават известни публични личности. Проявява се като блестящ ученик по китайски език и печели няколко конкурса за литературно съчинение. В един от конкурсите той прави впечатление с коментар върху известната фраза на Ейбрахам Линкълн: „Можеш да заблудиш всички хора за известен период от време. Може да заблуждаваш някои хора през цялото време. Но не можеш да заблуждаваш всички хора през цялото време“ (Itoh, 2016, p. 14) и текст с брилянтен анализ и аргументация.

От 1917 г. до 1919 г. Джоу е гимназист в столицата на Япония Токио, където влиза в директен контакт с азиатска нация, успяла да избегне унизителната зависимост от Западния свят и постигнала статут на

<sup>2</sup> Град Тиендзин е разположен на крайбрежието на Бохайския залив (渤海), на около 140 км югоизточно от Пекин.

велика световна сила чрез модернизация, държаща сметка за местните традиции. В този смисъл Япония е потенциален образец, който китайското общество би могло да следва в усилията си за постигане на независимост и просперитет. Младият Джоу обаче не приема, че японският модел е подходящ за Китай. Наблюдавайки отблизо японския политически живот и социална атмосфера, той започва да споделя недоверието на тогавашните китайски интелектуалци към милитаристичните амбиции на Империята на изгряващото слънце. След 19-месечен престой в страната Джоу стига до заключението, че тя е далеч от идеалното общество, и започва да се отнася критично към японския милитаризъм и елитаризъм и да определя като отблъскващо съчетанието на външна експанзия с вътрешно потисничество в политиката на Империята (Wangouin, Yu, 2006, pp. 19-20). Именно в Япония той започва да се интересува и активно да следи случващото се в Русия и политическите събития, свързани с действията на руските болшевики. Октомврийската революция от 1917 г. е една от любимите му теми за дискусия с други студенти, чете и много книги и публикации в пресата, свързани с нейните идеи. Подобно на много други китайски младежи той постепенно започва да възприема социалистическите и марксистките постановки и предписания като възможен път за разрешаване на проблемите на Китай (Lee, 1994, pp. 101-102).

През пролетта на 1919 г. Джоу Ънлай се завръща в родината си. Решението на Парижката мирна конференция за предаване на довоенната германска „сфера на влияние“ – Циндао<sup>3</sup> и полуостров Шандун, на Япония провокира бурна реакция и патриотични антияпонски демонстрации<sup>4</sup>, от които, както се твърди, Джоу също става част<sup>5</sup>. В Китай той се включва активно в действия и протести с продемократичен, националистически, антияпонски и антиимпериалистически характер и е един от организаторите на Тиендзинския студентски съюз. Той е и сред редакторите на издания в Тиендзин вестник „Тиендзински студент“, чието мото, изписано на английски език, е: „Демокрация: на народа, от народа и за народа“ (Han Suyin, 1994, pp. 41-42). Хората от обкръжението му го определят като високоинтелигентен, скромен и отдаден на дейността и идеите си човек. В началото на 1920 г. Джоу е арестуван заради протести срещу задържането на младежи, участвали в бойкот на японски стоки. Прекарва зад решетките половин година и именно в затвора, както се твърди, за първи път започва да изнася беседи за марксизма (Lee, 1994, pp. 147-148; Han Suyin, 1994, pp. 46-47).

3 Циндао – град в източната част на китайската провинция Шандун, който през март 1898 г. е превърнат в концесионна територия на Германия за срок от 99 г.

4 Гневните реакции на решението на миротворците в Париж раждат китайското антиимпериалистическо, политическо и културно движение за национално обновление „4 май“.

5 Въпросът за участието на Джоу в Движението „4 май“ е спорен. Официалната му биография в КНР твърди, че той участва и дори ръководи студентски протести, но редица негови „неофициални“ биографи отхвърлят вероятността това да е така поради липсата на налични документи и/или свидетелства в подкрепа на неговото участие – да не говорим за ръководна роля – в Движението.

След освобождаването си бъдещият комунистически лидер заминава да следва в Европа. В края на 1920 г. той пристига на европейска земя и след кратък престой в Лондон се установява в Париж. През 20-те години на XX век френската столица е космополитен метрополис, който гъмжи от неспокойни, търсещи промяна и революционно настроени млади хора и интелектуалци от целия свят. Джоу е стипендиант, на когото не се налага да работи, за да се издържа, което му позволява да се потопи изцяло в тази атмосфера и да се отдаде на политическа дейност. Влиза в контакт със сродни души от Азия, Африка и Латинска Америка, които обсъждат планове за постимпериалистическото бъдеще на страните, станали по-късно известни като „Трети свят“ или „Глобален Юг“. Още по-важно с оглед на идейното му оформяне обаче е ангажирането му с дейността на радикално настроени китайски студенти във френската столица, които често организират протестни демонстрации пред Китайската легация против различни вътрешно- и външнополитически решения на управляващите в Китай. Той все по-тясно се обвързва с популяризиране на идеите на социализма и марксизма, а квартирата му в Париж се превръща в център на политическа мрежа с космополитен характер, през която денонощно преминават революционно настроени китайски младежи (един от тях е 19-годишният тогава бъдещ китайски реформатор Дън Сяопин ) (Goebel, 2015, p. 1).

Престоят във Франция е времето, когато Джоу окончателно свързва политическата си и революционна дейност с комунистическото движение. След като научава за екзекуцията на свой приятел по време на стачка на работниците в текстилна фабрика в Китай, той пише поема в негова чест и завършва с обещанието: „Никога няма да променя идеологията си и ще продължа решително да работя за нея и да я разпространявам“ (Lee, 1994, p. 161). И наистина, Джоу остава верен на тези думи до края на живота си. Не е ясно кога точно той се присъединява към Китайската комунистическа партия (ККП), която е създадена през юли 1921 г.<sup>6</sup> във френската концесионна територия на град Шанхай. Китайски комунистически групи и протоорганизации обаче съществуват и преди това и повечето биографи на Джоу приемат, че той е бил член на една от тях още през пролетта на 1921 г. (Bagnouin, Yu, 2006, p. 27). По-късно, с още двадесет и двама китайски комунисти, той създава и младежко европейско подразделение на партията. Престоят в Европа трайно го свързва с комунистическите среди и идеи и го налага като

6 Първият (учредителен) конгрес на ККП се провежда от 23 юли до началото на август 1921 г. През 1938 г. обаче Мао Дзъдун произнася реч, в която заявява: „На 1 юли тази година отбелязваме 17-ата годишнина от основаването на ККП“. Оказва се, че Мао не може да си спомни точната дата, а само месеца на свикване на Учредителния конгрес. Тъй като не са запазени архивни документи, по които може да се верифицират датите, Централният комитет на ККП предлага 1 юли да се приеме като дата за отбелязване на годишнините от създаването на партията. (О КПК в вопросах и отчетах (2012); An Epic March. The 100th Anniversary of the Founding of the Communist Party of China (n.d.).

енергичен лидер с осезаем за всички революционен заряд. През юни 1923 г. ръководството на Китайската комунистическа партия, под влияние на насоките на Третия интернационал (Коминтерна), т.е. на Москва, решава да сътрудничи с ръководената от Сун Ятсен китайска Национална народна партия (Гуоминдан) в борбата срещу военните диктатори<sup>7</sup> и вътрешните междуособици за възстановяване на единството на Китай. През ноември същата година в гр. Лион, Франция, е създадено подразделение на Гуоминдана, а Джоу Ънлай получава инструкции да сътрудничи и дори става ръководен член на организацията (Barnouin, Yu, 2006, p. 28).

Активизирането на движението за китайско национално единство на китайска територия кара намиращите се във Франция китайски комунисти да вземат решение за завръщане в родината. Джоу пристига в Китай през есента на 1924 г. Това е време на смутове, междуособици и несигурност в страната. Съчетанието от леви политически и социални идеи и антиимпериалистически и националистически лозунги привлича редица китайски младежи и интелектуалци в комунистическата партия, но членовете ѝ все още са малко (Aleksandrova, 2021, p. 131). В средата на 20-те години на XX век Националистическата партия, водена от Сун Ятсен, изглежда като единствената политическа сила в Китай с потенциал успешно да се справи със задачата за възстановяване на единството и централизиране на властта в републиката. Установените близки отношения между ръководството на Гуоминдана и съветските лидери в Москва водят до натиск върху китайските комунисти за единен фронт с националистите. Те също така са насърчавани да се включат в Националистическата партия, като същевременно запазят членството си в ККП. Сталин и обкръжението му се надяват, че работейки „отвътре“, комунистите ще превърнат Гуоминдана в ударна сила на революция с болшевишки заряд в Китай. И макар това да не се осъществява, периодът на военно и политическо сътрудничество на комунисти и националисти, въпреки идеологическите им различия, изиграва важна и позитивна роля за развитието на Китай, като способства за възстановяване на целостта и държавното му единство.

Отношенията на Джоу Ънлай с Гуоминдана са интересен аспект от живота и политическата му кариера. Заради репутацията си на революционер и енергичен организатор, много скоро след завръщането си в родината Джоу е насочен към военната академия на Гуоминдана<sup>8</sup>, където

7 След свалянето на династията Цин в Китай младата китайска република преминава през труден период на междуособици и сепаратизъм, подклаждани от милитаристки клики, външни сили и местни военачалници (военни диктатори). Последните използват слабата (или отсъстваща на практика) централна власт, за да заграбят цялата военна и гражданска власт на контролираната от войските им територия.

8 Академията е създадена на о. Хуанпу, близо до град Гуанджоу, столицата на китайската провинция Гуандун. Официалното ѝ название е „Военна академия на Република Китай“ (中华民国陆军军官学校), но често е наричана и „Военна академия Хуанпу“ (黄埔军校).

оглавява нейния политически отдел.<sup>9</sup> Отдадеността, организационните му умения и способността да обединява различни фракции го налагат като една от водещите фигури в организираната и финансирана с помощта на СССР военна академия. Нещо повече – с основание може да се твърди, че той е един от хората, които полагат основите на политическата структура на китайската Национално-революционна армия – НРА (въоръжените сили на Гуоминдана). Още тогава се проявяват и дипломатическите качества на Джоу, който успява с умереност и прагматизъм да създава мостове между комунисти и националисти и да изглажда идеологическите им конфликти, особено в навечерието на Северния поход<sup>10</sup> на Гуоминдана срещу междуособстващите военни диктатори на китайска територия. В същото време натрупаният по това време опит в политическото ръководство на военни подразделения изиграва важна роля в по-късната му партийна, политическа и дипломатическа кариера.

Смъртта на Сун Ятсен и възходът на Чан Кайшъ<sup>11</sup> като лидер на Гуоминдана довеждат до напрежение и в крайна сметка до разпадане на Единния фронт на комунисти и националисти през 1927 г. Все по-авторитарният подход на Чан, съчетан с желанието му да затвърди контрола си върху националистическата партия и да съкруши ККП като потенциален конкурент за властта в Китай, води до напрежение между двете политически сили. През април 1927 г. Чан оторизира разправа с шанхайската комунистическа организация (прословутото Шанхайско клане), в резултат на която са убити хиляди комунисти. Това събитие бележи официалния край на Единния фронт и началото на открит конфликт между Гуоминдана и Китайската комунистическа партия.

Погромите сварват Джоу Ънлай в Шанхай, където той е един от регионалните комунистически лидери. Репресиите на националистите принуждават Джоу да напусне града, а скоро след това и страната и да се установи с други китайски комунисти в Москва. Там той участва и е един от докладчиците в проведения на съветска територия VI конгрес на ККП, по време на който е избран в ръководството на Централния комитет на партията. След почти едногодишен престой в СССР Джоу се завръща в Китай, където продължава активното си участие в комунистическото движение. Авторитетът му на предан на каузата комунист и харизматичен лидер се затвърждава по време на „Дългия поход“ (1934 – 1936 г.)<sup>12</sup> на частите

9 По същото време Джоу Ънлай е избран и за секретар на комунистическата партия в Гуандун-Гуанси (провинции в Югоизточен Китай).

10 Военна кампания на Гуоминдана (1926 – 1928 г.) за разгром на милитаристките клики и регионалните военни диктатори в Китай и за обединяване на всички китайски територии под властта на националистите.

11 Чан Кайшъ, или Дзян Дзиешъ (蔣介石) (1887 – 1975) – китайски политик, националист, революционер и военачалник, лидер на китайската Национална народна партия (Гуоминдан) и на Република Китай между 1928 г. и 1975 г. (в континентален Китай до 1949 г. и на о. Тайван след това).

12 Дългият (или Северозападният) поход (长征) е 370-дневно придвижване (около 9650

на Китайската червена армия (КЧА)<sup>13</sup>. Като член на Централния комитет на ККП и с натрупания опит от бойното сътрудничество с Гуоминдана в годините на Единния фронт той съдейства за координирането на похода и допринася съществено не само за поддържането на висок морал сред комунистическите части, но и за запазване на живота на ключови партийни лидери. Ролята му по време на изтеглянето на КЧА към северната част на Шанси, както и в последвалия критичен период на борба за оцеляване на комунистите в базата им в Янан (延安), засилва репутацията му на предан революционер и партийен функционер. Биографите на Джоу Барбара Барнуин и Чанджен Ю<sup>14</sup> пишат за него през този период, че „организационният му талант и отдадеността на работата му го правят незаменим“ (Barnouin, Yu, 2006, p. 57) за партията. Това е и периодът, който демонстрира способността му да работи в хармония с вече налагащия се като главен претендент за лидер на ККП, но често конфликтен и подозрителен Мао Дзъдун.

Японската агресия през юли 1937 г. и започналата китайско-японска война, както и внушенията от страна на съветското ръководство<sup>15</sup>, довеждат до „второ издание“ на единния фронт на комунисти и националисти. Джоу Ънлай изиграва ключова роля за възобновяване на сътрудничеството между доскорошните врагове. С присъщите му дипломатичност и прагматичен подход той успява да убеди ръководството на Гуоминдана, че противопоставянето на японската агресия е общонационална кауза, много по-важна от идеологическите различия и конфликти между националисти и комунисти. Във военните години Джоу също така работи в близко взаимодействие с Мао Дзъдун (по това време вече наложил се като партийен лидер) за консолидиране на комунистическите сили в базата им в Шанси, както и в околните региони. Той също така пледира за осъществяване на аграрна реформа, която е от жизненоважно значение за мобилизиране на китайските селяни за въоръжена съпротива и разгръщане на широка партизанска война срещу японците. Способността на Джоу да поддържа дисциплина и единство в комунистическата партия в екстремните условия на антияпонската борба откроява отчетливо капацитета и важността му като революционен лидер в критичен за страната и партията му период.

Краят на Втората световна война и победата над Имперска Япония не довеждат до умиротворяване на Китай. Точно обратното – разгромът на китайския външен архивраг поставя отново въпроса за властта вътре в страната. Приглушените от световния конфликт противоречия между

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километра при много тежки условия) на части на комунистическата Китайска червена армия от южните региони на Китай до провинция Шанси в централната част на Китай.

13 За създаването на Китайската червена армия и Китайската съветска република вж. Aleksandrova, 2021, pp. 138-140.

14 Changgen Yu.

15 На 21 август 1937 г. СССР сключва Пакт за ненападение с Република Китай на Чан Кайшъ.

комунисти и националисти, задълбочени допълнително от личната неприязън между Мао Дзъдун и Чан Кайшъ, довеждат до ожесточена и скъпоструваща гражданска война, продължила до 1949 г. По време на драмата на вътрешнокитайския конфликт Джоу Ънлай отново проявява както верността си към комунистическата кауза, така и качествата си на дипломат и балансьор. Той е един от организаторите на пропагандните кампании на компартията, разясняващи комунистическите практики на аграрната реформа и преразпределението на земята. Тази негова дейност допринася много за спечелване на масова подкрепа за военните усилия на ККП и подкопаване на социалната база на националистите. В същото време Джоу е един от основните преговарящи с представители на Гуоминдана, както и с представители на САЩ, СССР и други държави, в навечерието на гражданския конфликт. Той придружава Мао на спонсорираните от Съединените щати преговори между ККП и националистическото правителство в гр. Чунцин (29 август – 10 октомври 1945 г.) и макар те да завършват с неуспех, дипломатическите му усилия не остават незабелязани, особено от външните наблюдатели, и вероятно допринасят значително за по-добрия имидж на китайските комунисти и тяхната кауза в годините на Гражданската война.

Победата на комунистите и създаването на Китайската народна република на 1 октомври 1949 г. поставят началото на нов период не само в историята на Китай, но и в личния живот и кариера на Джоу Ънлай. Той поема нелеката задача на министър-председател и външен министър на КНР в изключително трудния период на възстановяване на националното единство, изграждане на новата комунистическа държавност и утвърждаване на независимостта и мястото на младата република на интернационалната арена. В новата си държавническа роля Джоу Ънлай още по-отчетливо проявява блестящите си дипломатически заложби, като в същото време продължава да ги съподчинява на революционните си и комунистическите си идеали. В книгата си „За Китай“ Хенри Кисинджър отбелязва, че Джоу обобщава концепцията за различност на китайската комунистическа дипломация в серия от афоризми: Нов Китай ще организира „отделна кухня“ на дипломатически взаимоотношения; ще „измете до чисто къщата, преди да покани гости“, т.е. ще премахне останките от колониално влияние, преди да установи дипломатически отношения с някоя от западните „империалистически“ сили; ще използва влиянието си във външния свят, за да „обедини народите по света“, т.е. ще насърчава революционни движения в развиващите се страни (Kisindzhar, 2012, p. 101). Тази заявка за „нова дипломация“ става в обстановка на разгърнала се Студена война в света и конфронтация на суперсилите САЩ и СССР, която хвърля своята сянка и върху събитията в Китай. Превърналите се в „запазена марка“ на китайския премиер и пръв дипломат реализъм в управлението на вътрешната политика и

прагматизъм във външната се оказват полезни инструменти за справяне със сложността на ситуацията в следвоенен Китай.

Едно от ранните дипломатически постижения на Джоу Ънлай е укрепването на връзките със Съветския съюз, които са от първостепенно значение за оцеляването и развитието на Народната република в условията на непризнаването ѝ от Съединените щати, враждебното отношение на Запада към комунистическото ѝ ръководство и разрухата, причинена от Гражданската война. Дипломатическите усилия и преговорните умения на китайския министър-председател са от решаващо значение за подписването на китайско-съветския Договор за дружба, съюз и взаимна помощ от 14 февруари 1950 г. Благодарение на него Китай получава жизненоважна за тогавашния момент икономическа и военна помощ. Способността на Джоу да поддържа близки отношения със Съветския съюз, без да поставя страната си в пълно подчинение на Москва, способства както за консолидирането на властта на комунистическата партия в Китай, така и за позиционирането на Пекин като значима сила в световното комунистическо движение.

