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Antonella Cagnolati

Introduction

Such rebellious inks

1. How quickly they learn!

During the cold nights of winter, sheltered in stalls heated by the precious live-stock, a small community huddled around the ancient storyteller, wise conservator of the stories passed down through the generations; she told of sleeping princesses and brave heroes, of evil wolves and disobedient children, woven through the fabric of tales that ably transfigured their daily lives and gifted them a magically positive version of their own destiny, with its inevitable happy ending. The hardships of daily life could acquire meaning only in a rarefied dimension in which every single tale held the possibility of a solution, brought about by magic, helpers, or objects that provided a valid aid to the protagonist in difficulty, as well we know from the analytical research by Vladimir Propp. The word surpassed reality, distilling it into rivers of positivity and sagacity, opening the door to the realisation of the most secret dreams – escape from the village, marrying the prince, killing the dragon – giving each of the listeners the capacity to dream of *other* worlds in which they took on another identity.

The main architects of such metamorphoses were, in every place and at every time, the women; attuned to the universal and meta-historical passages of existence – birth, procreation, death – caretakers of mysteries, wise healers and mistresses of the herbs, they were present in the community and knew its rituals; they guarded its genealogies and witnessed its events. Each mastered the subtle art of spinning tales, like precious fabrics; in the guise of small, hardworking Penelopes, they traced their designs, refining them and gifting them to the collective as the sum of folkloric eschatology, interiorised by everyone and treasured above all in their hearts, through the emotion of experience, and in their minds, to capitalise on their wise teachings.

I am driven to underscore with emphasis to what extent the role of the storyteller (and able wordsmith) enabled women to break the compulsory silence that the misogynist patriarchal societal model had relegated them to since time out of mind; the *limen* was crossed, like a difficult ford, and they entered a public sphere in which words took on a haloed magic. Narrative virtuosity enabled the *cuntrici* to take on a role in society that was acknowledged and admired by all.

From the spoken word to the written, the step is revealed in all its tortuous difficulty. When we think of the world of books aimed at children, our imagination flies towards the brothers Grimm, capable listeners of the tales told by the women of a more humble, more folkloric Germany. Nevertheless, the brothers were soon followed by an army of female writers who mastered the difficult art of putting words onto paper, to take their turn to tell the stories they had heard, or ably reinvented.

In the middle of the 19th century, the panorama changed rapidly. The female storytellers became visible; they published their stories in magazines, and targeted a new publishing market that evolved into what we know today as “children’s literature”. Following in the footsteps of their forerunner, Jeanne-Marie Leprince de Beaumont (1711–1780), author of *La Belle et la Bête* – a tale that we now have no hesitation in labelling a worldwide success – and undisputed authority in the age of Enlightenment, ranks of female writers decided to set out on their own journeys. At first they walked hesitantly, and then with more boldness and determination, overturning the trope of caretaking that was held to be the traditional preserve of the “weaker sex” to carve themselves out a place in the world of publishing.

This was a new world that they were unfamiliar with, and it could be merciless with those who did not master the rules. This is attested to by the numerous letters between authors and editors that reveal the darker side of those relationships, which were not always friendly and egalitarian; the women themselves were oppressed by financial necessities and hostile reviews by the critics, while the editors were driven by the demands of the market and the school, not to mention the textbook review boards and the need to ensure their own tidy profits.

The trend, however, was widely evident; the women writers learned quickly, produced much, and found favour with the public. One best-seller followed another, confirming that it is the readers rather than the editors who determine the fate of a book: Louisa May Alcott and *Little Women* (1868), a real masterwork, as relevant today as it was when it was written; Ida Baccini and *Memorie di un pulcino* (1875), read by many generations of scholars and continuously republished to the present day; Contessa Lara and *Una famiglia di topi* (1895); Edith Nesbit and *The Railway Children* (1906); Frances Hodgson Burnett and *The Secret Garden* (1911); Pamela Lyndon Travers and *Mary Poppins* (1934); Astrid Lindgren and *Pippi Långstrump* (1945); Ann Philippa Pearce and *Tom’s Midnight Garden* (1958); Ursula K. Le Guin and *Earthsea*, Cornelia Funke and *Tintenwelt-Trilogie* (2003); and so on, and so on, until we reach the most famous, and much loved, J.K. Rowling.

2. What do they write to become so famous?

Let us make haste, then, to investigate what were the most important themes that made the women writers discussed in this volume so famous. I will subdivide the discussion into several categories that appear to me to be the most representative, those which constitute the fertile soil that shaped their output, both in terms of content and the underlying ideals that were knowingly incorporated into their writing.

First and foremost, a trait shared by all is without doubt the willingness to rebel against the roles and stereotypes that bind and constrain, as if in a cage, the protagonists of the novels; this was often a rebellion that was expressed and determinedly explicit even through physical appearance and clothing – messy, dishevelled, unfashionable and even dirty – but is even more apparent from their reflections and musings, which stand out in stark contrast to the conventions universally accepted by the society in which they found themselves living; conventions that they were largely unable to understand, certainly did not condone, and whose hypocritical conformism they rejected. The girls, the main characters and protagonists of the stories, were living in a time of transition that delineated new behavioural models but had nevertheless not abandoned the old and obsolete clichés, strenuously defended by the reassuring traditions that the triumphant bourgeoisie clung to at the turn of the 20th century. Emblematic in this regard is the figure of the young rebel in *Das Mädchen, mit dem die Kinder nicht verkehren durften* by Imgard Keun, or, we find equally interesting, the character of Pouloudia in *Τρελαντώνης* by Penelope Delta; both wilfully smash the stereotypes upon which social injustice – spawned by rigid class, race, gender and socioeconomic distinctions – was based.

Rebellion is a spiritual category that was represented in their work precisely because they had experienced it in real life, and therefore another piece in the critical analysis consists of comparing the often problematic existence of the authors with the fictional lives of their heroines. As if reflected in a mirror we can intuit the same battles, painful delusions and defeats whose consequences carved out deep wounds. If we think, for example, of exile as a founding category, wanderings for political reasons or merely for survival, we encounter the difficulties of Ludmilla Durdikova, a woman whose life was so full and intense, entirely dedicated to the care of others, in which art becomes a powerful tool for the emancipation of herself and others; we discover the trials due to the political struggles of the Mancini family in defence of their ideals; the persecution that led Hermynia Zur Mühlen to abandon Austria, her home country, never able to return. Painful stories of lives lived that are regularly reflected like precious

fragments in the stories told. A manifestation in the majority of the authors considered here of a strong autobiographical legacy, a powerful emblem of their literary output.

Another category represented in the stories is the means by which reality is seen; efficiently, and stripped of sentimentality, the eyes of the child observe, judge, and criticise – often with disarming sincerity – the world of adults, experimenting with a divergent focus on the world, with its ugliness in the foreground and its aberrant contradictions. At the same time, this gaze reveals by contrast a series of universal values that are defended and illuminated by the children, like tolerance, freedom, acceptance of diversity, and anti-authoritarianism, all themes that are present in the works of our female authors, from Grazia Mancini to Christine Nöstlinger, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, Svetlana Makarovič and Nadia Terranova.

Analysis of the works of our women writers reveals with great force a love expressed in forms and ways that reflect the multiple points of view that are gradually adopted. Certainly solicitude, by turns moving and disarming, for childhood is revealed emphatically – a childhood without barriers, without borders and with no trace of discrimination. Children are in constant need of care, affection and attention, but that which appears to a greater extent is the need to be listened to and loved by adults, who often remain too indifferent and self-centred to be aware of the discomfort that children experience.

The narrative style of the women authors attests to their desire to immerse themselves in the children's universe, in order to represent the complex inner life of children, their way of seeing things. The system of judgement and values are front and centre. Thus, the social commitment that is articulated in some of the stories makes of the child a pure being, an antidote to the wickedness that they see around them, a salvific perspective that many of the authors attribute to childhood. The reader therefore lives and thinks alongside the protagonist of the tale, party to their thoughts, vicissitudes and defeats, and thereby becoming fully aware of their way of assessing everything around them. This stylistic choice is a resounding success, and above all testament to the total dedication of the authors to a moral concept of redemption united with a robust ethical view of children's literature, which is not considered a mere instrument of entertainment, but instead a map for deconstructing reality with no artifice, a messianic hope that the strength of children can bring about the advent of a better world.