Следващите години затвърждават водещата роля на Джоу Ънлай във формулирането на китайската външнополитическа стратегия. Нещо повече, той е в основата на излизането на КНР на арената на голямата световна политика, особено след смъртта на Йосиф Сталин през март 1953 г. и промените в линията на съветското комунистическо ръководство. В новата ситуация Джоу ориентира амбициите на Китай за самостоятелна роля в глобалната политика към лидерство сред страните от т.нар. Глобален Юг (развиващите се страни). Китайският пръв дипломат подкрепя инициативата за координирано Движение на необвързаните държави<sup>16</sup>. Той допринася съществено за формулирането на „петте принципа на мирно съвместно съществуване на държави с различен обществен строй“ (т.нар. *панча шила*), вписани най-напред в китайско-индийското споразумение от 1954 г.<sup>17</sup> и популяризирани в световен мащаб от Бандунгската конференция на страни от Азия и Африка (април 1955 г., Индонезия). Макар да звучи малко парадоксално, за нарасналия авторитет и влияние на китайския министър-председател говори опитът за убийството му непосредствено преди конференцията в Индонезия.<sup>18</sup>

16 Движението на необвързаните е международна организация, основана през 1961 г. от страни, които не са членове на военни блокове.

17 Споразумението урегулира започналия през 1949 г. по повод на Тибет конфликт между Китайската народна република и Индия. С него Индия признава Тибет за част от Китай.

18 На 11 април 1955 г. на борда на самолета „Принцесата на Кашмир“, собственост на „Еър Индия“, избухва експлозия. Самолетът, който лети от Хонконг до индонезийската столица Джакарта, е нает от КНР, за да транспортира делегация, оглавена от китайския министър-председател Джоу Ънлай, за участие в Бандунгската конференция на страните от Азия и Африка. Експлозията не е инцидент, а организиран от режима на Гуоминдана в Тайван опит за убийство на китайския комунистически лидер. За разочарование на организаторите на атентата Джоу не е на борда на самолета и оцелява.

Речта на Джоу Ънлай на форума е широко отразена в световните медии, а декларацията му:

[...] завинаги са отминали времената, когато съдбата на азиатските и африканските народи е била манипулирана от чужда воля [...] ако сме решени да запазим световния мир, никой не може да ни въвлече във война; ако сме твърдо решени да опазим националната си независимост, никой не може да продължи да ни поробва; ако сме решени да влезем в приятелско сътрудничество, никой не може да ни разедини. Това, което [...] искаме, са мир и независимост (Wilson Center Digital Archive, n.d.)

резонира силно в Африка и Азия. В следващите години китайският премиер затвърждава външнополитическия авторитет на страната си, като посещава лично много от развиващите се държави, подкрепя активно процеса на деколонизация в света, подчертава солидарността на китайския народ с много от новонезависимите нации и установява полезни контакти с техни лидери.

През 1966 г. Китай е обхванат от колизиите на Културната революция. Мао Дзъдун стартира Революцията с цел да затвърди властта си над комунистическата партия, да прочисти предполагаемите си врагове и да премахне „буржоазните и контрареволуционни елементи“ в китайското общество и в ККП. Последвалото десетилетие е един от най-сложните, противоречиви и нюансирани периоди в политическата кариера на Джоу Ънлай. Като министър-председател той е един от най-високопоставените комунистически лидери и това го позиционира в центъра на вълната от ляв радикализъм на Революцията. Лоялен към Мао и неговите идеи, първоначално премиерът подкрепя амбицията за „саниране“ на китайското общество, заличаване на корупцията и възраждане на революционния ентузиазъм на нацията. Лоялността и подкрепата на Джоу обаче изиграват негативна (особено в ретроспектива) роля, тъй като допринасят за придаване на легитимност на Културната революция, която нанася неизмерими и трайни щети върху културния, интелектуалния и социалния живот на нацията и трансформира трагично личните съдби на стотици тероризирани от Червената гвардия<sup>19</sup> китайци. Интензифицирането на радикалните действия и настъпилият в страната хаос обаче все повече притесняват Джоу. Известен с дипломатичността и умерения си характер, той успява да внесе известна стабилност наред с хаоса на политическата истерия и крайностите на радикалните поддръжници на Мао. Балансираното поведение в дейността му като премиер способства за запазване на относителен ред и предотвратяване на пълния социален колапс в годините на Културната революция. Особено важно с оглед бъдещето на Китай е, че Джоу не само осъзнава

<sup>19</sup> Червена гвардия – предимно младежки отряди, формирани за борба с предполагаеми противници на Мао Дзъдун и с представители на китайския елит, заподозрени в привързаност към традиционни китайски ценности и идеи, ревизионизъм или опити за връщане на капитализма.

значението на запазването на функционална китайска икономика, но и предприема стъпки за ограничаване на разрушителния ефект на масовите политически кампании върху икономическата дейност в страната. Той също така инициира защита от атаките на хунвейбините<sup>20</sup> на високопоставени партийци (разбира се, главно от своето обкръжение) и особено на такива с държавнически опит и експертиза. Намесата му в това отношение е внимателна и фина, за да не се провокират ответни наказателни действия, особено от страна на Мао, и за да се предпази правителството и сложният инструментариум на държавно управление от тотална ерозия. Пример за неговите недемонстративни „корективи“ на ексцесиите на Културната революция е и намесата му за запазване на някои от ключовите университети и колежи в страната, с което се предотвратява пълният срив на интелектуалния и научен живот в Китай.

Въпреки казаното по-горе, следва да се отбележи и това, че макар Джоу да е признат като заслужаващ уважение, умерен, дипломатичен и прагматичен лидер, някои автори, като Родерик МакФаркуър (MacFarquhar, Schoenhals, 2006), Джонатан Спенс (Spence, 1990), Барбара Барнуин и Чанджен Ю (Barnouin, Yu, 2006), Франк Дикьотър (Dikkötter, 2016) и др., критикуват поведението му по време на Културната революция. На прицел е по-специално непоколебимата му лоялност към Мао, която го кара да не оспорва публично и най-радикалните политики на Великия кормчия дори когато те водят до неконтролируемо насилие, репресивни чистки и дълбоки обществени сътресения. Някои виждат в тази лоялност егоистичен инстинкт за самосъхранение, тъй като благодарение на нея той запазва държавните си и партийни постове, докато други висши партийни дейци – като Лиу Шаоци (刘少奇) и Дън Сяопин (邓小平) например – са отстранени и малтретирани. В същото време не бива да се пропуска фактът, че в началото на 70-те години на ХХ в. здравословното състояние на Джоу започва бързо да се влошава, което би могло да обясни нежеланието и дори невъзможността му да се конфронтира с Мао Дзъдун или да консолидира под свое ръководство опозиционни на маоистката политика сили.

Въпреки вътрешните сътресения по време на Културната революция, Джоу Ънлай продължава да играе ключова роля във външната политика на Китай. Може би най-значимото му, с оглед не само на националната, но и на глобалната политика, дипломатическо постижение е полагането на основите за нормализиране на отношенията на КНР със Съединените щати и историческото посещение на американския президент Ричард Никсън в Пекин през 1972 г. Джоу е човекът, чрез когото се установяват първите контакти с Белия дом, открили възможност за „затопляне“ в китайско-американските отношения. През декември 1970 г. той предава по дипломатически канали собственоръчно написана

20 От китайското название на отрядите на Червената гвардия – 紅衛兵.

бележка, в която е декларирана готовност на китайското правителство да приеме за разговори високопоставен пратеник на американския президент (Aleksandrova, 2007, p. 84). Това послание достига до Вашингтон и отваря възможност за първото (тайно<sup>21</sup>) посещение на Хенри Кисинджър (тогава съветник по въпросите на националната сигурност на президента Никсън) в Китай. Преговорите на китайския пръв дипломат със съветника на Никсън прокарват пътя за визитата на президента на САЩ в Пекин през февруари 1972 г. и драматичната (особено в контекста на Студената война) промяна в геополитическата ситуация в Азия и в света през следващите години.<sup>22</sup> В дипломатическата подготовка и реализирането на възстановяването на контактите с Вашингтон се проявяват особено ясно отличителните характеристики на стила на Джоу като дипломат и държавник – вярност на личните идейни убеждения и лоялност към партийната йерархия и постулати, но и способност прагматично да притъпи идеологическата жар в името на постигане на реалистични цели в интерес на родината; уважение към представителите на различните нации, виждания и концепции, но и твърда защита на независимостта, позициите и самостоятелната значимост на комунистически Китай; гъвкав дипломатически подход, но и безкомпромисно отстояване на китайските национални интереси.

Скоро след нормализирането на отношенията със САЩ здравословното състояние на Джоу започва бързо да се влошава, вероятно не без помощта на стреса, на който премиерът е подложен поради продължаващата Културна революция и неуспеха на опитите му да овладее крайнолевите уклони в най-високите ешелони на властта в Пекин. Дългогодишният министър-председател и дипломат № 1 на КНР умира на 8 януари 1976 г. Смъртта му отбелязва края на цяла една епоха в дипломатическата история на страната.

Приносът на Джоу Ънлай към оформянето на външната политика на Китайската народна република е несъизмерим с този на която и да е друга фигура от историята на Китайската народна република. Неговият подход към международната политика представлява уникална комбинация от революционен устрем и дипломатическа умереност. Ръководството му по време на критични моменти в историята не само на Китай, но и на света – от раждането на Китайската народна република до нормализирането на отношенията между САЩ и КНР – демонстрира способността му да се ориентира бързо в сложната материя на международните отношения, да реагира адекватно на ситуационните промени и да използва прагматично геополитическите амбиции на

21 Първото посещение на Кисинджър в Пекин (с кодово название „Поло“) е съгласувано с президента Ричард Никсън, но се осъществява без знанието на Държавния департамент и без съгласието на Конгреса на САЩ.

22 По-подробно за нормализацията на китайско-американските отношения през 70-те години на XX век вж. Aleksandrova, 2007.

големите играчи на интернационалната арена, като същевременно остава верен на идеологическите си убеждения и защитата на националните интереси на Китай. Ролята му в оформянето на международния имидж на КНР в много отношения е пример за това как дипломатията може, от една страна, ефективно да прокарва стратегическите интереси на една нация, а от друга – успешно да поддържа често спорна и остро критикувана от външни сили идеологическа доктрина. Оценката на делото на Джоу не е абсолютно еднозначна, особено извън континентален Китай. Критиците на неговите действия като държавен и партиен лидер обаче не бива да забравят огромните предизвикателства, пред които го изправя сложната, турбулентна и изпълнена с политически сътресения епоха, в която той живее и ръководи страната си. В Китайската народна република и днес Джоу Ънлай е национален герой. През юни 1981 г., пет години след смъртта му, резолюция оценка на историята на ККП открито критикува лошата политическа преценка на Мао по време на Културната революция, но оневинява Джоу, когото Културната революция е поставила в особено трудна ситуация и който все пак е успял да минимизира щетите, нанесени от ултралевия партиен уклон, и да защити много хора в и извън партията (Keith, 1989, p. 209).

В заключение, харизматичният първи министър-председател на Китайската народна република може да бъде определен по много начини – лидер, държавник, политик, комунист, боец, интелектуалец – и всички те биха били верни. Но може би определенията, които улавят най-точно квинтесенцията на „легендата Джоу Ънлай“, са революционер и дипломат. Именно наследството на Джоу като революционер и като дипломат все още е крайъгълен камък на съвременната китайска дипломатия и продължава да оказва влияние върху международните изяви и позициите на Китайската народна република на глобалната сцена и днес.

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# ЧЕШКИЯТ МОТИВ ЗА СВОБОДАТА В ПИСМАТА И ДОКУМЕНТИТЕ НА ГЕОРГИ МАРКОВ

Дияна Боева

## THE CZECH MOTIF FOR FREEDOM IN GEORGI MARKOV'S LETTERS AND DOCUMENTS

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/XVNE7825>

**Abstract:** *This article examines the letters and documents from Georgi Markov's archive. The Czech element in it is seen as a symbol of disobedience and revolt since it is related to the events of the Prague Spring and the author's attitude towards this key moment in Post-World War II European history; an attitude shown more tacitly or explicitly in Bulgaria and on the Western radio stations. "I Was Him" is the play marking a point of no return after which Markov had to leave Bulgaria in 1969. The facts and what has been hushed from the already published writer's archive, as well as his correspondence with Milosh Voita and Jan Koska, are being discussed in the context of their respective times. From the personal correspondence of Georgi Markov, we can see his desire for a fulfilling life with the ones close to him, his love for Bulgaria and the absence of pathetic or heroic gestures. Freedom in this Bulgarian writer is part of his authentic desire to live according to a personal philosophy where writing occupies a crucial place; very important for the writer are a few of his friends, especially his parents in Bulgaria for whom he has a sense of guilt – after his father's death Markov is overcome by the feeling of intolerance for the Bulgarian political and social status quo. The Czech motif for freedom in Markov's letters and documents is like "a life with the others" where the individual and his or her place matter.*

**Key words:** *freedom, Georgi Markov, letters and documents, "I Was Him", Czech play, "life with the others"*

### Чувство за непоносимост

„Живот с другите“ е книга от българо-френския учен Цветан Тодоров, посветена на отношенията между хора, принадлежащи към една и съща общност. В нея, по думите на Цветан Тодоров (Todorov, 2015, p. 12), самият

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**Article history:** Received: 20 April 2025; Reviewed: 25 May 2025; Revised: 1 June 2025; Accepted: 9 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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той не се задоволява да описва смисъла на текста, а влиза в полемика с вижданията на автора, когото анализира чрез т.нар. „диалогична критика“. Цветан Тодоров се придържа към схващането, че двамата с описвания автор се намират в един по-широк контекст в търсене на истина и справедливост като реакция към властта. Отбелязва, че не само истината за човека, но и неговото щастие минават през „другия“. В контекста на Студената война си струва да се отбележи, че трудности, свързани с непоносимост към статуквото, се споделят от писатели, принадлежащи на двата враждуващи лагера, както недвусмислено показва Христо Боев, сравнявайки изображенията на морето при Силвия Плат и Петя Дубарова, като тези писателки в своя протест изразяват симпатии към противоположния политически блок (Боев, 2022, pp. 9-25) – копнеж по „другото“, това, което официално се отхвърля.

През 2022 г. издателство „Рива“ издаде в солиден том „Аз бях той. Писма и документи за съдбата и творчеството на Георги Марков“. Трябва да се отдаде дължимото на съставителя на този хронологичен текст – Любен Марков, първи братовчед на българския писател, убит в Лондон, Георги Марков. Любен Марков полемизира с миналото, като добросъвестно публикува: кореспонденцията на своя братовчед около присъдата му в България заради клеймото „невъзвращенец“; писмата до майка му и баща му; протокола от бързото приемане на Георги Марков в Съюза на българските писатели; кореспонденцията с Петър Увалиев; разговори на журналисти с писателя; някои рецензии по повод пиесите му и други произведения; писмата на Яна Пипкова до Георги Марков и неговите до нея, както и тези до бившата му съпруга Здравка Лекова; кореспонденция с онези, които се осмеляват да общуват с него в края на 60-те и 70-те години на ХХ век след установяването му на Запад. Виждаме доносите, разпитите на свидетелите по делото на писателя, както и кореспонденцията с посланици, министри и началници на служби по повод удължаването на паспорта му извън страната. В случая прави впечатление бавенето на отговорите, за да се достигне до обявяването му за „невъзвращенец“. До самото му убийство силно приятелство и доверие го свързва с преводачките – майка и дъщеря – Надежда и Румяна Кожухарови; публикувани са някои от есетата на писателя; календарът на майката на Георги Марков, в който тя отбелязва смъртта на своя син.

Очевидно е, че Георги Марков приема съдбата си: не безропотно, но с надежда, че най-доброто предстои в този Западен свят, в който той избира волю-неволю да живее, без да забравя родината си, за която до последния момент мисли и пише в своите „Задочни репортажи за България“, които чете по Западните радиа. Общият тон на писмата на Георги Марков до близки и познати българи издава голямото му желание да не къса със своята родина, въпреки че би искал много по-рано да се е озовал в Англия и там да прекара живота си – смислено и свободно. Неминуемо прозира и

голямото му желание да бъде успял писател на новото място, което не може да нарече „родно“, но оценява през положителното и отрицателното, за да стигне до ялната мисъл, че предпочита свободата и трудностите пред нагаждачеството и партийните недомислици в комунистическа България. Именно това заявява директно и в един от известните си репортажи „Прага '68“. Есето е прочетено по „Дойче веле“ през 1974 г., в памет на годишнината от Пражката пролет.

Оказва се, че животът за писателя Георги Марков ще е живот „без другите“, без онези, които обича най-много – своите родители, които оставя в България. Надделява чувството му за непоносимост към статуквото. Последният от трийсет и седемте репортажа от „Задочни репортажи за България“, излъчен на 27 юли 1978 г. по радио „Свободна Европа“, носи именно заглавието „Чувство за непоносимост“, съпроводено от голямата болка по загубата на баща му и невъзможността да го изпрати в последния му час.

### Чешкият мотив

На 15 юни 1969 г. в 11:30 часа преди обед в Държавния сатиричен театър в София започва закритата премиера на пиесата на Георги Марков „Аз бях той“. Георги Марков споделя, че в 11:30 часа вечерта вече е бил в хотел „Екселсьор“ в Белград. След сбогуване с близките (и обещание за скорошно виждане), след странната обиколка из София – наистина се оказва последна, Георги Марков напуска България с въпросителни какво следва.

В репортажа „Чувство за непоносимост“ писателят споделя:

Не беше въпросът за съдбата на пиесата ми в Сатиричния театър. За мен и за всички беше ясно, че щяха да я спрат. В края на краищата театърът беше техен. Истинският въпрос беше за това, че аз никога не успях (въпреки опитите ми) да се идентифицирам с тях. Винаги усещах ясна предопределеност, която категорично определяше кое беше мое и кое беше тяхно (Markov, 2022, p. 443).

Ако се перифразира българският изследовател Вихрен Чернокожев (Chernokozhev, 2009, p. 16), може да се направи изводът, че подобни мисли, които водят и до действия при Георги Марков, са опит човек да се приближи до изгубената автентичност на собствения си живот, отнета от тоталитарната власт, в случая – от комунистическа България. Паметта, продължава Вихрен Чернокожев, не е институция, която постановява кое задължително да помним и кое да забравим (p. 16). Марков помни пространствено и емоционално всичко от България: планини, реки, села, градове, обичаи, роднини, чисто български реплики и пр.

Насрочената закрыта премиера на „Аз бях той“ от ръководството на театъра има две цели: да се разбере какво мислят властите и да се потърси подкрепата на публиката. По думите на Георги Марков реакцията на публиката надминава най-добрите очаквания. Представянето на актьора

Георги Парцалев се определя като великолепно, залата се е тресяла от смях. Но колкото по-смешно е ставало в първо действие, толкова помрачни са били някои лица в салона. В антракта към Георги Марков се приближава известен полковник от Държавна сигурност и му казва: „Абе, ти каква чешка пиеса си написал?“ (Markov, 2022, p. 444). Марков отвърща, че пиесата му е българска, и отминава. Вечерта „по-важни приятели“ го съветват да напусне страната за известно време, така се озовава в Белград в деня, в който България и Полша играят мач за Световното по футбол. Прави впечатление, че паспортът и визата на Георги Марков са готови, очевидно за всеки случай и в очакване на нещо. Писателят споделя, че по време на последната си разходка из София всичко в него е крещяло, че никога няма да се върне и да види „тази земя, тази природа“ (Markov, 2022, p. 445).

Около година по-рано преди да свалят пиесата „Аз бях той“, на 20-21 август 1968 г., Чехословакия е окупирана от армиите на Варшавския договор; България също участва в потушаването на Пражката пролет, даже е първата страна, настояла за военна интервенция. Неминуемо това превръща българските власти в още по-бдителни по отношение на идеологически „правилното“ изкуство и култура.

В настоящата статия ще се опитам да открия „чешката пиеса“ и мотива за свободата в писмата и документите на Георги Марков. „Чешкото“ като символ на неподчинение и непокорство; като себerealизация чрез писма и жестове, чрез пиеси и репортажи. Самият Георги Марков в „Задочни репортажи за България“ прави уточнението, че ако е притежавал истинско чувство за гражданска честност и доблест, логично е било да остане в България и да се опита да се бори оттам, както се случва на честните и доблестни хора. Надделява личната му непоносимост, а не героичните пози, от които писателят така настойчиво страни през целия си живот.

„Аз бях той“ се оказва преломната „чешка пиеса“, заради която Марков трябва да напусне веднага България. На това отгоре е комедия, в чийто край героят инженер остава сам и се опитва да си спомни и „види“ отново своята машина и приятелите – това е своеобразно завръщане към себе си. Отделно комедията се превръща в тъжна история за човека, тръгнал по стълбата на израстването в кариерата, където качествата и законът нямат никакво значение. Действителността е доста цинично устроена, защото, ако го няма инж. Иван Петров, ще се наложи да го измислят. Наивникът е нужен на самозаблуждаващата се власт, нужен е заради корупцията и облагите на „своите“. Ясно е защо лицата на партийните величия, по свидетелски разкази, са помръквали по време на закритата постановка на „Аз бях той“. Изобличението е повече от очевидно, но за Марков драматургичното „чешко“ начало също е завръщане към себе си. Диалогът е изключително свеж и истински, конфликтността е не просто актуална днес и тогава, а по-скоро носи белезите на „живия свят“, както казва Георги Тенев (Tenev, 2018, p. 7) в предговора на томчето с пиеси, издадено от „Сиела“ през 2018 г. Може

да се добави, че така любимият герой на Марков – обикновеният човек, е показан като несъвършен, притиснат, но успява да излезе от ситуациите по свой начин, дори желае да се върне към своето „преди“. Най-големият страх на тоталитарната власт е от човешкото, което определя индивида с минало, настояще и бъдеще. Колебаещата се личност със свои ценности, морал и падения се опира на малкия си свят и ако го загуби като инж. Петров, настъпва празнотата и самотата. Идеологическото клише обаче призовава човека да е винаги нащрек, да дебне. Излизайки извън този приём, Марков навлиза в сериозната конфликтност (и драматургия), като добавим и неподправения смях и ироничното като допълнителен пласт към общата картина на действието – нямало е как „още същата вечер“ писателят да не напусне България.

„Чешкото“ за Георги Марков в „Прага ’68“ е и светлина, прозрение за живота и смисъла му, както и осъзнаване на реалността без идеологически окраски, истинско усещане за пролет, съживяване и духовен подем:

И в цялата тази мрачна, реакционна, безнадеждна атмосфера на отвъд-средновековен феодализъм чешката пролет дойде като първата светлина на възможен ренесанс. Апостолите на този ренесанс искаха да съборят крепостните стени, да сринат всички прегради между партия и човек, да отхвърлят налудните идеологични схеми и да признаят реалността (Markov, 2018).

### **Милош Войта и Ян Кошка до Георги Марков**

На 31 октомври 1968 г. Георги Марков получава писмо от Прага от чешкия театрал и българист Милош Войта (Voyta, 2022, p. 65). Войта нарича свойски Марков Джери, обвинява го, че не държи на обещанието си (не му е пратил пиесата, която е обещал); с доста весел тон говори за думата „веднага“, която при балканските народи можело да означава месец-два до две години.

Внимателното вглеждане в датата на писмото обаче показва, че 31.10.1968 г. е близо два месеца след Пражката пролет, която приключва август същата година с навлизането на чужди войски в Прага. Точно по това време там ври и кипи. Приповдигнатият тон на Войта може да се приеме и като напрегнат и наистина фалшиво весел: да речем, съобщава, че жена му Марийка (българка) сънувала, че Марков я целува, затова и той изпраща целувки на Здравка Лекова, към онзи момент съпруга на писателя.

Българката Марийка всъщност е д-р Мария Христова Войтова, съпругата на чешкия театрал, която по това време се грижи за samozапалилия се Ян Палах, героя на Пражката пролет, който умира през януари 1969 г. от раните си. Погребението на Палах довежда до масови протести срещу окупацията. Едва ли д-р Войтова сънува Марков в този момент. Милош Войта действително внимава какво пише, защото е наясно къде и кога праща писмото си. Марков също знае, че кореспонденцията му се чете от

българските власти, предупреждаван е неведнъж за това, когато започва да живее на Запад.

Писмата от и до Марков носят скрита дълбочина и заряд, които не са за подценяване. Нужно е да се четат в контекст. Никой не разкроява думите, но се усеща „желязната завеса“, усеща се времето, напрежението, което носи злото в лицето на тоталитарната машина.

В началото на ноември същата 1968 г. Марков получава писмо от Братислава от Ян Кошка (Koshka, 2022, р. 66) – словашки българист. В края на 50-те години на XX век Кошка специализира българска литература в СУ „Св. Климент Охридски“. Писмото му е доста по-въздържано от това на Войта, пише на Марков във връзка с превод на новелата и сборника „Жените на Варшава“. От издателството са харесали книгата, но от заглавието трябвало да се „избегне тая Варшава“. Кошка предлага доста по-несполучливите заглавия – „Приключенията на Барбара“, „Жените на Павел“ и пр. Също така недоволства, че се публикуват глупости (буквално така казва) и че печатът е компрометиран – очевидно съзнава, че руши добро заглавие като „Жените на Варшава“. Какво му отвърща Марков, вероятно трябва да се провери в архива на Кошка. Българистът казва, че ще предложи на издателството и „Портретът на моя двойник“.

Не е необходимо да се напомня отново, че това се случва около Пражката пролет. Контекстът и времето може да се открият във въздържания и учтив тон, забележките са общи, даже може да се каже, че важат и за днешното време. Нито дума за военната обстановка в Чехословакия, няма и как да бъде спомената. Това по всички правила се нарича автоцензура: Войта е излишно весел, а Кошка пише все едно животът е посредствен и рутинен около него. Няма и враждебност – все пак Марков е гражданин на страна, чиито войски участват в нахлуването и окупирането на Чехословакия, наред с други, разбира се.

И все пак Ян Кошка „изпуска“ две реплики, които бързо замаскира след това:

*В нормална обстановка всичко щеше да върви успешно и бързо. (После бърза да каже, че положението на преводачите е сложно.)*

*Продължава всенародно разочарование. (Следва репликата за глупостите в печата и сложните културни връзки и нито дума за още по-сложните политически връзки.)*

Писмата на двамата българисти, Войта и Кошка, говорят чрез своето мълчание. Чешкият мотив е реплика на премълчаното, или на желанието на преводачите да се скрият чрез своята дейност от ужаса на нахлуването и погрома. По-различни са взаимоотношенията на Георги Марков с близките му хора в България и някои негови сънародници в странство.

## Петър Увалиев и Яна Пипкова

След един момент от своето пребиваване извън България Марков има обтегнати взаимоотношения и с двамата: Увалиев не му помага да пробие в киното, което навлиза и в криза по това време; Яна Пипкова свидетелства на делото срещу него. Това е видимо от разпита ѝ (Dobrev, 2022, р. 225) в началото на 70-те години на ХХ век, в който Яна Пипкова цитира писмо от Георги Марков, в което той казва, че няма да се върне при „[...] тези софийски шимпанзета и цялата българска измет“. Тук ще отбележа, че в книгата „Аз бях той. Писма и документи за съдбата и творчеството на Георги Марков“ могат да бъдат прочетени показанията по делото „Марков“ на негови колеги, както на български интелектуалци, критици, артисти. Не става ясно дали тези хора на духа са си давали сметка, че участват по някакъв начин в подписването на смъртната присъда на своя близък до неотдавна. По-скоро прозира страхът и безсърдечието (Яна Пипкова е и наранена), както и очевидното желание да запазят облагите си, с които българските писатели и артисти са особено популярни тогава. Най-унизителен е „разпитът“ на Розалия Ликова (Dzhagarov, 2022, р. 183) пред Управителния съвет на СБП през 1972 г. Ликова се опитва да защити по някакъв начин Джери, онзи, когото е познавала, но изтъква, че днес той е „предател“. Най-разочароващ е фактът, че преводачът Цветан Стоянов по поръчка на Службите е в Лондон при Марков (само веднъж) (Karayotov, 2022, р. 551), който го посреща с радост. В кореспонденцията на Марков до Антоанета Войникова, съпруга на Цветан Стоянов, прозира тъга: отишъл си е негов приятел, а Марков поднася своите съболезнования. Остава отворен въпросът за причините и мотивациите на Цветан Стоянов да осъществи това пътуване.

В свое писмо Атанас Славов пита Марков за адреса на Милан Кундера, на което той му отговаря, че няма връзка с него (Markov, 2022, р. 413). Можем да припомним, че Кундера е автор на ключов роман за Пражката пролет – „Непосилната лекота на битието“, преведен като текст на английски и на френски през 1984 г., оригиналният текст на чешки излиза през 1985 г. Видим е интересът на по-будните българи тогава към всичко чешко, което символизира свобода и полет на духа.

На 3 октомври 1969 г. близката приятелка на Марков Яна Пипкова му пише, след като той вече е извън България:

От театрите свалят пиесата на Артър Милър, тъй като е говорил на страната на чехите (Pipkova, 2022, р. 97).

и

Знай, че твоите писма се оглеждат, фотографират, тълкуват най-внимателно! (Pipkova, 2022, р. 97).

Очевиден е страхът на българските власти от онези, които са „на страната на чехите“. Ясно е и че Марков не се отказва от заглавието „Жените на Варшава“, което не се харесва на чешките му приятели, но е със славянски привкус. Известният полски и канадски славист Едвард Можейко в своя фундаментален труд „Социалистическият реализъм. Теория. Развитие. Упадък“ пише за XIX сесия на Съвета за култура и изкуство през март 1956 г. в Полша. Можейко подробно разказва за горчивата равносметка на Ян Кот по отношение на социалистическия реализъм. Той твърди, че след тази сесия социалистическият реализъм никога не възстановява своето положение в Полша (Mozheyko, 2009, p. 249). Можейко допълва, че развоят на събитията предизвиква безпокойство в съседните страни, особено в СССР и ГДР, но Кот получава най-остро осъждане по страниците на българския литературен печат. В Чехословакия изказването на поляка се публикува (за разлика от България), а и полемиката там е лишена от изблици и обидни нападки (Mozheyko, 2009, p. 249). За цялото това раболепие на българския културен деятел от онова време има не една или две страници в репортажите и писмата на Марков. Очевидна е невъзможността му да прави компромиси от един момент нататък, когато опознава отвътре тоталитарната система. Спорно е колко е „техен“ Марков. По-горе цитирах от репортажа „Чувство за непоносимост“, в който писателят казва, че е усещал предопределеност, че е знаел кое е „тяхно“ и кое „негово“, че е правил опити, но не е успял да се идентифицира напълно с тях. За тази вътрешна отдалеченост на човека от властта пише и Цветан Тодоров, разказвайки за своя живот в България; споделя, че благодарение на интересите си към литературознанието бързо разбира, че „всяка полемика за идеите и ценностите, каквато предизвиква литературата, ми бе забранена“ (Todorov, 2015, p. 6).

На 8 октомври 1969 г. Марков се намира в Болоня и изпраща писмо на Петър Увалиев с надеждата „да тръгне“ поне с „Жените на Варшава“. Казва направо:

Живея в почти пълна изолация, опитвам се да решавам интересни за мен проблеми, пиша много [...]. Атмосферата у нас сега е такава, че изключва каквато и да е възможност за почтена работа. С две думи никога не е било по-лошо (Марков, 2022, p. 99).

Няма как чехословашките приятели на Марков да формулират така ситуацията в своята страна, пишат му писма от окупираната си родина, самият Марков тогава е все още в България. Има нещо органично в стремежа към „чешката пиеса“, този стремеж в изкуството се нарича *импулс*. Дори чисто езиково може да се наблюдава колко естествено, макар скрито и с недомлъвки, присъства „чешкото“ в писмата и документите – като нещо важно от общото ни развитие, въпрос на чест (дано и на съпричастност). Именно затова властите съблюдават кой и какво говори за чехите, така се стига до свалянето на Артър Милър от сцена.

## Чешкият мотив в обвинителния акт на Софийската градска прокуратура по делото на Георги Марков за изменничество

В обвинителния акт на Софийската градска прокуратура по преписка от 1972 г. още на първа страница се намесва английската радиостанция Би Би Си и западногерманската „Дойче веле“. Отбелязва се, че Марков търсел изява на литературните си възможности чрез тях. Вероятно се има предвид популяризация на тези възможности. Доказателства събира агенция „София прес“, като прослушва радиоемисиите, в които участва Марков с „остър антибългарски език“, както се твърди. За обвинителния акт се използват свидетелствата на Евгения Филипова, Антоанета Джорова, Любомир Кабакчиев и Яна Пипкова. Всички са се виждали или контактували с него, след като напуска България. Някои от изброените имена са сред живите, биха могли да попълнят архива на Георги Марков с по-точни свидетелства за онова време и за мотивите, свързани с личните им постъпки.

Марков е обвинен в цинично и вражеско отношение към социалистическата държава, „стопанското и културно развитие на страната“, както и в „злостни клевети“, насочени срещу дейци на културата, срещу партийни и държавни ръководители. „Забравил род и родина, продължава Софийската градска прокуратура, Марков нарича по радио „Дойче веле“ Съюза на българските писатели „една плитка локва“ (Данов, 2022, р. 201). Официално-деловият стил, необходим при изграждането на документи, отстъпва на емоционалните изблици на подписалия се зам.-градски прокурор на София Данов.

Любопитен е моментът, в който прокуратурата защитава изкуството и културата от „клеветническите твърдения“ на Марков. Като части на речта преобладават прилагателните, оттам и квалификациите срещу писателя, които извън контекста на времето (а и за самото време) звучат абсурдно. Марков е обвинен, че пледира за *свобода на културните дейци* (курсив мой) – „Дори нещо повече – твърди прокуратурата – след като хули нас, безогледно поучава и „консервативно редакционните среди в западната култура“ (р. 203). Марков е критичен към „свои“ и „чужди“. Тоталитарната власт съществува и осмисля себе си, като определя точно кой е нейният враг. Случаят „Марков“ обаче излиза извън контрол, българските власти стигат до идеята, че и Западът също се нуждае от защита, от българска защита.

В обвинителния акт се цитират думите на Марков, в които той говори за **чешките събития** и българското кино, над което надвисва Държавна сигурност – думите му са от репортаж по радиото. Нещо повече, казва българският писател: „[...] фактически всяка творческа работа бе спряна. Темите, предложени на кинодейците за работа, бяха само две – далечното историческо минало и днешните подвизи на Държавна сигурност“ (Данов, 2022, р. 201). Това се случва след Пражката пролет.

Зам.-градският прокурор на София Данов възкликва, позволявам си да цитирам отново: „Но какво предлага той и какво създават неговите господари – творби за „бандити“ от типа Ал Капоне или живота в нощните заведения или [...]“ (Danov, 2022, p. 202). Прокурорът припомня и дейността на Марков в издателство „Народна младеж“, в което предлагал книги с антикомунистическо съдържание. Дава се за пример „Тъгата на лейтенант Боровка“ от чехословашкия писател емигрант Йозеф Шкворецки (p. 205).

Марков споделя един основен принцип в изкуството – „или агнето, или вълкът“, но според него не може „и вълкът сит, и агнето цяло“. Интересът му и към чешките събития очевидно оформя възгледа му на непокорен човек, който страни от героичните пози, както вече бе подчертано.

На 10 ноември 1972 г. следователят Константин Добрев разпитва Ганка Попдимитрова (Dobrev, 2022, p. 209) по случая „Марков“, тя е редактор в издателство „Народна младеж“. Попдимитрова разказва, че след заминаването на Марков за Италия са открити три книги, влезли в плана на издателството, които са били „идейно неиздържани“ (p. 210). „Бяха дори с антикомунистическо съдържание“ (p. 210) – допълва тя. И тук дава за пример „чешки автор, който по време на събитията е избягал в Канада“<sup>2</sup> (p. 210). Попдимитрова разказва за авторитета на Марков като автор и влиянието му върху колегите ѝ. Създадената от него редакция е разформирана заради книгите с антикомунистическо и антисъветско съдържание, а редакторите – наказани. Марков е внасял известна свобода в това издателство, от която свобода и колегите му са имали нужда. Неслучайно след неговото заминаване вече е било невъзможно да се търси новото и любопитното в литературата, което Попдимитрова определя като антисъветско. Това се случва след Пражката пролет. И ако направим опит да спекулираме, ще кажем, че ако бунтът на чехите не беше потушен, и у нас щеше да се усети по-човешкото лице на социализма, както забележително казва Александър Дубчек. Очевидно е, че Марков се е опитвал да е извън наложените от властта схематизъм и безвкусица по отношение на литературата и културата, правил го е „тайно“, опитвал се е да се съпротивява чрез законите на естетическото начало и/или драматургичната конфликтност, затова и не се усеща докрай „техен“. Целият му биографичен наратив показва дори, че му липсва вяръност към един човек (дори и в личен план), към една идея, към една кауза, към една власт. Не му липсва вяръност към човешкото начало обаче и приятелството, затова и не допуска, или поне не откривам нещо подобно в публикувания му архив, че Цветан Стоянов го посещава в Лондон под давление на Службите. Марков искрено страда след смъртта му.

### Предстоящи теми, юли 1978

В записките на Георги Марков откриваме предстоящите му задачи през 1978 г. (Markov, 2022, p. 430). Темите са интересни и от днешна гледна точка:

2 Очевидно става дума за Шкворецки – б. а.

кокошият инстинкт на всички автори; Веселин Андреев; езикови проблеми на съвременния български книжовен език и пр. Под точка пета е написано: „Чехословакия – много аспекти“. Очевидно Марков е очаквал по-добри дни за себе си и своите занимания, започнал е да планира и записва идеите си. В писмо до Димитър Бочев (Markov, 2022, p. 395) от 1977 г. споделя, че е престанал да следи сп. „Индекс“, въпреки че там е открил „много хубави материали за чехите и по-специално за пиесата на Хавел“ (p. 395). Очевидно интересът му към чешката тема е траен и идва още отпреди заминаването му от България.

В строго секретен документ от декември 1975 г., засягащ радио „Дойче Веле“ (Началник Първо главно управление – ДС, с. 334), се изтъква, че един от главните отдели е за Европейските социалистически страни, в който влизат секциите на България, Румъния, Чехословакия и пр. Изтъква се и „идеологическата им диверсия“. В справката Марков е наречен „беглецът писател“, очевидно е част от общата „вражеска емиграция“ (p. 334). Началникът на Първо главно управление признава, че с назначаването на Марков през 1974 г. „блудкавите“ програми на българска тематика „са освежени“ (p. 336). Въпреки че е обиждан и отричан от властта в България, Марков е признат от всички за интересен писател и журналист, дори от онези, които го определят като свой враг.