Antonella Cagnolati

Educating the “new women”: the comedies of Grazia Pierantoni Mancini

Abstract: In the last decades of the 19th century, there was a large group of writers in Italy dealing with various issues that we would nowadays define as gender-related, observing social reality from a point of view strongly geared towards female emancipation. This is the case of Grazia Pierantoni Mancini, a writer of considerable cultural depth known also beyond the borders of Italy. In both her narrative and journalistic output, Grazia Pierantoni Mancini focussed on women, highlighting their suffering due to the poverty, violence and the patriarchal context in which they lived.

A fundamental weapon in the struggle to change such a negative reality was the instruction practiced in schools, combined with education in family contexts. Another particularly effective method was the theatre, which was used as a tool for highlighting new behavioural models based on ethical values and the important role that “new women” had to play in society. Mancini’s plays were published in two different collections, entitled respectively *Teatro per fanciulle* (1874) and *Commedie d’infanzia* (1880) (*Theatre for Girls and Childhood Comedies*), which fully outline the educational ideals that animated her entire literary output, setting out her goal of a moral awakening for young women.

Keywords: women’s emancipation, Grazia Mancini, comedies, theatre, moral behaviour

1. The complex world of a female writer

In the second half of the 19th century, there was a turning point as regards the formation of young women: mass schooling, a goal of the new unified Italian State, brought increasing numbers of girls and women into the classrooms – as diligent, studious and tenacious students and nurturing kindergarten and elementary school teachers, respectively. There were also women teacher-trainers in the Normal Schools that were spreading throughout the Kingdom of Italy, from north to south, at that time.

The contradictions seem evident: on the one hand there was an army of girls and young women who were seriously taking possession of the essential tools required to discover the world and make their way in society through constant commitment, great professionalism and dedication to work, but on the other they were still being denied an effective role within a sociocultural vision in which the patriarchal model retained its domination unchallenged. Young

women were forced to live in a reality that was shaping them with behavioural canons that differed entirely from those of the past, but refused to accept them in their new emancipated role, labelling them as “the third sex” and other slurs.

So what was the challenge posed by training for girls and young women? It required education and literacy while still handing down the old-fashioned models perpetuated by the reading materials and textbooks; at the same time, however, the content of the teaching altered along the journey, awakening consciences, proposing new models, and ensuring that, at the turn of the 20th century, the traditional female figure, entirely based on the category of the maternal ideal, would no longer be sufficient.

In the world of education, a dichotomy that we could define as ontological clearly stands out: should rhetorical assimilation be privileged, or should attempts be made to give voice to fractures, albeit painful, and discontinuities? And again, should continuity with the genealogies of the past prevail, or should the effort to break the bonds of identity be emphasised? The answers are still difficult to find, caught between adaptation and freedom, renunciation and rebellion (Musiani, 2013). It is important to remember that we are talking about a time that could be described as a kind of “middle ground” between precarious progress and hazardous steps backward. Let us see then what responses to these changes the women directly involved provided.

First and foremost, I would like to underline the tenacity, courage and will-power with which some women were constructing training courses, in a clean break from the past. One note unites them: the experience of being self-taught, not only in terms of the mere tools of literacy, but in particular for the breadth of the cultural knowledge that they found themselves admirably mastering. The need to communicate and educate was very strong in all, as was the repeatedly affirmed desire to go beyond the boundaries of their own vision of the world to which they were linked by symbolic belonging, to shout out loud that it was precisely this belonging that had transformed into a prison, a sort of golden cage from which they must escape in order to retain their own identities. More and more often, therefore, the homologating legacy of the culture transmitted by the wheel of education suffered repeated blows inflicted by the desire to explore *new* words, *other* worlds that could satisfy their desire for authenticity.