В Би Би Си също продължава интересът му към чешката тема. В личната му кореспонденция до Димитър Бочев от 6.03.1977 г. четем, че „брат Тео“ е добре, след като е постигнал огромен успех с главната роля в пиесата на Вацлав Хавел „Аудиенция“, предадена по Би Би Си: „Би Би Си направи чудесен жест, като отмени цялото предаване и го посвети на пиесата – 45 минути. Мисля, че стана много хубаво и беше отчетено като постижение [...]“ (Markov, 2022, p. 380).

Полската българистка Целина Юда в книгата си „Под знака на НРБ. Българската култура и литература в капана на идеологията“ (Yuda, 2006, p. 47) пише за сложната и драматична съдба на българския интелектуалец след 9. IX. 1944 г. Развива и тезата за духовната биография на интелектуалеца, която е част от колективната идентичност. Очевидно, който не успява да се приспособи към новите времена, е бил маргинализиран, а понякога и убиван като българския писател Георги Марков. Интересното при него е, че поне видимо той е бил успял писател в България, четен и популярен (до момента, когато не решава да си тръгне, защото в България става тягостно след чешките събития). Авторът познава прийомите на властта и пътищата за издигане именно затова е толкова изобличителен и автентичен със своите репортажи по Западното радио. Георги Марков извървява труден път в личностен и творчески план, по който разбира, че в изкуство и литература не може да има „и вълкът сит, и агнето цяло“ – или е едното, или другото, както споменах вече. Мисля, че Георги Марков, за разлика от Павел Вежинов, не успява да напише своя истински голям текст (той мечтае

за роман) в България. Репортажите по Западното радио се превръщат в неговия „роман“, в които честно, някои казват субективно, се вписва в колективната ни памет. Последователно, и то чак към края на 70-те и началото на 80-те години на ХХ век, Павел Вежинов достига до „Барьерата“ и „Нощем с белите коне“, но с доста идеологически клишета и компромиси в своето творчество преди това. Още през 1969 г. без героични пози Георги Марков разбира, че не може да живее и пише по „този“ начин, очевидно е искал нещо да промени, преди да е станало късно. След напускането му комунистическата власт изземва всичко написано от него от книжарниците и библиотеките: от най-четен, се превръща в низвергнат. Можем да гадаем дали Георги Марков е съзнавал, че се доближава до онова гранично състояние на разбунтуваност, за което Албер Камю казва, че води до смърт (Катуц, 2023). Полемика с абсолютната идеологическа истина не може да има – това Марков със сигурност е разбирал, щом отклонява молбите на близки и далечни познати да се върне в България. Мислел си е, че може да избегне насилствената смърт по този начин, но е грешал.

Още от времето на Българското възраждане стремежът на нашенеца към Европа е пословичен. Темата вълнува не един или двама автори, които я адаптират в различни образци – къде с комичен маниер и фолклорни мотиви като в „Криворазбраната цивилизация“ (1871) на Добри Войников или в сатиричните фейлетонни разкази „Бай Ганьо“ (1895) от Алеко Константинов. Европа като ценност и начин да осмислиш „своето“ е част от житейския път на П. П. Славейков, който се заема с нелеката задача да представи пред авторите на младата българска литература естетически критерии на писане, той е първият, който си поставя това като цел заедно със своите приятели от кръга „Мисъл“. Разбира се, среща отпор от страна на Вазов, с когото изобщо не запазват добрия тон, дори в името на литературата.

Очевидно тази тънка „европейска линия“ се оказва устойчива през времето: като мотив в творби на български автори или като стремеж за учене по Европа, да речем, а после като пренасяне на култура и образци чрез преводи. Самият Георги Марков иска да успее на Запад, да пропише на английски и най-после да бъде разбран истински от някого. Въпреки че творбите му в България са с общ тираж около 63 000 екземпляра, той иска повече, иска нещо различно. Георги Марков не е подозирал колко добра картина на „българския модел“ ще са неговите „Задочни репортажи за България“, които се четат по „вражеското радио“ – както се изразяват българските комунисти в секретните документи. Толкова проникновен и откровен глас в нашето литературно битие – няма. Поне не и в такава форма. Георги Марков е разбрал, че Западът не се интересува от родните теми, и започва да адаптира и представя отдалече пред българските радиослушатели онова, което знае и познава най-добре – нашата действителност. Той се изказва по повечето проблеми, касаещи ни като нация, народ, индивиди.

На прицел са всякакви тоталитарни прийоми, които потискат човека и съществуването му, обикновения човек, както казва той. Именно затова би могло да се каже, че Георги Марков написва своята „чешка пиеса“, т.е. превръща се в неудобен и непокорен човек и заплаща с живота си, подобно на герой от Пражката пролет, въпреки че осъзнато винаги се е стремил към живота, а не към смъртта.

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„... Я ВАМ ОТВЕТИЛА ВМЕСТО БОЯНА...“:  
(НЕ)СОСТОЯВШАЯСЯ ПЕРЕПИСКА МЕЖДУ ИВАНОМ  
БУНИНЫМ И БОЯНОМ ПЕНЕВЫМ (СОФИЯ, 1920 г.)

Галина Петкова

“... I ANSWERED YOU INSTEAD OF BOYAN...”:  
THE (FAILED) CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN IVAN BUNIN AND  
BOYAN PENEV (SOFIA, 1920)

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/VJHS7698>

**Abstract:** *This research comments on the three-person correspondence between the Russian writer Ivan Bunin, the Bulgarian professor of Slavic literature Boyan Penev, and Penev’s wife – the poetess Dora Gabe. Emigrating from Russia, Bunin stayed in Sofia for 18 days between February and March 1920. During this period, he personally met the Penev family. Acquainted with Bunin’s work, prof. Penev made every effort to support the writer and showed him academic socialization by inviting Bunin to work as a “professor” of “new Russian literature” at Sofia University. However, while the procedure for the approval of the Russian émigré scholar was in progress, Bunin left Sofia for Belgrade and then Paris. He never returned to Sofia to take up the chair offered to him. From Paris, Bunin sent to Boyan Penev two letters, kept in the Scientific Archives of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and published long ago, in which he explained the circumstances that led to his decision. Until now Bulgarian literary scholars have believed that Penev reacted to these letters with silence. During archival searches, however, letters in reply to Bunin were found. They were written by the poetess Dora Gabe, who responded to Bunin “instead of” her husband. These documents are kept in the I. A. Bunin Collection of the Leeds Russian Archive (University of Leeds). Written in the first-person plural, these missives contain a general impression of Bunin but also reveal Penev’s opinion about Bunin’s decision. The chronologically restored*

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Article history: Received: 27 April 2025; Reviewed: 23 May 2025; Revised: 26 May 2025; Accepted: 2 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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*correspondence, as well as the published illustrations, contributes to the reconstruction of the Sofia period of Bunin's emigrant life, which has remained more or less marginalized till now.*

**Key words:** *Ivan Bunin, Boyan Penev, Dora Gabe, Russian emigration, Russian literature, correspondence*

Цель настоящей публикации – представить тройную корреспонденцию, раскрывающую общение–разминовение русского писателя Ивана Бунина, прожившего в Софии „18 дней“ (Моhовоу, 1936, р. 1) в феврале – марте 1920 г., и болгарского профессора истории славянских литератур Бояна Пенева, приложившего все усилия, чтобы Бунин был избран лектором по русской литературе в Софийском университете. Должность профессора гарантировала бы И. Бунину некую обустроенность эмигрантского бытия, но он ее не занял, уезжая в Белград, а оттуда в Париж. Он извещал о себе Б. Пенева из Белграда через посредника, а потом – из Парижа – послал Пеневу в том же 1920 г. два письма. Болгарское литературоведение ввело эти письма в научный оборот в 1969 г. Общепринятой считалась точка зрения, что на письма И. Бунина Б. Пенев не отвечал. Однако, в результате архивных разысканий удалось найти ответы Бунину: их написала из Софии поэтесса Дора Габе, „вместо“, по ее словам, своего мужа Бояна Пенева. Эти письма сохранились в Бунинской коллекции Русского архива в Лидсе (Leeds Russian Archive, University of Leeds) и до сих пор оставались неизвестными.

В общей сложности публикация содержит шесть писем, снабженных научным аппаратом: 1) записка на обороте визитной карточки И. Бунина, предназначенная для Б. Пенева; 2) два письма И. Бунина из Парижа, адресованные Б. Пеневу; 3) два письма Доры Габе из Софии, отвечающие И. Бунину, и 4) краткое письмо Доры Габе из Польши, адресованное Вере и Ивану Буниным.

Визитная карточка и письма И. Бунина сохранились в фонде Бояна Пенева в Научном архиве Болгарской академии наук, и они уже более полувека являются объектом научного интереса болгарских исследователей.

В 1969 г. литературовед Иван Сарандев опубликовал на французском языке письма известных деятелей литературы и науки к профессору Бояну Пеневу. Среди них фигурирует перевод первого во времени письма Бунина, посланного из Парижа (Sarandev, 1969, pp. 95-96). В комментарии И. Сарандев отмечал, что это „первая публикация“ корреспонденции И. Бунина с Б. Пеневым, „связь“ между которыми установилась во время пребывания русского писателя в Болгарии (Sarandev, 1969, р. 94). В самом тексте письма контаминируются собственные имена двух различных личностей – Лопуховского и Нилуса, – и так появляется „M<onsieur> Peter Alexandrovich Lopouhovski-Nillus“ (Sarandev, 1969, р. 95). Кроме того, пропущено, без

указания на это, словосочетание „вспрыскивания мышьяку“, которое, вероятно, было трудно перевести на французский язык.

В 1970 г. И. Сарандев опубликовал в переводе с русского на болгарский язык три документа: записку для Б. Пенева, набросанную Буниным на его одесской визитке, и два письма И. Бунина к Б. Пеневу, посланные из Парижа (Sarandev, 1970, pp. 39-41). Размещенная на лицевой стороне визитки информация о Бунине воспроизводится на языке оригинала, а в комментарии, предшествующем тексту записки, уточняется, что „на обратной стороне визитной карточки есть текст, написанный карандашом“ (Sarandev, 1970, p. 41).

В публикации не соблюдена хронология текстов, которые расположены в следующем порядке: 1) письмо из Парижа, датированное „8 сентября 1920 г.“; 2) записка на визитке, которая во времени предшествует другим письмам; 3) недатированное письмо из Парижа, уже опубликованное в 1969 г. на французском языке. И в переводе этого письма на болгарский язык снова повторяется контаминация собственных имен в одну личность, на этот раз фамилия напечатана без дефиса: „г<осподин> Петър Александрович Лопуховски Нилов“ (Sarandev, 1970, p. 41). Во вступительном комментарии И. Сарандев цитирует материалы из софийских газет, на основании которых реконструирует факты жизни Бунина в Софии: его знакомство с „семьей Доры и Бояна Пеневых“ (Sarandev, 1970, p. 40), ограбление в гостинице „Континенталь“, избрание на должность преподавателя Софийского университета и отъезд в Белград. Таким образом, благодаря разысканиям И. Сарандева, тема „Иван Бунин и Боян Пенев“ получила свою научную институционализацию на рубеже 1960-х – 1970-х гг.

В своей болгароязычной статье 1992 г. историк Людмил Спасов останавливается на уже известных событиях софийской жизни И. Бунина. Нессылаясь ни на какие источники, он реферировал первое во времени письмо Бунина, инкорпорируя две короткие цитаты, а второе – от „8 сентября 1920 г.“ – воспроизводит и факсимильно, и в собственном переводе с русского на болгарский язык (Spasov, 1992, pp. 52-54). Свои наблюдения в свернутом виде, в том числе и перевод письма, ученый включил в работу 2004 г. (Spasov, 2004, pp. 482-483), где все цитаты атрибутированы, а архивные источники указаны.

В оригинале два письма И. Бунина на русском языке, написанные из Парижа, „впервые“ (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 469) опубликованы М. Каназирской в приложении к ее книге „После России“ в 2013 г. (Kanazirska, 2013, pp. 468-470). Письма расположены в ожидаемой хронологии, но в текстах оригиналов наблюдаются некоторые пропуски. Научный комментарий к письмам сводится к трем сноскам, поясняющим собственные имена Лопуховского, П. Нилуса и А. Дзивгова.

В русскоязычном литературоведении интерес к пребыванию И. Бунина в Софии и его письмам проф. Б. Пеневу проявил исследователь

творчества писателя А. К. Бабореко. В 1994 г. он неточно указывал, что „письма Бунина Баяну [sic] Пеневу опубликованы по-французски Иваном Сарандевым“ (Baboreko, 1994, p. 70). В той же работе А. Бабореко сообщал, что текст писем „был набран“ для 84-го тома „Литературного наследства“, посвященного И. Бунину, но „напечатаны они не были“, а их „корректурa хранится“ в Российском государственном архиве литературы и искусства (Baboreko, 1994, p. 70). Позднее в своей книге „Бунин. Жизнеописание“<sup>2</sup>, ученый цитирует первое письмо по „корректуре писем Бунина Баяну Пеневу, РГАЛИ“ и в примечании № 1 ко второй части книги – „В изгнании“ – снова повторяет приведенную выше информацию о письмах, набранных для „Литературного наследства“, но не напечатанных (Baboreko, 2009, p. 448). Ученый использует неправильную форму личного имени проф. Пенева – „Боян“ – вместо „Баяна“, и вне его внимания остаются причины, по которым редакция „Литературного наследства“ не опубликовала письма И. Бунина Б. Пеневу, тем самым урезывая факты жизни писателя в Софии и в целом уничтожая эту страницу его эмигрантской биографии. Более того, форма множественного числа – „письма Бунина“, опубликованных по-французски, – свидетельствует о том, что, очевидно, А. Бабореко не знаком с публикацией И. Сарандева.

Сохранившиеся документы в фонде Б. Пенева в Научном архиве Болгарской академии наук позволяют расширить наблюдения всех упомянутых выше ученых, которые внесли немалый вклад в буниноведение. Записка на визитной карточке<sup>3</sup> дает ценную информацию относительно времени пребывания И. Бунина в Софии. В мемуарной литературе отмечается, что Боян Пенев познакомился с Буниным „в феврале“. Профессор „нашел“ писателя в гостинице „Континенталь“, „повел к себе домой“ и получил „несколько рукописей“ стихотворений, которые ему „Бунин дал посмотреть“<sup>4</sup>. Вероятно, именно в контексте этой встречи можно понять значение записки на обороте визитки. В ней также зафиксирован факт, который не обсуждался ни мемуаристами, ни исследователями. Речь идет о приглашении И. Бунина посетить спектакль Народного театра Болгарии. Когда это могло случиться?

Известно, что в Софии И. Бунин был приглашен на лекцию русского журналиста Петра Рысса „Старая и новая Россия“, которая должна была состояться в театре „Одеон“ 3 марта 1920 г. Но накануне „вечерняя пирушка“ у „одного видного болгарского поэта“ (Bunin, 1950, p. 250) продлилась „до четырех

2 Первое издание книги А. К. Бабореко „Бунин. Жизнеописание“ вышло в 2004 г. В настоящей работе все ссылки даются по 2-му изданию 2009 г.

3 Визитная карточка И. Бунина воспроизводится факсимильно с двух сторон на стенде „Коллеги и друзья“ документальной выставки „Боян Пенев (1882–1927)“, организованной Научным архивом БАН в июле – августе 2022 г. [http://archiv.cl.bas.bg/Exhibitions/Galeria/IZLOJBA%208/Boyan\\_Penev.pdf](http://archiv.cl.bas.bg/Exhibitions/Galeria/IZLOJBA%208/Boyan_Penev.pdf) (14.03.2025).

4 Об этом сообщает в своих воспоминаниях писатель Константин Константинов. Он упоминает также, что Б. Пенев пригласил его „пойти повидать Бунина“ (Konstantinov, 2015, p. 328).

утра“ (Chilingirov, 1933, p. 4). Бунин вернулся в гостиницу „только на рассвете“, „заснул мертвым сном“ (Bunin, 1950, p. 251) и лекцию пропустил. Это „пьянство“ спасло ему жизнь<sup>5</sup>, так как, пока публика собиралась, в зале произошел взрыв, организованный анархистами. Несколько человек погибло, они сидели в „первом ряду перед эстрадой“, как напишет впоследствии в своих воспоминаниях Бунин, где вероятно „сидел бы“ и он сам (Bunin, 1950, p. 252). Утром того же дня, пока писатель суетился по поводу своего опоздания на лекцию П. Рысса, его чемодан, в котором хранилось все семейное „достояние“, был „ограблен до тла“, и таким образом Бунины „оказались уже вполне нищими“ и в „положении совершенно отчаянном“ (Bunin, 1950, p. 251)<sup>6</sup>. После подобного события писатель вряд ли бы принял приглашение посетить театральный спектакль. С другой стороны, вероятно, Бунин, только что приехавший в Болгарию<sup>7</sup>, стал бы смотреть постановку, связанную или с русским театральным репертуаром, или с русскими эмигрантами. В коллекции афиш спектаклей Народного театра<sup>8</sup>, сыгранных в период между последними днями февраля и 1 марта 1920 г. (2 марта была „вечерняя пирушка“), удалось найти любопытную находку: 29 февраля 1920 г.<sup>9</sup> был сыгран „Ревизор“ с участием „гастролирующих“ артистов И. Э. Дувана-Торцова (в роли Антона Антоновича) и В. М. Вронского (в роли Хлестакова) из Киевского драматического театра „Соловцов“. Вполне возможно, что И. Бунин был знаком с этими известными актерами, оказавшимися в эмиграции в Софии. Обозначенный дополнительный сюжет также ждет своего исследователя. Рискую предположить, что именно на эту постановку Бунина пригласили в „ложу министра“. Если это было так, то тогда можно считать, что сообщение на визитке написано 29 февраля 1920 г.

5 Цитирую слова И. Бунина, сказанные писателю Стилияну Чилингирову, которые последний приводит в своем очерке о пребывании русского писателя в Софии: „как видите, пьянство иногда спасает [жизнь]“ (Chilingirov, 1933, p. 4).

6 В своих воспоминаниях эти два события И. Бунин объединил так: „судьба оказалась ко мне удивительно великодушна: взяла с меня большую взятку, но зато спасла меня от верной смерти“ (Bunin, 1950, p. 251).

7 В „Биографическом пункте“ И. Бунина Т. Двинятина отмечает, что 23 февраля 1920 г. „Бунины ... уезжают из Константинополя и через день приезжают в Софию“ (Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 7). Ссылка на источник, подтверждающий информацию, что Бунин приехал 24 февраля в Софию не приводится. В хронике болгарской газеты „Зора“ от 28.02.1920 г., в сообщении „Русская миссия в Софии“, сказано, что „вчера в Софию прибыла из Новороссийска комиссия, которая должна позаботиться о размещении русских беженцев в Болгарии. Состав комиссии следующий: проф. Завьялов, проф. Попруженко (известный своими трудами по истории Болгарии), член Русской академии Бунин (известный поэт), член академии Кондаков (специалист по византийскому искусству) ... При миссии в Софии и Варне будет организовано русское бюро печати“ (Хроника. Руска мисия в България. Газета „Зора“ от 28.02.1920 г., № 241, с. 2). Как бы ни был неточен журналистский дискурс по поводу „комиссии“, он зафиксировал определенный факт, и можно говорить о том, что 27 февраля 1920 г. Бунины уже были в Софии, и это стало известно болгарскому обществу.

8 Выражаю свою признательность Художественному архиву Народного театра за возможность ознакомиться с афишами спектаклей, сыгранных в интересующий меня период, и получить необходимые копии. Отдельно хотелось бы поблагодарить г-жу Виолету Станкову, заведующую Художественным архивом Народного театра, за ее содействие и исключительную отзывчивость.

9 Спектакли Народного театра следовали в таком порядке: 1) 25 февраля – „Тартюф“, 2) 26 февраля – „Иванко“; 3) 27 февраля – „Гамлет“; 29 февраля – „Ревизор“; 2 марта – „Дьявол“.

Афиша спектакля „Ревизор“ в Народном театре, 29 февраля 1920 г.

**НАРОДЕВЪ ТЕАТЪРЪ**  
**НЕДЪЛЯ 29 ФЕВРУАРИ**  
 1919-1920 г.  
 Начало точно **7 1/2** Край излъчъ **11**  
**114° ВЕЧЕРНО**  
 Гастроли на г. г. **ДУВАНЪ - ТОРЦОВЪ** и **ВРОНСКИ**  
 — артисти отъ **КВЕСКИЯ ТЕАТЪРЪ „СОЛОВЦОВЪ“**.  
 (Трети прѣзъ този сезонъ)  
**РЕВИЗОРЪ**  
 Комедия въ 5 дѣйстви отъ Н. В. Гоголь, прѣд. Ив. Д. Ивановъ.  
**Т Р У П А:**  
 Ангелъ Антоновичъ, градоначалникъ . . . . . г. **ДУВАНЪ - ТОРЦОВЪ** . . . . . г-жа Б. Боровацкая  
 Луисъ Гейденхаймъ, неговъ синъ . . . . . г-жа Ек. Запорова . . . . . г-жа В. Гелкова  
 Маркъ Антоновичъ, тѣлесъ дѣлатель . . . . . г-жа В. Николска . . . . . г-жа В. Райкова  
 Луисъ Пухачъ, ученикъ, неговъ синъ . . . . . г-жа Юли Сайкова . . . . . г-жа За. Калитерова  
 Жена му . . . . . г-жа М. Хайбарова . . . . . г-жа Г. Димитрова  
 Паша . . . . . г-жа К. Славина . . . . . г-жа Ст. Колева  
 Артезий Филиповичъ, лекарникъ . . . . . г-жа П. Славина . . . . . г-жа М. Кавалева  
 Ив. Кураловъ, Шанива . . . . . г-жа Б. Попова . . . . . г-жа М. Буковска  
 Петръ Ив. Бобански . . . . . г-жа П. Панаева . . . . . г-жа Ек. Чанова  
 Ив. Лавсановичъ, търговецъ . . . . . г-жа Н. Христова . . . . . г-жа Ст. Ковалева  
 Овца, неговъ слуга . . . . . г-жа **ВРОНСКИ** . . . . . г-жа Ст. Карова  
 . . . . . г-жа Г. Карова . . . . . г-жа Д. Кабузова  
 Хо. Николовъ, Габриелъ . . . . . г-жа Б. Боровацкая  
 Ст. Ив. Коробовъ . . . . . г-жа В. Гелкова  
 Стефанъ Ивковъ, артиста . . . . . г-жа В. Райкова  
 Савословъ . . . . . мажоръ . . . . . г-жа За. Калитерова  
 Директоръ . . . . . г-жа Г. Димитрова  
 Общественъ, търговецъ . . . . . г-жа Ст. Колева  
 Невата на палката . . . . . г-жа М. Кавалева  
 Невата на готварската . . . . . г-жа М. Буковска  
 Невата на Коробова . . . . . г-жа Ек. Чанова  
 Невата, слуга у градоначалника . . . . . г-жа Ст. Ковалева  
 Кучеринъ слуга . . . . . г-жа Ст. Карова  
 Баша готвина . . . . . г-жа Д. Кабузова  
 Режисора: Ив. Поповъ.  
**Цѣни увеличени**  
**БИЛЕТИ № 208 ЗА РЕВИЗОРЪ.**  
 ТОЧНО 2 1/2 Ч. **ДНЕВНО**  
**МОРАЛЪТЪ НА**  
**Г-ЖА ДУДСКА**  
 Комедия въ 3 дѣйстви отъ Габриела Запolsка, прѣд. З. Ф. Зенбукова.  
**БИЛЕТИ № 207 ЗА МОРАЛЪТЪ НА Г-ЖА ДУДСКА.**  
**РЕПЕРТУАРЪ ПРѢЗЪ СЕДМИЦАТА.** Вторникъ — „Приказката за вълка“ комедия въ 4 дѣйстви отъ Фр. Молларъ,  
 прѣд. Д-ръ Ф. Маноловъ; Сряда — „Алико, Ева и Зенита“ комедия въ 3 дѣйстви  
 отъ П. Егерь, прѣд. Л. Поповъ; Четвъртъкъ — „Ревизоръ“ комедия въ 5 дѣйстви отъ Н. В. Гоголь,  
 прѣд. Ив. Д. Ивановъ; Сбота — „Подъ старото небе“ пиеса въ 5 дѣйстви отъ Ц. Черновски; Недѣля  
 — „Мирвошии танць“ пиеса отъ Л. Стринбергъ, прѣд. Ив. Маневъ.

Художествен архив на Народния театър, а. е. 1634, л. 114

До сих пор никто из исследователей, работавших с архивом Б. Пенева, не обратил внимания, что визитная карточка вложена в конверт „заказного“ письма И. Бунина, высланного из Парижа. На лицевой стороне конверта виден оттиск почтового штемпеля, удостоверяющий, что письмо принято для отправления в отделении почты на ул. Дюфреной (rue Dufrenoy) в 18.30 ч., 4-го месяца, 1920 г.<sup>10</sup> Дата отправления, которая должна быть проставлена

10 За помощь разобраться в содержании штемпеля выражаю свою искреннюю благодарность г-же Светлане Горановой-Марковой (Национальный политехнический музей в Софии), доц. Николаю Маркову (Национальный исторический музей) и д-р Борису Станимирову (Высшее училище телекоммуникаций и почтовой связи).

в штемпеле слева от месяца, не читается, может быть, не пропечаталась. На оборотной стороне конверта частично виден софийский почтовый штемпель, в котором начальная цифра „4“ занимает место, обозначающее дату получения письма. Таким образом, можно предположить, что письмо пришло в Софию 4 мая 1920 г., а отправлено из Парижа в апреле.

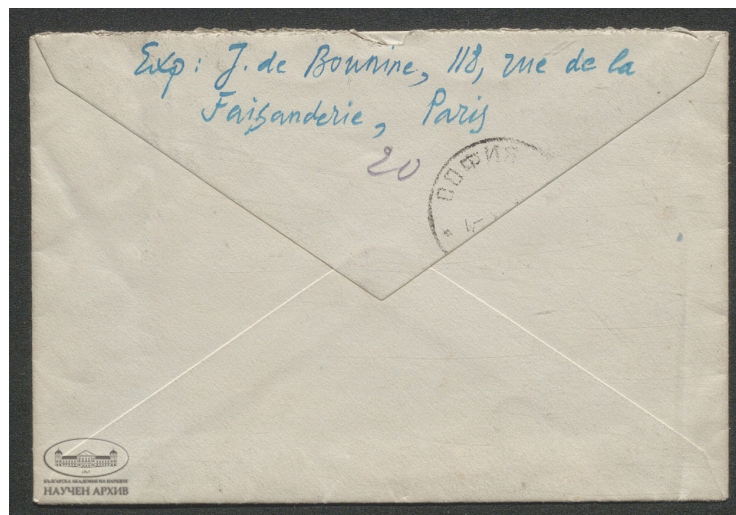
Лицевая и обратная сторона конверта первого письма И. Бунина, посланного Б. Пеневу из Парижа

1.



Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а.е. 2051, л. 2

2.



Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а.е. 2051, л. 2-гръб

А. Бабореко в своей книге сообщает, что И. Бунин „писал“ Б. Пеневу „30 апреля 1920 г.“ и ссылается в упомянутой уже сноске № 1 ко второй части на „корректуру писем Бунина Баяну Пеневу, РГАЛИ“ (Baboreko, 2009, p. 448). Только, подлинник письма, хранящийся в Софии не датирован, ответ Доры Габе на это первое письмо тоже без даты, поэтому трудно считать вопрос с датировкой исчерпанным. Неизвестно также сколько времени было необходимо, чтобы письмо пришло из Парижа в Софию, и как скоро поэтесса написала ответ по его получении. В случае со вторым письмом Бунина, датированным 8 сентября 1920 г. и отправленным из Парижа, вероятнее всего, 9 сентября 1920 г., Д. Габе ответила сразу („только что получилось второе письмо от Вас“) 14 сентября.

Первый ответ Доры Габе свидетельствует о том, что из Белграда И. Бунин написал персонально не Б. Пеневу, а своему другу – П. А. Нилусу – с просьбой посетить Пеневых и рассказать им о поездке из Софии в Белград. Как видно из ответа Д. Габе, П. Нилус исполнил просьбу Бунина. Этот факт дает основания утверждать, что после Софии лично Б. Пеневу И. Бунин адресовал два письма.

До сих пор и в мемуарной литературе, и в нарративах о пребывании Бунина в Софии творческий диалог с болгарскими литераторами исчерпывался описаниями пиршественной жизни. Встречи с Б. Пеневым, с критиком Александром Дзивговым, и сущность их разговоров как будто оставались вне внимания исследователей. Контрапунктом этой тенденции стали женские мемуары. Дора Габе в своих разговорах с И. Сарандевым, вспоминала, что Иван и Вера Бунины приходили к Пеневым домой „два или три раза“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). Если вернуться к записке на визитке, вероятно, первая из этих встреч была еще в феврале.

Писавшие об отношениях Б. Пенева и И. Бунина болгарские ученые отмечали, что Пенев был знаком с творчеством русского писателя и интересовался им еще до того, как эмигрировавший автор оказался в Софии<sup>11</sup>. Вполне возможно, что ограбление в гостинице „Континенталь“ стало катализатором того, что Б. Пенев предложил И. Бунину академическую социализацию, т. е. „пригласил“<sup>12</sup>, а не „просил“<sup>13</sup> читать лекции по русской литературе в Софийском университете.

Приезд Бунина в Софию совпал во времени с „приглашением“ „выдающихся русских профессоров читать лекции“ (Penev, 1920/1974, p. 61) в Софийском университете. Так как тогда назначение иностранных подданных

11 См.: Radev, 2014, p. 219; Spasov, 1992, p. 51; Dimitrov, 2004, p. 12.

12 См. начало последнего абзаца доклада Б. Пенева о Бунине, прочитанного на заседании совета Историко-филологического факультета: „Думаю, что для нашего университета будет честью пригласить Бунина читать лекции по русской литературе“ (Penev, 1920/1974, p. 64).

13 Означающее, предложенное А. Бабореко в 1994 г. (Baboreko, 1994, p. 70), которое впоследствии некритически воспроизводилось в русскоязычном буниноведении (Baboreko, 2009, p. 253; Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 8).

было невозможно, предпринимались шаги, чтобы урегулировать этот вопрос. В Народное собрание 20.02.1920 г. был внесен „Законопроект о принятии иностранных подданных преподавателями в Софийский университет“, но из-за прекращения существования парламента, законопроект был принят лишь следующим Народным собранием 22 июня 1920 г.

В этой ситуации практически все избрания, утверждения и назначения, предпринятые до окончательного решения Народного собрания, „означали нарушение конституции“ и являются „прецедентом в новой болгарской истории“ (Kyoseva, 2002, pp. 52-53). Эпизод избрания Бунина профессором Софийского университета детально описан болгарскими учеными<sup>14</sup>. Ниже отмечу тот административный лабиринт, преодолеть который пытался Б. Пенев.

И. Бунин сначала был утвержден лектором по русской литературе на заседании совета Историко-филологического факультета, вероятно, проходившем 10 марта 1920 г., на котором Б. Пенев прочитал свой доклад, мотивирующий это приглашение<sup>15</sup>. На своем внеочередном заседании 27 марта Академический совет Софийского университета подтвердил решение Историко-филологического факультета и избрал „единодушно“ „ординарными преподавателями по контракту“ византиниста академика Никодима Кондакова, слависта и заслуженного профессора Новороссийского университета Михаила Попруженко, романиста доцента Константина Мочульского и „г<осподина> лектора И. А. Бунина по новой русской литературе“<sup>16</sup>. Со своей стороны, Совет министров на своем заседании от 1 апреля 1920 г. (протокол № 40) одобрил доклад Министерства народного просвещения от 22 марта 1920 г. о принятии „на государственную службу в Софийский университет по договору“ „иностранных подданных“: среди упомянутых имен фигурирует и „писатель И. А. Бунин по „новой русской литературе“<sup>17</sup>.

Пока продвигалась процедура назначения, И. Бунин уехал из Софии в Белград. В материале, озаглавленном „Новый профессор“, газета „Зора“ от 19 марта 1920 г. сообщала о следующей договоренности: „русский писатель г. Ив. Бунин уехал на несколько дней в Белград“, „по возвращении“ он „останется в Софии и займет предложенную ему кафедру русской литературы в нашем университете“<sup>18</sup>. Бунин в Софию не вернулся, а по полученной визе во Францию уехал из Белграда в Париж.

14 См. вступительную заметку Д. Вылчановой к докладу Б. Пенева (Penev, 1920/1974, p. 61), а также: Spasov, 1992, p. 52; Spasov, 2004, p. 483; Dimitrov, 2004, pp. 12-13; Kanazirska, 2013, pp. 460-468.

15 Так как не сохранились протоколы заседания ИФФ, эта дата учитывает датировку машинописного экземпляра доклада Б. Пенева. См. публикацию доклада Б. Пенева, осуществленную Е. Димитровым (Dimitrov, 2004, pp. 12-13).

16 Цитируется по: Протокол № 11 от извънредното заседание на Академическия съвет на Софийския университет от 27 март 1920 г. (Държавен архив – София, ф. 944К, оп. 2, а. е. 13, л. 188).

17 Централен държавен архив, ф. 284, а. е. 4210, л. 2

18 См.: Хроника. Нов професор. Газета „Зора“ от 19.03.1920 г., № 257, с. 2.

В жизнеописаниях И. Бунина зафиксировано, что 28 марта 1920 г. он и В. Н. Бунина „приехали в Париж“ (Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 8). К этому времени в Софии Министерство просвещения подтвердило назначение Бунина в Софийский университет. Вероятно, первоначально во Франции перед Буниным встала дилемма *что делать*, которая постепенно разрешилась. В дневниковой записи Веры Буниной от 4 апреля 1920 г. „София“ упоминается дважды в противоположных контекстах: „... Нет никаких надежд на то, чтобы устроиться в Париже. Вероятно, придется возвращаться в Софию. ... Был Шполянский<sup>19</sup>. ... Уверяет, что в Софию нам возвращаться не придется“ (Bunin, Bunina, 1981, pp. 7-8).

Вероятно, на фоне этих противоречивых перспектив И. Бунин отправлял свои письма из Парижа Б. Пеневу и А. Дзивгову, которые, может быть, были и сходного содержания. Поэтому, кажется, *экзистенциальная* датировка первого письма, посланного Б. Пеневу, важнее, чем хронологическая. Рискую предположить, что Бунин написал своим адресатам в Софию тогда, когда был уже уверен, что сюда он больше не вернется. И главная цель была не послать Б. Пеневу „благодарственное письмо“ (Spasov, 1992, p. 52), а сообщить ему о своем решении, т. е., сохраняя лицо, отказать в „чести“ стать „профессором“ Софийского университета. Все остальные тяготы эмигрантской неприютности, которые перечисляются, декорируют *отказ*, пытаясь смягчить его. На это послание болгарские литераторы ответили соответственно – *молчанием*.

Каждый из участников этого диалога имел свои основания. И. Бунин пытался сохранить бытие и статус русского писателя такими, какими они были до революционного переворота 1917 г. Б. Пенев, будучи извне этого бытия, выявил именно его разрыв и предложил ему альтернативу. Невозможность привести эти разные перспективы к общему знаменателю стала причиной герменевтического скандала. Форма собственного имени – „Баян“, выведенная на конверте, т. е. в публичном пространстве, и анонимизирующее обращение „господин Профессор“ (хотя и с прописной буквы) в личных письмах ставят вопрос насколько И. Бунин заметил/запомнил болгарское личное имя Пенева. Аналогичный пробел в памяти через несколько лет постигнет и Дору Габе, когда в 1926 г., после вероятной встречи с Буниными в Париже, в своем кратком послании Вере Николаевне и Ивану Алексеевичу от 25 марта из Польши, напишет, что „не помнит имя и отчество“, поскольку „так их много в русском языке“, и обратится к своим адресатам по фамилии.

В 1920 г. молчание Б. Пенева обрело женское лицо: Бунину „вместо“ профессора отвечала на русском языке его жена – Дора Габе. Думается, что факт корреспонденции, как и сами письма, вряд ли были несогласованны

<sup>19</sup> Шполянский А. П. (1888–1957) – русский поэт, сатирик, мемуарист, писавший под псевдонимом Дон Аминадо. В январе 1920 г. он эмигрировал из Одессы через Константинополь во Францию.

с Б. Пеневым, хотя бы, потому что поэтесса подписывала их своим именем и фамилией по мужу – „Дора Габе – Пенева“. Таким образом, вероятно, удостоверяется не только родственная связь, но и имплицитруется некий их *совместный* взгляд на Бунина. Доказательством тому служат многочисленные инклюзивные конструкции типа „нам рассказали“, „мы тоже было испугались“, „радость наша“, „великая для всех нас радость“, „мы лишимся этой радости“ в неопределенно-личных предложениях. Множественное число – „для всех нас“ – выражает, может быть, точку зрения не только семьи Пeneвых, но и того круга болгарских литераторов, который познакомился с И. Буниным и общался с ним в Софии.

В своих ответах Дора Габе передавала и мнение профессора – „Боян сказал“. Акцент в нем ставился на оценке писателя Бунина и понимании его эмигрантской судьбы: „Бунин не родился для нашего удовольствия“, „он должен жить там, где ему лучше“, „главное в том, чтобы он жил где-нибудь на земле и творил свои чудеса“. Вместе с тем поэтесса сообщает в обоих своих ответах, что, пока она пишет, „Бояна нет дома“. Это особое присутствие в отсутствии ставит вопрос действительно ли Пeneв „сказал“ все так, как ему приписывается, и что, кстати, И. Бунин подчеркнул в ответе Д. Габе. Во втором письме, чтобы объяснить молчание Б. Пенева, она добавляет еще одно весомое оправдание: он пишет по-русски „хуже“, чем она. На фоне конспектов и записей по русской литературе, сохранившихся в архиве профессора, можно усомниться в подобном утверждении. Вероятно, приведенные аргументы являются куртуазной формой маскировать нежелание Б. Пенева самому написать/ответить, за которым можно прочесть неприятие и уязвленность выбором И. Бунина. Сам писатель, общавшийся в Софии с Б. Пеневым, вероятно, на русском языке<sup>20</sup>, вряд ли не отдавал себе отчета в этом. И хотя Бунин читал письма Доры Габе (в тексте ее ответа от 14 сентября 1920 г., сделал пометку, что „ее муж профессор“) и сохранил в своем архиве, он их *не замечал*, для него это несуществующие и несущественные ответы, может быть, потому что они написаны женщиной, пусть и талантливой поэтессой в эккермановской роли. Он не нуждался в ее посредничестве, так как значимым Другим для него была *мужская фигура – профессора Пенева*. Именно последний должен был признать выбор Бунина остаться в Париже *правильным* и сделать это *лично*. В письме от 8 сентября 1920 г. И. Бунин высказывал свое недовольство молчанием Б. Пенева, обращаясь к нему словами: „... Вы ... может быть, даже слегка разгневались на меня“ и кончая письмо в пожелательней модальности: „... хочу надеяться, что Вы все-таки когда-нибудь напишете мне“.