Among the many eclectic writers of the time, I chose Grazia Pierantoni Mancini (1842–1915), both due to her decidedly interesting biographical profile (Villani, 1915; Rovito, 1922) and for the depth and heterogeneity of her writings, which range from diaries, accounts and novels, to journalism and translations, fairy tales and children’s plays (Guidi, 2007: 510–513). But who was Mancini really? “Happy bride, praised writer, wife and tender mother”;

with these affectionate words the journalist Fanny Zampini Salazar defined her friend Grazia Pierantoni Mancini, to whom, on the sad occasion of her death on 12th May 1915, she dedicated a long obituary, published in *Nuova Antologia* (*New Anthology*, Salazar, 1915: 563–570). She wrote about the salient phases of the life of Mancini, revealing her as a young woman born and raised during the second half of the 19th century in a family context of great moral standing, to which a fierce patriotic belief and an unshakable confidence in the progress of the newly built Italian nation was added. Salazar’s pen emphasises the role played by Mancini in the prime of her youth as the wife of Augusto Pierantoni and mother to her three beloved children, underscoring her moral qualities, wide-ranging culture and “the fine and gentle soul [...] reflected in all her literary works” (Salazar, 1915: 568). Ample space was also dedicated to the activities that Mancini lavished her time upon, her energies and her innate philanthropic bent, always with her gaze turned towards the emancipation of women and to raising the level of her own education, nonetheless avoiding the most radical feminism which was appearing on the social and political scene at the end of the 19th century.

However, Mancini’s books, articles in the most renowned press of the time, numerous translations and correspondence with important exponents of European culture, were a mere backdrop in the heartfelt obituary, almost as if they were pastimes, hobbies for whiling away her leisurely hours. The posthumous portrait turns into a hagiography, relegating to the background Mancini’s presence on the Italian cultural scene as an intellectual and dedicated woman, attentive to the news from abroad, appreciated and praised for reporting the serious moral and social conditions in which the Italian commoners existed, disappointed by the betrayal of the highest ideals of the Italian Unification, which by the dawn of the 20th century had already fallen miserably by the wayside.

Instead, the obituary continues with a wealth of details on the last, painful phases of Mancini’s existence: the sudden illness that had cruelly taken her daughter Bice away, the misfortune that befell her son Riccardo – and the consequent long agony that inevitably resulted in his passing, and the death of her beloved husband – all blows inflicted by cruel fate that had contributed to making the final years of her tempestuous life miserable and desperate. Her maternal identity could not withstand the buffeting of these events, and nothing could bring Mancini back to serenity; her intense private sufferings continued to worsen with the news of the atrocious upheavals that were brewing in Europe. World War I, with its wake of death and destruction, was on the horizon.

Her portrait became a cameo, indicative of a view, bordering on secular sanctification, of a woman who should have been eulogised for quite different

things. However, if pain and suffering qualified Mancini in her prime, as wife and mother, the representation of her youth, ties and family, not to mention her patriotic fervour and rich narratives, left as a legacy of great moral value, seem more nuanced.

Born into a wealthy family in which devotion to the homeland, political passion for the Unification, and love of culture were perfectly blended, Mancini grew up amongst the stimulating meetings, friendships and relationships that were encouraged in her home, and knew to treasure these moments (Valentino, 2005: 69–92). Little more than a child, however, she suffered painful vicissitudes as a result of the exile of her father Pasquale Stanislao Mancini (Stasi, 2019), and found herself shuttled between Turin and Naples, both cities dear to her, in the decisive years of her formation (Bandini Buti, 1941). She then found stable affective serenity beside her husband Augusto Pierantoni, whom she married in 1868, a union that produced three children: Beatrice, Riccardo and Dora¹. After the wedding, the family were still continually displaced, from Modena to Florence (where the couple lived until 1880) and then Rome, where Mancini founded an intellectual salon with the aid of her husband's prominent position, first as Member of Parliament and then as Senator (Mura, 2015).

Her family of origin always occupied a special place in Mancini's heart; she had boundless admiration for her father, for his constant sacrifice in his work so that he could raise his large brood, and his generosity – often lauded in the pages of her diary – in providing support to the “vast brigade of exiles”, for whom he felt responsible in the hospitable Turin of the Savoys (Guidi, Russo, 2011). She also nurtured a mature affection and dedication for her mother Laura Beatrice Oliva, poet and muse of the Unification (Savini, 1869; D'Avanzo, 1915; Orestano, 1940). From both, Mancini learned the value of devotion, the importance of helping others in need, and the power of ideas and words to change the ugliness in society, a cult of feelings.