Подход Доры Габе очевидно отличался от стратегии Б. Пенева. Женской интуицией она пыталась, вероятно, избежать конфронтации и сохранить дар общения, проявившийся в Софии. В ее понимании

20 В своих воспоминаниях о семейной встрече с Буниными Дора Габе цитирует русскоязычную реплику Б. Пенева о ней: „Она тоже пишет стихи“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48).

восстановление диалога проходило через творчество. Дора Габе делилась с Буниным, что Б. Пенев написал о нем „большую студию“, „целую книгу“, и очень хвалила ее. Но это сообщение, повторенное и в двух ее ответах, оказалось неэффективным, чтобы преодолеть коммуникативный провал. До сих пор остается открытым вопрос, что случилось со статьей Пенева, которая должна была быть опубликована вместе со стихами русского поэта в авторитетном литературно-художественном журнале „Златорог“. О ней знали современники: литературный критик Малчо Николов в своем письме Б. Пеневу от 30 апреля 1920 г. отмечал: „Жду твою статью о Бунине“<sup>21</sup>. О том, что, вероятно, профессор „ставил себе целью написать целостное исследование о Бунине“ сообщал и болгарский литературовед Иван Радев (Radev, 2014, p. 219). Наиболее вероятно, эта публикация в своем первоначально задуманном виде не осуществилась. Среди сохранившихся рукописей в архиве главного редактора „Заторога“ Владимира Василева мне не удалось ее найти. Может, она была-разделена на части, которые вошли в две работы Б. Пенева, напечатанные в том же журнале в 1921–1922 г.<sup>22</sup>. Последний прижизненный текст Пенева о русском писателе – это краткий отзыв в том же журнале за 1926 г. на изданную в Париже в 1925 г. книгу Бунина „Митина любовь“.

Когда речь идет о (литературных) контактах Бунина в Софии, до сих пор тоже не обсуждался появившийся параллельный сюжет. Имеется в виду встреча двух поэтов – И. Бунина и Д. Габе. В своих воспоминаниях Дора Габе рассказывала И. Сарандеву о приходе Буниных в дом Пеневых и цитировала реплику профессора по поводу ее творчества: „Она тоже пишет стихи“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). Бунин „весьма заинтересовался“ и попросил поэтессу прочитать ему что-нибудь. Дора Габе, которая знала русский язык, „прочитала несколько стихотворений“ „прямо на русском языке“, а „потом на болгарском“, чтобы гости „услышали музыку стиха“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). После этого Бунин обратился к Пеневу и спросил: „А Вы ее поддерживаете? (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48).

Слова Бунина Дора Габе запомнила, поскольку, вероятно, восприняла их в контексте отстраненного отношения Б. Пенева, который, как она говорила, „просто перестал интересоваться, пишу ли я, или не пишу“. На вопрос И. Бунина она ответила утвердительно, уточняя тем не менее, что профессор „очень занят“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). Ту же ситуацию, очевидно, важную для нее, Дора Габе вспомнит и в своих беседах с писательницей Снежиной Кралевой (Kraleva, 1987, pp. 78-79).

Уходя из дома Пеневых, Бунин говорил Доре Габе, что она должна „каждый день, абсолютно каждый день“ что-то писать или что-то переводить,

21 Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, а. е. 2807, л. 1-гръб.

22 Имею в виду рецензию на антологию русской поэзии „Русский Парнас“ (Leipzig: Insel Verlag, 1920), составленную Александром и Давидом Элиасбергами (1921), и материал „О литературном плуте“ (1922), касающийся путей болгарского модернизма и литературных плагиатов.

чтобы таким образом „всегда быть в состоянии творчества“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). Разговор с И. Буниным, как вспоминала Д. Габе, „вдохновил ее уверенностью“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 49), поэтому вполне реально считать, что ее ответы были проявлением персонального отношения к русскому писателю: она *хотела* это сделать и не стеснялась допущенных грамматических ошибок. В пассажах от своего имени, поэтесса использует форму первого лица единственного числа, как это видно из ее ответа от 14 сентября 1920 г.: „... для Вас, Иван Алексеич, [я] приготовила стихи“ и „[мне] так хотелось узнать Ваше дорогое для меня мнение“. Таким образом, для Доры Габе Бунин превратился в мужскую фигуру, которая заметила женщину поэта „вместо“ (рискуя использовать ее предлог) „ее мужа профессора“. Более того, он становится *значимым другом*, который знает истину, как *писать стихи, как творить*, инстанцией, наличие которой позволяет женщине-поэту выразиться, а ее творчеству – проявиться. Именно сквозь эту призму можно говорить о сложившихся личных отношениях Доры Габе с Иваном Буниным и коммуникации, различной от эмоциональной женской коммуникации с „белой, милой и доброй, как ангел“ Верой Николаевной Буниной. Эта личная и творческая связь с Буниными раскрывается и в последнем письме от 25 марта 1926 г., отправленном уже после разрыва с Б. Пеневым из Польши. Может быть, во время своей поездки в Париж, куда ее пригласили прочитать лекцию о болгарской литературе в 1926 г.<sup>23</sup>, она побывала в гостях у Буниных. На этот раз Дора Габе подписала краткое послание только своей фамилией, ей уже удалось эмансипироваться и выйти из тени знаменитого мужа „профессора“. Но, как и в 1920 г., она выбрала себе роль медиатора: на той же стороне открытки, рядом с ее письмом, написала свое краткое приветствие И. Бунину жена польского поэта Яна Каспровича – Мария Каспровичова, урожденная Бунина. Этот сюжет, отсылающий к созданию транснациональной общности в 1920-х гг., также ждет своего исследователя.

Ответы Доры Габе И. Бунину не только уплотняют информацию о контактах писателя во время его пребывания в Софии в феврале-марте 1920 г., но и помогают, с точки зрения болгарского взгляда, реконструировать софийскую страницу эмигрантской жизни И. Бунина, остающейся до сих пор или незамеченной (Marullo, 1995, p. 42), или маргинализованной (Baboreko, 2009, pp. 252-253; Dvinyatina, 2020, pp. 7-8).

Опубликованные шесть писем расположены в хронологической последовательности. Их тексты приведены в соответствие с нормами современной русской орфографии и пунктуации. Использованные болгаризмы в письмах Д. Габе отмечены в постраничных сносках. Все заглавия произведений, названия организаций и цитаты помещаются в кавычки. Восстановленные в цитатах и текстах писем слова и даты

23 В своих разговорах с И. Сарандевым Дора Габе вспоминала, что три года подряд – в „1926, 1927 и 1928-м“, она получала приглашение читать лекции в Париже“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 59).

даются в угловых скобках (<>), мои пояснения – в квадратных скобках ([ ]), а отмеченные мной слова и выражения набраны курсивом. Все цитаты с болгарского на русский язык приводятся в моем переводе. Ссылки на документы и на неподписанные материалы газетных хроник располагаются в постраничных сносках, при этом название источника и стандарт цитирования архива сохраняется на языке оригинала.

Настоящая публикация не могла бы состояться без ресурсов архивов. Выражаю свою признательность Русскому архиву в Лидсе (Leeds Russian Archive, University of Leeds) за предоставленный доступ к материалам Бунинской коллекции и за разрешение опубликовать тексты трех писем Доры Габе, посланных И. Бунину. Хотелось бы особо поблагодарить г-на Ричарда Дэвиса, заведующего Русским архивом в Лидсе, за благожелательное содействие и за все внимательные уточнения, касающиеся документального контекста Бунинской биографии и творчества.

Благодарю также Центральный государственный архив, Научный архив при Болгарской академии, Художественный архив Народного театра за разрешение факсимильно воспроизвести предоставленные иллюстрации и Университетскую библиотеку „Св. Климент Охридский“ за возможность получить редкие литературоведческие издания.

## Письма

### 1.

Иван Бунин – Бояну Пеневу<sup>24</sup>

[Визитная карточка]

[29.II.1920 г.

София]

[Лицевая сторона]

Иван Алексеевич Бунин

Почетный академик

Княжеская, 27, тел. 18–21<sup>25</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Публикуется по: Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а. е. 2051, л. 1–1-гръб.

<sup>25</sup> На лицевой стороне визитной карточки указан адрес И. Бунина в Одессе. На улице Княжеской № 27, в доме художника Е. И. Буковецкого, Бунин прожил с октября 1918 г. и до отъезда в эмиграцию 6 февраля 1920 г.

**[Обратная сторона]**

Господин Профессор<sup>26</sup>, я был у Вас, чтобы сказать, что нынче я не могу быть дома, так как приглашен в театр, в ложу министра<sup>27</sup>. Зайду к Вам завтра.

Ив. Бунин

Министерская ложа в восстановленном здании Народного театра после пожара в 1923 г. С ложи спускается гобелен с изображением герба Царства Болгарии



Фотография сохранилась в архиве Владимира Василева, главного редактора журнала „Златорог“ (1920–1944) и директора Народного театра (1921–1938).

Централен държавен архив, ф. № 373К, оп. 1, а. е. 691

<sup>26</sup> Сохраняется прописная буква оригинала.

<sup>27</sup> Министерская ложа Народного театра находится на уровне бельэтажа (первого балкона), справа от сцены, если смотреть на сцену из зала.

## 2.

Иван Бунин – Бояну Пеневу<sup>28</sup>

[Апрель 1920 г.

Париж]

Paris, rue de la Faisanderie, 118

Chez M-me Zetline<sup>29</sup>

Дорогой и уважаемый Профессор<sup>30</sup>, пожалуйста, простите, что пришлось написать из Белграда не лично Вам, а воспользоваться более верным в наши дни способом сообщения, то есть, оказией, – послать письмо через г. Лопуховского<sup>31</sup> Петру Александровичу Нилусу<sup>32</sup> с просьбой съездить

28 Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а. е. 2052, л. 1–1-грѣб. В оригинале на русском языке письмо Бунина опубликовано М. Каназирской в ее книге „После России“ в „Приложении II. Русские профессора в Софийском университете“, в подрубке „Письма И. А. Бунина проф. Бояну Пеневу“ (Kanažirska, 2013, pp. 468–469). В пояснении отмечено, что это „письмо без даты, написано после 18 марта 1920 г., дня отъезда Бунина из Софии“ (Kanažirska, 2013, p. 469). Бунин уехал из Софии в Белград раньше 18 марта, о чем свидетельствует запись от 19 марта в дневнике В. Буниной: „Сижу одна в вагоне в Белграде... Ян целые дни в городе... Вчера ходили по Белграду...“ (цит. по: Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 8).

29 По этому адресу в Париже проживали Михаил Осипович Цетлин (1882–1945), литератор и меценат, и его жена Мария Самойловна Цетлина (1882–1976). Будучи финансово обеспеченными, в годы эмиграции супруги Цетлины „занимались издательской деятельностью и благотворительностью, поддерживали общественную жизнь в русском литературном сообществе Парижа, а затем Нью-Йорка“ (Bunin, 2025). Иван Бунин и Мария Цетлина познакомились в 1917 г. в Москве, и между ними установились дружеские отношения. Пока писатель пытался устроиться в Белграде, 18 марта 1920 г. была получена телеграмма, которой М. Цетлина приглашала Бунина в Париж (Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 8). Приехав туда, Бунины первоначально остановились на квартире у Цетлиных. Именно последних имеет в виду Бунин, когда дальше в письме Б. Пеневу пишет о „парижских друзьях“ и „милых заботах наших друзей и комфорте их дома“.

30 Сохраняется прописная буква оригинала.

31 В сноске № 1 к своей публикации письма, М. Каназирска отмечает, что это „неустановленное лицо“ (Kanažirska, 2013, p. 469). Вероятнее всего, речь идет о педагоге Михаиле Александровиче Лопуховском (1884–?). М. Лопуховский закончил Киевскую духовную академию со званием „кандидата богословия“. С 1912 по 1918 г. преподавал русский язык и руководил библиотекой в Первом реальном училище в Киеве (Kaganov, 2021). С лета 1919 г. участвовал в Вооруженных силах Юга России. В начале 1920 г. эвакуировался на пароходе „Спарта“. В эмиграции жил в Чехословакии, в 1922–1926 гг. состоял членом Союза русских педагогов в Чехословакии (Volkov, 2025). М. Лопуховский преподавал в Русской реформированной реальной гимназии в Моравской Тршебове (Sládek, Běloševská, 1998, p. 286). Выражаю свою исключительную благодарность проф. Ирине Антанасиевич (Белградский университет), которая обратила мое внимание на факт, что Лопуховский эвакуировался из Одессы на том же пароходе „Спарта“, что и Бунины. Когда Бунин и Лопуховский познакомились, вместе ли Бунины и Лопуховские (жена Лопуховского – Людмила Акимовна (1893–?) тоже фигурирует в хрониках русского образовательного дела в Чехословакии (Sládek, Běloševská, 1998, pp. 186, 286) добирались до Софии, какие у них сложились отношения, в чем состояла роль Лопуховского, который очевидно пользовался доверием Бунина и, имея военный опыт, сопровождал Буниных в их пути из Софии в Белград, остаются пока открытыми вопросами.

32 Нилус, Петр Александрович (1869–1943) – русский и украинский художник-импрессионист

к Вам и рассказать о нас. Теперь повторяю подробнее то, что, надеюсь, уже известно Вам от него. Поездка наша до Белграда была долга и тяжела, было очень холодно, голодно и беспокойно, ибо вагон мой<sup>33</sup>, – за который я еще раз приношу благодарность Вашей железнодорожной администрации, и который г. Лопуховский, я уверен, доставил в Софию в полной сохранности, – поежечасно и весьма грубо осаждали русские беженцы. В Белграде много хлопотали для меня о помещении, но мы предпочли остаться жить в вагоне, откуда я и совершал походы в город по разным делам, и все это, т. е. тяжелый путь, цыганская жизнь в вагоне, всяческие беспокойства и прочее, привело меня в состояние еще более плохое, чем в Софии. Мы с

и писатель, один из организаторов Одесского литературно-художественного общества, членом которого состоял и И. Бунин. Нилус и Бунин были знакомы „с 1898 г.“ (Baboreko, 1994, p. 69). Их связывала многолетняя дружба, которая, по словам В. Н. Буниной, „перешла почти в братские отношения“ (Muromtseva – Bunina, 1989, p. 177). В Одессе Нилус жил в доме своего друга художника Е. И. Буковецкого на улице Княжеской 27, где снимали квартиру Бунины с 1918 до эмиграции в 1920 г. Нилус эвакуировался из Одессы вместе с писателем А. М. Федоровым на пароходе „Витязь“, прибывшем в Варну 7 января 1920 г. (См.: Dimitrov, 2010, p. 148). В Софии Федоров и Нилус остановились в гостинице „Континенталь“, предоставленной русским эмигрантам, в ней по приезду в Софию разместились и Бунины. Они помогли Бунину освоиться в софийской жизни. По утверждению А. Бабореко, Нилус и Федоров „познакомили“ Бунина с профессором Бояном Пеневым и его женой поэтессой Дорой Габе (Baboreko, 1994, p. 69). В Софии Нилус устроил персональную выставку своих картин, открытую 4 апреля 1920 г. в зале Рисовального училища (Художественной академии) (Хроника. Газета „Мир“ от 30.03.1920 г., № 5962, с. 2; Хроника. Газета „Мир“ от 2.04.1920 г., № 5965, с. 2). Писатель Стилиян Чилингиров в своем очерке „Александр Митрофанович. Федоров“, вспоминал, что на одной из выставок русских эмигрантов болгарские художники обвинили Нилуса в „плагиате“ имея в виду одну из его картин. Выставка была „компрометирована“, картины остались „непроданными“, а Нилус скоро уехал из Болгарии (Chilingirov, 2010, pp. 168, 187). Если судить по просьбе Бунина, можно считать, что его доверенным лицом среди русских эмигрантов в Софии был именно Нилус. 33 В автобиографическом очерке „Гегель, фрак, метель“, опубликованном в книге „Воспоминания“ (Париж, 1950) Бунин рассказывал о своей поездке в Белград, призванной компенсировать ограбление в гостинице „Континенталь“: „И вот болгарское правительство предложило мне бесплатный проезд до Белграда в отдельном вагоне третьего класса, наиболее безопасном от тифозных вшей, и небольшую сумму болгарских денег на пропитание до Белграда. А в Белграде, где нам пришлось жить в этом вагоне возле вокзала на запасных путях, – так был переполнен в ту пору Белград, – я не только никак не устроился, но истратил на пропитание даже и то, что подарило мне болгарское правительство“ (Bunin, 1950, p. 252). Об этой поездке писал и А. М. Федоров в своей статье „Злоключения Бунина в Болгарии“ (1933): „Болгарское правительство заботливо предоставило моему знаменитому гостю отдельное купе первого класса до самой границы“ (Цит. по: Kapazirska, 2013, p. 474). Несмотря на дистанцию времени Бунин точнее, чем Федоров, воспроизводит факты. В своей книге о развитии вагонного парка в Болгарии С. Стоичков отмечает, что в период с 1890 по 1935 гг. из Софии в Белград ходили пассажирские „вагоны третьего класса (С III)“ (Stoichkov, 2023, p. 192). Сначала это были общие вагоны, в которых деревянные сиденья, расположенные друг против друга, образуют купейные ниши. Впоследствии меняются технические параметры, и появляются новые модификации этого типа вагонов. Неизвестно какая разновидность вагона третьего класса была предоставлена Бунину, но отсутствие удобств в сочетании с тогдашней скоростью движения поездов вполне объясняют почему Бунин назвал поездку „долгой и тяжелой“. Выражаю свою признательность г-же Даринке Йордановой (Национальный музей транспорта и путей сообщений) за помощь и предоставленную информацию.

Верой Николаевн<ой> стали все более сомневаться, смогу ли я достойно читать в Вашем университете, но все же, уезжая<sup>34</sup> из Белграда в Париж, куда, как Вы знаете<sup>35</sup>, вызвали меня телеграммой по серьезным делам<sup>36</sup>, и где нам предложили свое помещение наши парижские друзья, я с полной искренностью писал Вам через Петра Александровича<sup>37</sup>, что надеюсь возвратиться в Софию в конце апреля и только в крайнем случае, т. е., если уж очень мне будет плохо или если очень задержат дела, просить Вас разрешить мне читать у Вас с осени, после каникул, если, конечно, это возможно и интересно Вам. К сожалению, в наличности именно этот случай. Новый путь так утомил меня, что первые дни в Париже я от слабости и сердцебиения буквально не мог ста шагов сделать. Врачи мне предписали полнейший покой, впрыскивания<sup>38</sup> мышьяку<sup>39</sup>, обтирания<sup>40</sup>, усиленное питание и прочее>. Благодаря всему этому, равно как и милым заботам наших друзей и комфорту их дома, я теперь понемногу прихожу в себя, но уже теперь<sup>41</sup> совсем ясно вижу, что мне и думать нечего о чтении лекций<sup>42</sup> раньше осени. Из газет я узнал, что я утвержден профессором Вашего университета<sup>43</sup>, – позвольте же просить Вас передать Вашим коллегам и Вашему министерству мою глубокую благодарность за эту честь и мои извинения, что я не могу в данный момент использовать ее. Глубоко благодарю и Вас лично за ту сердечность и приветливость, которую Вы проявили ко мне, – с полной правдивостью

34 В своей публикации на болгарском языке этого письма после „уезжая“ И. Сарандев поставил уточняющую сноску, что „в написании слова нельзя с уверенностью разобраться“ (Sarandev, 1970, p. 41). В оригинале письма слово „уезжая“ написано достаточно разборчиво.

35 Словосочетание „как Вы знаете“, подчеркивает, усиливая смысл, что Бунину известно, что Бояна Пенева осведомили о фактах белградской жизни русского писателя, в том числе и о полученной им телеграмме.

36 Телеграмма М. С. Цетлин на французском языке и в переводе на русский приводится Т. Двинятиной во втором томе книги „Иван Бунин: Биографический пунктир“: „Будем очень счастливы принять вас у нас в Париже, 118, rue [de la] Faisanderie, телеграфируйте о дне Вашего прибытия. Цетлина“ (Dvinyatina, 2020, p. 8). „Серьезные дела“ в тексте телеграммы не упоминаются.

37 Петра Александровича Нилуса.

38 В публикации М. Каназирской – „впрыскивание“ (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 468).

39 В переводе письма И. Сарандевым на французский язык словосочетание „впрыскивания мышьяку“ пропущено (Sarandev, 1969, p. 95). В переводе на болгарский язык слово „мышьяку“ также пропущено. Вместо него И. Сарандев ставит многоточие, поясняя в сноске, что „слово зачеркнуто автором в рукописи“ (Sarandev, 1970, p. 41). Последнее не соответствует истине.

40 В публикации М. Каназирской – „обтирание“ (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 469).

41 Слово „теперь“ зачеркнуто И. Буниным в оригинале. В своих публикациях перевода письма на французский язык (Sarandev, 1969, p. 95) и на болгарский (Sarandev, 1969, p. 41) И. Сарандев сохраняет „теперь“ в тексте письма, снабжая пометкой, что „слово зачеркнуто автором в рукописи“ (Sarandev, 1969, p. 95).

42 В публикации М. Каназирской – „лекции“ (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 469).

43 Л. Спасов утверждает, что Бунин „узнал“ о своем утверждении „преподавателем Софийского университета“ „весной“ 1920 г. „из эмигрантской прессы в Париже“, и интерпретирует это письмо Бунина Бояну Пеневу как „благодарственное“ (Srasov, 1992, p. 52). Он не приводит никакие ссылки на конкретные периодические издания. Мне не удалось установить в каких эмигрантских газетах было опубликовано сообщение об утверждении Бунина в должности профессора Софийского университета.

говорю Вам, что у нас осталось самое прекрасное и нежное воспоминание о Вашем доме<sup>44</sup>. Шлю Вам истинно дружеский привет и почтительно целую руку Вашей супруге<sup>45</sup>. Пожалуйста, напишите нам и передайте мой поклон милому, доброму Александру Дмитриевичу Дзивгову<sup>46</sup>. Весну мы надеемся провести в Париже, лето – еще один Бог знает где<sup>47</sup>.

Преданный Вам Ив. Бунин

### 3.

#### Дора Габе-Пенева – Ивану Бунину<sup>48</sup>

[Без даты

София]

Многоуважаемые и дорогие Вера Николаев<на> и Иван Алексеич<sup>49</sup>,

Очень, очень, очень рады, что вы наконец доплыли до берега и там, может быть, немного успокоились. Нам рассказали<sup>50</sup>, что вам пришлось пережить по дороге!

44 В Софии Бунины приходили к профессору Бояну Пеневу и его жене – поэтессе Доре Габе, в их дом на улице „Солун“ № 7. Впоследствии Дора Габе вспоминала, что Бунины побывали в гостях у Пеневых „два или три раза“ (Sarandev, 1986, p. 48). Во время этих семейных встреч Бунин проявил интерес к поэзии Д. Габе, которая прочитала ему свои стихи на русском языке. См.: Sarandev, 1986, pp. 48-49; Kraleva, 1987, pp. 78-79.

45 Доре Габе.

46 Дзивгов, Крум-Александр Димитров (1895–1936) – болгарский литературный критик и публицист, „последователь“ А. Бергсона. Дзивгов хорошо знал творчество русских символистов, в особенности Владимира Соловьева, увлекался „русским мистицизмом и религиозным мессианизмом“ (Pencheva, 2013, p. 13). В 1920-е гг. его дом в Софии был открыт для всех русских эмигрантов, обращавшихся к нему за помощью. Дзивгов был лично знаком с И. Буниным, о котором сообщал в статье „Русские писатели в Болгарии“ (1922), что тот в 1920 г. проехал через Болгарию „со скоростью метеора“ (Dzivgov, 1922, p. 10). Болгарский литературный деятель Константин Попов (1883–1954) в своем рассказе о встречах с И. Буниным в Праге в 1936 г. вспоминал, что Бунин отзывался о Дзивгове как об „европейце между болгарами“ (Mohovoy, 1936, p. 1).

47 В публикации М. Каназирской слово „где“ пропущено (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 469).

48 Публикуется по: Leeds Russian Archive. MS 1066/2554.

49 В обращении к Вере Николаевне Буниной Дора Габе повторяет принцип сокращения отчества, использованный И. Буниным в первом письме Пеневу – „Мы с Верой Николаевн<ой>“. С другой стороны, поскольку отчество написано Дорой Габе совсем в конце строчки, совпадающем с краем бумаги, вполне возможно, что это сокращение механично и вызвано тем, что просто не хватило места закончить слово. В обращении к Бунину разговорная форма отчества „Алексеич“ может быть знаком расположения к другому, дружественности, симпатии.

50 Ср. с началом письма Бунина Б. Пеневу: „... пришлось написать из Белграда не лично Вам, а воспользоваться оказией, – послать письмо ... Петру Александровичу Нилусу с просьбой съездить к Вам и рассказать о нас“. Эту просьбу Бунина П. Нилус, очевидно, исполнил.

Где бы вы ни были<sup>51</sup>, далеко или еще дальше, думаете или совсем забыли о нас, радость наша будет только, если вы здоровы и, если вы себя хорошо чувствуете. Боян написал большую студию<sup>52</sup> о Вас, Иван Алексеич, (скажу Вам на ухо, что она так серьезно<sup>53</sup>, глубоко и хорошо написана, что понравится Вам больше всего, что Вы до сих пор о себе читали... увидите!). Статья<sup>54</sup> выйдет в будущей книжке вместе с Вашими стихами в „Златороге“<sup>55</sup>.

Если Вы приедете, это будет великая для всех нас радость, ежели это Вам трудно и невозможно, никто [из-]за этого худого слова не скажет – не считайтесь с никакими обязательствами, а будьте свободны и выбирайте только то, что для вас хорошо.

Очень прошу не смеяться<sup>56</sup> над моими ужасными ошибками – я никогда по-русски<sup>57</sup> не писала.

Целую Вас, белая, милая и добрая, как ангел, Вера Николаевна<sup>58</sup>. Жму сердечно руку Ивана Алексеича.

Ваша Дора Габе-Пенева<sup>59</sup>

Спешу послать письмо – Бояна нет дома, и поэтому не пишет.

#### 4.

### Иван Бунин – Бояну Пенеvu<sup>60</sup>

8 сент<ября> 1920 г.

48 bis, rue Raymonard, Paris (XVI)<sup>61</sup>

Дорогой Профессор<sup>62</sup>, очень огорчен, что ни Вы, ни А. Д. Дзивгов не ответили на мои письма<sup>63</sup> (заказные, значит, вероятно, дошедшие к Вам).

51 В оригинале письма – „где бы вы не были“.

52 Интерференция с болгарским языком, в котором „студия“ означает „большая статья“.

53 В оригинале письма – „серiously“.

54 В оригинале письма – „статья“.

55 „Златорог“ – ежемесячный литературно-художественный журнал, выходящий в Софии в 1920–1943 гг. Публикация статьи Пенева совместно со стихами Бунина в журнале не осуществилась.

56 В оригинале письма – „смеяться“.

57 В оригинале письма – „по-русски“.

58 Вера Николаевна Бунина.

59 В подписи Доры Габе здесь и в ее ответе от 14 сентября 1920 г. присутствует и ее фамилия по мужу – Пенева.

60 Публикуется по: Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а. е. 2053, л. 1. В оригинале на русском языке письмо Бунина опубликовано М. Каназирской в ее книге „После России“ в „Приложении II. Русские профессора в Софийском университете“, в подрубике „Письма И. А. Бунина проф. Бояну Пенеvu“ (Kanažirska, 2013, p. 470).

61 Адрес первой парижской квартиры Буниных, снятой во второй половине июля 1920 г. (Popomarev, 2024).

62 Сохраняется прописная буква оригинала.

63 Множественное число существительного – „письма“ – дает основание думать, что речь

Я пояснял в них причину, по которой я не вернулся в Софию к маю, как обещал, но Вы, видимо, не придали ей особого значения и, может быть, даже слегка разгневались на меня, что я понапрасну ввел Вас в заботы и хлопоты обо мне. Ну, что же, очень грустно, простите и еще раз примите благодарность за них. Не получив от Вас ни строки за все лето, я, конечно, взял на себя обязательства здесь<sup>64</sup>, редактирование классиков, издаваемых парижским „Объединением земских и городских деятелей“<sup>65</sup>, и участие в книгоиздательстве „Русская земля“<sup>66</sup>, недавно здесь начавшем действовать. Крепко жму Вашу руку, от души желаю Вам всего доброго, прошу передать наш с Верой Николаевной привет Вашей супруге и хочу надеяться, что Вы все-таки когда-нибудь напишете<sup>67</sup> мне.

Сердечно преданный Вам

Ив. Бунин

5.

Дора Габе-Пенева – Ивану Бунину<sup>68</sup>

София

14.IX.<1>920 <г.>

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идет не только о первом письме Бунина Бояну Пеневу, посланном из Парижа в апреле 1920 г., но, вероятно, и о письме, отправленном Александру Дзивгову. На сохранившемся конверте бунинского письма почерком писателя помечено „Recommandée“ и наклеена марка с напечатанным текстом „R / Paris – 78 № 852“, подтверждающая, что письмо, действительно, было заказным. См. Научен архив на БАН, ф. 37К, оп. 1, а. е. 2051, л. 2.

64 В публикации М. Каназирской слово „здесь“ пропущено (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 470).

65 „Объединение земских и городских деятелей за границей“ было учреждено русскими эмигрантами в Париже летом 1920 г. Среди книг с логотипом „Издание Объединения земских и городских деятелей за границей“ мне удалось разыскать только следующие заглавия: Русским детям. [Ред. Н. И. Бутковская]. Народные русские сказки, песни, шутки. Рисунки А. Шервашидзе (Париж, 1921); Проф. В. Ф. Тотомианц. История экономических и социальных учений (Париж, 1921). В январе 1921 г. „Объединение...“ вместе с другими организациями вошло в состав сформированного „Российского земско-городского комитета помощи российским гражданам за границей“, знакомого по акрониму „Земгор“.

66 „Русская земля“ – эмигрантское издательство в Париже, созданное в конце 1920 г. группой русских писателей – А. Н. Толстым, И. А. Буниным, А. И. Куприным, К. Д. Бальмонтом и др. Издательство было связано и частично финансировалось „Земско-городским комитетом помощи российским гражданам за границей“ („Земгором“). Оно ставило себе целью публиковать произведения русских эмигрантских писателей. За год своего существования „Русская земля“ выпустила 13 книг, среди которых три сборника Бунина с переизданием его дореволюционных произведений: „Господин из Сан-Франциско“ (1921), „Деревня“ (1921) и „Чаша жизни“ (1921). Подробнее см.: Shomrakova, 2005, p. 263; Abolina, 2019, p. 236. Выражаю свою коллегияльную благодарность проф. Владимиру Хазану (Еврейский университет в Иерусалиме) за помощь в уточнении деятельности русских эмигрантских издательств.

67 В публикации М. Каназирской – „напишите“ (Kanazirska, 2013, p. 470).

68 Публикуется по: Leeds Russian Archive. MS 1066/2553.

Уважаемый Иван Алексеич,

Только что получилось второе письмо от Вас от 9.IX.<1>920 <г.><sup>69</sup>. В защиту Бояна<sup>70</sup> скажу Вам, что он не только не рассердился, когда узнал, что Вы в мае не приедете, но даже сказал, что Бунин не родился для нашего удовольствия, что он должен жить там, где ему лучше, что главное в том, чтобы он жил где-нибудь на земле и творил свои чудеса<sup>71</sup>. Мы тоже было испугались о Вашем здоровье<sup>72</sup> и так радовались потом, что Вы хорошо устроились и немного восстановили здоровье. Тогда я Вам ответила вместо Бояна, потому что, хотя и я очень плохо пишу по-русски<sup>73</sup>, он пишет хуже меня, а это для филолога, наверное, [зачеркнутое слово не читается] равносильно смерти.

Писала я Вам, чтобы не беспокоились о том, что дали слово приехать: что мы лишимся этой радости, если [зачеркнутое слово не читается] необходимо для Вас остаться<sup>74</sup> в Париже и что Вы можете приехать когда хотите – Ваше место всегда будет Вас ждать.

Писала о том, что стихи Ваши все ждали статью Бояна, чтобы напечатать их вместе в „Златороге“, но он так увлекся Вами, что вышла целая студия – целая книга. Скажу Вам на ухо, что она так хорошо написана и так много нового сказано о Вас, что Вы сами будете доволен. Все, что до сих пор было напечатано о Вас, не может сравниться<sup>75</sup> с [зачеркнутое слово не читается] его студией. Так глубоко он Вас понял и почувствовал. К сожалению, еще не окончил, потому что нервы его расстроены, и неврастения прогнала его в горы.

Светлой Вере Николаевне жму крепко белые ручки и целую. Я так радовалась, что увижу ее эту осень. Я не имею подруг – которых имела, уехали! А для Вас, Иван Алексеич, приготовила стихи, и так хотелось узнать Ваше дорогое для меня мнение.

Будьте здоровы и счастливы. В самом деле, ведь важно то, что Вы живете и творите.

Жму руку.

Ваша Дора Габе-Пенева

69 Дора Габе, вероятно, датирует письмо Бунина по штемпелю на конверте, т. е. берет в счет дату отправления письма, а не дату его написания – 8 сентября 1920 г.

70 Речь идет о Бояне Пеневе. В письме слово „Бояна“ подчеркнуто и помечено крестиком, а в верхнем поле страницы поставлен тот же крестик, и почерком Бунина написано пояснение – „ее муж профес<ор>“.

71 Фраза „творил свои чудеса“ подчеркнута, вероятно, Буниным, а весь фрагмент текста, начиная со слов „но даже сказал“ и до „творил свои чудеса“ помечен вертикальной линией в левом поле листа.

72 В оригинале письма – „здоровьи“. Вероятно, под влиянием болгарского языка русская конструкция „испугались за Ваше здоровье“ трансформируется.

73 В оригинале письма – „по-русски“.

74 В оригинале письма – „остатся“.

75 В оригинале письма – „сравнится“.

## 6.

**Дора Габе – Ивану и Вере Буниным<sup>76</sup>**

Narenda. Zakopane<sup>77</sup>

25.III.<1>926 <г.>

Дорогие г-жа и г-н Бунин (не помню имя и отчество – так их много в русском<sup>78</sup> языке, а я не привыкла!),

В ответ на вашу сердечность и гостеприимство<sup>79</sup>, я бесследно исчезла! Неожиданно поехала в Лондон, а теперь я уже две недели у Яна Каспровича, жена которого – Бунина<sup>80</sup>. Может быть, родственница. Она такая чудная, что может только быть Вашей родственницей. Поэт болен, лежит!

Мы в горах – снег, горы как неземные! Вспомните обо мне и не судите жестоко.

Дора Габе

Сердечный привет от незнакомой, но немного Вам родной и по фамилии, и по душе, которая, хотя и оторванная много лет от родины – осталась русской.

Мария Каспрович

<sup>76</sup> Публикуется по: Leeds Russian Archive. MS 1066/3179. Письмо написано на оборотной стороне почтовой карточки с видом вершины горы Свинница в Татрах. Текст размещается в двух колонках: слева – письмо Доры Габе, написанное ее почерком, а справа – короткое приветствие, принадлежащее Марии Каспровичовой. Здесь тексты воспроизводятся не параллельно, а последовательно друг за другом.

<sup>77</sup> Вила „Харенда“ недалеко от Закопане – дом, купленный польским поэтом-модернистом, переводчиком и драматургом Яном Каспровичем (1860–1926), в котором он жил с конца 1923 г. вместе со своей женой – Марией Каспровичовой (1887–1968). После издания своих переводов с польского в антологии „Польские поэты“ в 1921 г., Д. Габе уехала в Польшу, где встретила с Яном Каспровичем, пригласившим ее в свой „сельский дом“. Там Дора Габе познакомилась и с его женой Марией, с которой подружилась. Дора Габе часто гостила в „Харенде“, в 1923 г. ее проезд был связан с работой над переводом с польского на болгарский язык „Гимнов“ Каспровича. При ее посредничестве Боян Пенев тоже познакомился с Каспровичами (См.: Sarandev, 1986, pp. 50-52). Об отношениях, сложившихся между участниками этого особого писательского четырехугольника см. работы Калины Бахневой: 1) „Тази вечер слушах «Тайнхойзер»“. Театрализирането на епистолярния диалог между Боян Пенев и Мария Каспрович. В: *Bułgarzy na Uniwersytecie Jagiellońskim*. Red. J. Rusek i W. Stępiak-Minczewska. Kraków: Wyd. UJ, 2002, 133-161; 2) За бунта на Мария Каспрович и българската му следа. В: *Паисиеви четения. Международна славистична конференция*. Пловдив, 13-14 октомври 2006 г. Литературознание. Фолклор. Научни трудове. Т. 44, кн. 1, сб. Б. Пловдив: ПУ „Паисий Хилендарски“, 2006, 267-279.

<sup>78</sup> В оригинале письма – „руском“.

<sup>79</sup> В оригинале письма – „гостеприимство“.

<sup>80</sup> Мария Викторовна Каспровичова была дочерью русского царского генерала Виктора Бунина и шведки Марии Андерсон. В 1911 г. она стала третьей и последней женой поэта Яна Каспровича.

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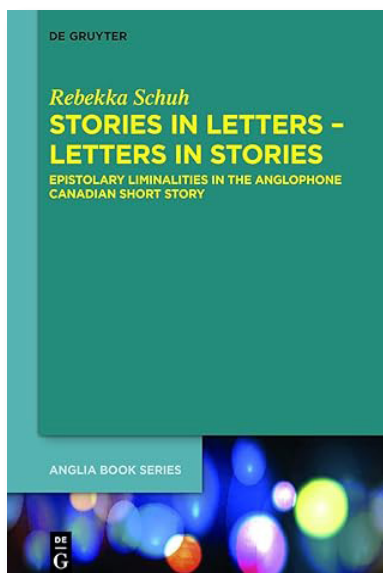
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## LIMINALITY AND ITS EPISTOLARY PROJECTIONS IN CANADIAN FICTION

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**Rebekka Schuh**, *Stories in Letters – Letters in Stories: Epistolary Liminalities in the Anglophone Canadian Short Story*. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021.

In Rebekka Schuh's book, *Stories in Letters – Letters in Stories: Epistolary Liminalities in the Anglophone Canadian Short Story*, she discusses the revival of the epistolary story form in novel and short story writing from the 1970s (Altman, 1982), and the revival in scholarly study of the form from the 1990s (Beebe, 1999). Schuh claims that not only has there been a resurgence in the form itself, and of the epistolary short story in Canadian Anglophone literature, but that epistolarity is a special feature of Canadian short fiction. So too is the prevalence of the traditional letter form over modern digitalized forms of communication, and this, in the author's view, makes the epistolary short story in Canadian literature a notable subject for research. Of the numerous short stories collected by Schuh for her study, only three examples feature modern, digitalized forms of communication such as emails and text messages. According to Schuh, this preference for analogue over digitalized forms in the Canadian short story is an expression of historicity (Loschnigg and Schuh, 2018) and a representation of de-familiarization through detachment

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**Article history:** Received: 25 June 2025; Edited: 27 June 2025; Revised: 30 June 2025; Accepted: 1 July 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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from the pace and zeitgeist of modern life (*ibid.*), which adds a counter-cultural dimension to the genre.

While the book (Schuh, 2021) deals with letters and forms of communication in the epistolary short story in Canadian Anglophone literature from the 1970s till the present day, the focus of the study is the theme of liminality and its connection with letters. The author defines liminality as ‘the experience of finding oneself at a boundary or in an in-between position’ (Thomassen, 2015, p. 40), and the feelings of disorientation, ambiguity and freedom that come with such an experience. In addition, ‘liminality is about how human beings deal with change’ (*ibid.*). The author contends that, along with letters, liminality is the common theme by which all the stories in the book are united, and suggests that this liminality operates at the level of genre, as the Canadian epistolary short story is essentially a liminal genre due to the structural tension between the narrative as a whole and the individual letters within the narrative. In addition, the author claims liminality is a feature of epistolary narrative as the epistolary mode functions in between first- and second-person narration, and creates in-between characters, settings and mindsets in stories, including characters who are in-between centuries, states and homes. Through this epistolary lens, and the letter format, the author attempts to explore liminality in the Canadian Anglophone short story.

In the book (Schuh, 2021), Schuh discusses how liminality and its in-between nature are characteristic of Canadian culture and Canadian literature in general. As a ‘cultural, geographical and political entity’ (Brandt, 2017, p. 12) Canada encapsulates liminality because the Canadian ‘self’ is complex and contradictory (*ibid.*). According to the author, the prevalence of the letter format and its expression of liminality in Canadian literature of the twentieth and early twenty-first century suggests that liminality shapes the Canadian psyche. This reflects the author’s view that narrative themes and forms within a particular culture or time-period reveal the moods and mindsets of that period or culture, and an analysis of the forms and functions of such narratives can contribute to the reconstruction of the culturally-formed norms and values of a society. In line with this, Schuh subscribes to cultural narratology – the belief that cultures are constructed, and that narratives are culturally dependent (Nunning, 2012) – and applies the principles and concepts of cultural narratology to her study.

While acknowledging the presence of epistolary forms in a variety of Anglophone literatures, Schuh argues that it is particularly in Canadian literature of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that the epistolary form has become prominent. To address what she perceives as a gap in the study of such forms, Schuh undertakes a critical reading of a number of short stories, and analyzes them through the lens of liminality. In her view, the Canadian short story is closely associated with the in-between nature of liminality. She reviews the current state of scholarship on epistolary writing, and examines the characteristics of the epistolary short story. She also discusses the concept of liminality, its

origins and uses, and the relationship between liminality and the letter form in a selection of Canadian short stories from the 1970s till today. There is a particular focus on the epistolary stories of Alice Munro, who, having written more than twenty such stories, is acknowledged as first raising the author's awareness of the epistolary short story form. Rather than an overview of the short story form in general, however, the study provides closer readings of a number of short stories, which, by the author's own admission, forces her to omit a number of compelling examples of the genre. However, this does enable her, in her view, to analyze more fully those examples which are most representative of liminality and her research interest. The discussion provides an overview of generic features of the epistolary short story, as well as a close reading of selected Canadian stories and an analysis of the role of letters within them.

Edited by Lucia Kornexl, Ursula Lenker, Martin Middeke, Gabriele Rippl and Daniel Stein, the book (Schuh, 2021) forms Volume 75 of the *Anglia Book Series* (*Buchreihe der Anglia*). Consisting of 335 pages, it contains eight chapters including an introduction and a conclusion organized into two main sections – Part 1: 'Theoretical Considerations', and Part 2: 'Analytical Case Studies'. There is also a list of cited works and primary and secondary sources at the end of the book. In addition to providing a brief summary of the chapters, the introduction (pp. 9-20) provides an outline of the scope and organization of the book, and a discussion of the main ideas and arguments of the author. It also introduces key terms such as liminality, epistolary, and short story genres, and the author's rationale for researching the topic. This is followed in chapter 2 (pp. 21-26) by a review of the current state of research on the topic. The two chapters in Part 1 fall under the general heading of 'Theoretical Considerations'. Chapter 3 (pp. 27-41), which is the first chapter in Part 1, is titled "The Epistolary Short Story in Canada and Beyond", and contains a review of epistolary criticism and an overview of the generic features of the epistolary short story form. Chapter 4 (pp. 42-88), "Liminality and the Epistolary Short Story", discusses liminality as a concept, and its origins and manifestations in the study.

Part 2 of the book comprises three chapters, and is called 'Analytical Case Studies'. It explores the relationship between liminality and letters in a selection of Anglophone Canadian short stories in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, and is divided into three chapters. Chapter 5 (pp. 90-118), "The Epistolary Mode as First- and Second-Person Narration in the Single Letter Story", provides a critical review of liminality at the level of discourse in epistolary story forms. By challenging previous conceptions of the epistolary mode as a first-person narrative form, the author attempts to show that the epistolary mode is a liminal narrative mode which alternates between first- and second-person narrative modes. She argues that, while shifts can take place between first- and second-person narration within a single letter, the epistolary narrative form tends towards second-person narration, particularly in single-letter stories.

In chapter 6 (pp. 119-214), “Letters from Alice Munro, ‘the Master of the Epistolary Short Story’”, Schuh reviews the use of letters in Alice Munro’s work, and the relationship between letters and women’s liminality. The first sub-chapter, “Enveloped in Epistolary Illusion: Liminal States of Reading and Writing Letters”, explores the propensity of letters for transporting Alice Munro’s characters into liminal imaginative states in which they operate in a reality between the real world and a world created by letters, and in which they are transported forward and backwards between worlds. Schuh compares the imaginative state into which Munro’s characters are drawn to ‘aesthetic illusion’ (Schuh, 2021, p. 128) – a concept in reader-response theory used to describe the state of immersion induced in the reader by the reading of fiction. The second sub-chapter in chapter 6, “Writing Back: An Epistolary Metaphor Applied”, highlights liminality in narrative forms, and attempts to deconstruct what the author terms patriarchal ‘master-narratives’ by focusing on stories in which letters are used to ‘write back’ and deconstruct binary concepts of right and wrong and good and bad (Schuh, 2021, p. 190).

Chapter 7 (pp. 215-291), “Between ‘Here’ and ‘There’: Letters and the Experience of Migration”, discusses letters in short stories about migration, with a focus on writers from the West Indian diaspora in Canada. In the first sub-chapter, “Letters as/across Borders: West Indian-Canadian Letter Stories”, the author shows how letters can be used to represent the ‘in-between’ nature of migrant characters existing as they do between cultures ‘here’ and ‘there’, and in between their own cultural heritage and Canadian culture (Schuh, 2021, p. 216). The second sub-chapter of chapter 7 – and the final chapter of the book – is titled “Moving letters, Moving Identities: Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag* as an Epistolary Self-Begetting Short Story Cycle”, and analyzes Rohinton Mistry’s *Tales from Firozsha Baag* as an example of an epistolary story frame in which liminality serves to forge identity.

The conclusion (pp. 292-297) of the book provides a summary of the previous chapters and reviews the ways in which what the author calls ‘epistolary liminalities’ (Schuh, 2021, p. 292) manifest themselves in the texts in the study, and the role of letters in putting characters into liminal states in stories. The author revisits her argument that the epistolary mode is a liminal mode between first- and second-person narration in the single-letter story, and states that the epistolary mode is a liminal narrative mode which should be seen as operating on a continuum from first-person to second-person narration. The author also restates her view that epistolary illusion relates to, and can be viewed as a variation of, aesthetic illusion. On this basis, she identifies opportunities for further research into the relationship between epistolary and aesthetic illusion, and what she calls ‘extra-textual manifestations of aesthetic illusion’ (Schuh, 2021, p. 294).

Rebekka Schuh takes the concept of liminality – originally coined by Arnold Van Gennep (1908) in the early twentieth century in connection with threshold states of mind and religious rites of passage – and uses it to explore what she calls ‘epistolary liminalities’ (Schuh, 2021, p. 293) in Canadian short fiction. Threshold

states and letter forms in narratives are an interesting lens through which to analyze Canadian short stories, but, as the study omits many examples of epistolary short stories, the book might not be best suited to students looking for a comprehensive survey of the epistolary short story form, or of epistolary writing in general. It might, however, be of interest to anyone interested in exploring the form and function of letters in epistolary writing, or the Canadian Anglophone short story as a sub-genre. As such, the book could perhaps make a valuable contribution to the study of epistolary forms, or the theme of liminality in storytelling.

The book is logically organized, moving from a theoretical discussion of generic features of epistolary short stories, and the application of liminality to the Anglophone Canadian short story, to a more analytical discussion of epistolary liminality in selected Canadian short stories of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In her analysis of selected stories, Schuh illustrates the potential of letters to express liminality, and the connections she makes between epistolary writing as a literary mode, liminality, and the Canadian psyche are interesting and insightful. The study shows that the use of the traditional or old-fashioned letter in literature is not dead, and that the epistolary form – particularly in the Canadian Anglophone short story – is alive and well.

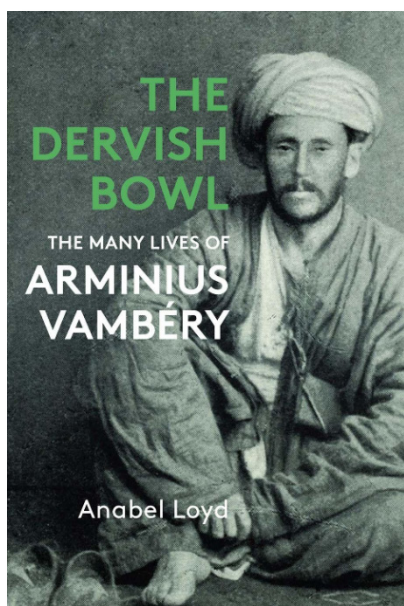
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## ARMINIUS VAMBÉRY: A MULTIFACETED PORTRAIT

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<https://doi.org/10.46687/BYJF6956>



**Anabel Loyd**, *The Dervish Bowl: The Many Lives of Arminius Vambéry*. London: Haus Publishing, 2024.

largely follows a traditional chronological approach to Vambéry's life and times, making judicious reference to the Hungarian's own English-language writings and contextualising the material with information from a wide variety of historical and modern sources, including the previous English-language academic studies by David Mandler (see Mandler, 2016) as well as by Lory Adler and Richard Dalby (see Adler & Dalby, 1979).

The subject of author and journalist Anabel Loyd's latest book is the Hungarian scholar and traveller Arminius Vambéry, who enjoyed a degree of fame at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. This was not only for his travels to Central Asia as a young man in 1860s, but also for his polymathic abilities which spanned languages, diplomacy, and academia. As with many prominent figures active during that era of imperial dominance, Vambéry's legacy – at least in the United Kingdom, a country which was to feature prominently in his life and professional trajectory – has dwindled over the ensuing decades, a situation which Loyd's incisive and well-researched biography remedies excellently.

Totalling 385 pages and divided into an introduction and eighteen numbered chapters, Loyd's study is aimed at the generalist reading public. In this regard, it

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**Article history:** Received: 20 May 2025; Edited: 25 May 2025; Revised: 30 May 2025; Accepted: 1 June 2025; Published: 5 August 2025



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The book's Introduction opens, however, in the present day, when Loyd spots a dervish bowl – an item commonly used by the Islamic holy men for begging for sustenance on their pilgrimages and travels – in a museum on a visit to Azerbaijan. With Vambéry adopting the disguise of a dervish in order to make his way unencumbered across Central Asia in the 1860s, Loyd therefore uses this artifact to introduce the reader to the complex and enigmatic personality portrayed in the book's pages.

Chapter 1 ('The Lame Boy') charts Vambéry's early years. He was born in either 1831 or 1832 in a small town in rural Habsburg Hungary. From a humble Jewish family, Vambéry was raised by his mother and stepfather (his own father had died before Vambéry's birth) but his background and lameness did not stop him from excelling academically, particularly in languages. He attended grammar school and began work as a tutor to wealthy families, before embarking on his first set of travels. Chapters 2 ('Constantinople') and 3 ('Reshid Effendi') detail Vambéry's travels and first arrival in the Ottoman capital, as well as his attempts to settle himself within Turkish society by offering language lessons to diplomats, eventually reaching the *crème-de-la-crème* of imperial activity through access to the sultan's household (see also Hoyte-West, 2024).

Chapter 4 ('The Many Lives Begin') details Vambéry's initial successes following the publication of his first book and other writings, as well as presenting some of the geopolitical factors underpinning his often stridently-held opinions regarding the politics of the time – namely, the 'Great Game' concerning British and Russian imperial activities in Central Asia. After a brief return to Hungary from Constantinople, and motivated by an attempt to discover the supposed Central Asian linguistic origins of his native Hungarian, Vambéry embarks on his journey by obtaining a special passport from the sultan and then travelling to the easternmost realms of the Ottoman lands.

Chapter 5 ('Persia') presents Vambéry's journey by caravan through Khoy, Tabriz, and Tehran, meeting the European diplomats there before first donning his dervish disguise to make his way to Qom, Kashan, and Shiraz, before returning to Tehran. Chapters 6 ('The False Dervish') and 7 ('Khiva') illustrate the initial stages of the disguised Hungarian's journey by caravan out of Persia into what was then called Turkestan, a region then little-travelled by Europeans and considered highly dangerous territory. On arriving in the capital of the khanate of Khiva, the false dervish was accommodated by the local ruler, before proceeding onwards. In Chapter 8 ('Bukhara'), Vambéry journeys to that famous city, meeting with the emir and avoiding detection, as well as onwards to Samarkand and into Afghanistan in Chapter 9 ('The Turning Point').

Chapter 10 ('Going Home – From Mashhad to Tehran') outlines the Hungarian's journey back to Persia. From the Persian-Ottoman border, Chapter 11 ('The Dervish in London') details Vambéry's return to Europe, where he would make his reputation following his Central Asia escapades. He did not linger long

in Budapest, heading onwards to London where he met with the great and good of Victorian politics and society, before a short stay in Paris, where he was also feted by the social and political class. Chapter 12 ('The Prophet in His Own Land'), charts Vambéry's return to the Habsburg lands, including a meeting with the Austro-Hungarian emperor, Franz Joseph. Indeed, it was the personal intervention of the monarch that ensured that the Hungarian received a permanent academic post in Oriental languages at the University of Pest. Yet Vambéry was to meet with considerable difficulties in the world of academia, in part owing to his religious and social origins (even though he had by then converted to Christianity), his lack of academic degrees and other credentials, as well as his seemingly difficult and combative personality.

With Vambéry firmly in favour of the British side during the 'Great Game', Chapter 13 ('The Russian Menace') is concerned with his antipathy towards the Russian Empire and its territorial designs on Central Asia and – potentially – British-ruled India. These were topics that he would deal with frequently in his writing and journalism over the next few decades, and thus gave him a considerable degree of visibility and prominence in British politics at that time.

Chapter 14 ('Royal Favour') depicts how Vambéry was welcomed by the British royal family and thus exemplifying his acceptance by the highest echelons of British society. He received an invitation from Queen Victoria to stay at Windsor for two nights in 1889, and also had a long-standing friendship with the then Prince of Wales, who would later rule as Edward VII. Chapter 15 ('The Sultan') continues Vambéry's personal acquaintance with a very different monarch, the Ottoman ruler Abdul Hamid II, and additionally expounds on the Hungarian's intelligence-gathering activities on behalf of the British at that time.

Building on Vambéry's links with the sultan, Chapter 16 ('A Jewish Homeland') examines his role and personal contacts with the Zionist Theodor Herzl regarding the complex issue of diplomatic and political discussions on Palestine. Chapters 17 ('The British Pensioner') and 18 ('The Last Act') deal with the Hungarian scholar's twilight years, including his passing and how this sad news was received at that time.

As this excellent volume testifies, it is clear that Vambéry undoubtedly led a very full and active life. Indeed, in some aspects (such as his penchant for self-promotion and celebrity), he seems to be quite modern in his behaviour and attributes, with the manifold references to Vambéry's own prolific writings helping to ensure that his voice also resonates through the text. Yet, in noting the Hungarian's tendencies to self-aggrandisement and hyperbole about himself and his own abilities, it is important to underline that Loyd's study supplies the necessary balance, nuance, and context to many of the remarks and events featured in the book. Indeed, some criticism is made of his contributions to academia and society, echoing the perspectives of several of Vambéry's contemporaries. Nor does Loyd shy away from presenting some of the less-favourable aspects of Vambéry's

character, and personality, including his treatment of his own family and close relations, his difficult behaviour and longstanding ability to hold grudges, as well as – despite receiving numerous state, royal, and academic accolades – his apparent conviction of having being overlooked for even greater honours.

In summing up, Loyd's masterly study goes beyond being merely a chronicle of Vambéry's varied diplomatic, linguistic, and scholarly activities. Rather, *The Dervish Bowl: The Many Lives of Arminius Vambéry* is an extremely thoroughly researched analytical portrait of a complex individual who, in an age of limited social mobility, was eventually to acquire many of the trappings of a successful and influential life during an era of immense geopolitical significance.

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## ЛЮБОСЛОВИЕ

*Издание на Факултета по хуманитарни науки*

*Шуменски университет „Епископ Константин Преславски”*

© Авторски колектив, 2025

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„Епископ Константин Преславски”, 2025

ISSN 1314-6033