We can say without doubt that Mancini's adolescence was full of encounters and experiences that helped shape and strengthen her young conscience. From the frequent annotations in her diary², it is easy to compile a list of the titles of the books she read, and to discern the emotions she experienced in her perceived

- 1 Mancini and her husband often lived far apart and communicated by letter; for their papers see: Gori 2009.
- 2 The diary *Impressioni e Ricordi* sets up immediately in the reader's imagination as a remarkably rich text for a variety of reasons, first due to the spontaneous adhesion to a type of literature that was rather widespread in women's writings, i.e., the diary; but especially because of the extraordinary period that the narration spans, full of the events involved in the construction of a unified Italy; and, finally, due to her

closeness to authors such as Giacomo Leopardi, Laurence Sterne, Victor Hugo; it is also enlightening to read her careful analysis – rather singular for a young girl – of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s *The Social Contract*, and reflections of a socialist bent, accompanied by fiery enthusiasm, which she began to cultivate after a collection of “valuable speeches by Robespierre” – a sign of a remarkable broadening of cultural horizons in the Mancini household, decidedly singular for the times (D’Antuono, 2008: 367–373).

“For me, learning has always been a celebration” (Mancini, 2005: 16); these were her words in her diary, published in 1908 with the title *Impressioni e ricordi* (*Impressions and Memories*). Indeed, when exploring Mancini’s formation, this is clear from her description of the schooldays she spent at the French Institute run by Messrs. Desnisard, where she had the opportunity to make lasting friendships with other young girls (such as Teresa, cousin of the famous writer Edmondo De Amicis), to learn fundamental notions, to develop a passionate love for languages and literature, and to internalise moral values. In addition, she was able to establish a trusting relationship with her esteemed young professor at the Elliott Institute, Francesco De Sanctis, who later went on to lecture at the University of Zurich. A noteworthy correspondence attests to the loving care with which he followed, even from afar, the progress of his “Grazina”; she, in turn, sent him poems and short prose for his critical appraisal (Santori, 1987). How all these experiences intermingled and developed within the soul of this young woman is an interesting topic, worthy of investigation if we are to understand her multifaceted activities as a writer, attentive to the issues of education, the needs of childhood, and violent situations in which women were at the mercy of male brutality (Cagnolati, 2012: 15–32).

2. Her educational plays

Her love for theatrical performances occupied a conspicuous part of Mancini’s formation; proof of such is the enthusiasm with which she welcomed invitations to attend comedies – whether staged at the Teatro Regio (Royal Theatre) in Turin, then the sparkling capital of Italy, or in the underground rooms rented by the Workers’ Association. She liked them to such an extent that she fancied, in the depths of her consciousness, that she would become a great writer of dramas, seeing the characters born from her fertile creative mind represented on the

self-exploration and development of an identity as a growing adolescent struggling to homologue the behavioral models propagated by her family and societal contexts.

stage. As a teenager, she entrusted the sensations she experienced after having witnessed admirable theatrical performances to the pages of her diary, in which she recounted her admiration for Gioacchino Rossini's *Mosè in Egitto*, which she saw on the stage of the Teatro Regio, and how *The Count of Monte Cristo*, on the bill at the National Theatre, fired her imagination. Her love for theatrical literature led her to read and meditate on classic texts such as *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello*, and one day she decided to venture into writing dramas and comedies herself.

Still a teenager, on the 16th February 1864, Mancini reports this episode as follows:

an idea came to my little sisters and their friends: they would like the theatre to be given over to them every now and then, and themselves to act on those sets for our acquaintances. Mama didn't say no, but the difficulty all lies in choosing the comedy to put on. The girls disdain the productions for children and by educational institutions, and mother does not want to permit the well-known repertoire comedies. She will only allow my sisters and their companions to act with each other... (Mancini, 2005: 196).

Mancini quickly found the solution to this problem: a passionate reader and imaginative writer, she was coerced into committing to paper a small drama with a happy ending entitled *Il segreto* (*The Secret*), which would be the first in a series of plays: "There was much applause, they called the playwright out [on stage], and there was no shortage of flowers [...] So I can say that I tasted triumph [...] Of course, an encore was requested, and the company has already commissioned another play from me" (Mancini, 2005: 197). Despite her early success, her writing for the theatre would remain episodic, but nonetheless well structured and convincing; in all, Mancini published only two volumes of plays. The first, entitled *Teatro per fanciulle*, included four comedies which she wrote in the years she was living in Turin "when, still a young girl, she was taking care of her younger sisters' education under the eyes of my beloved mother" (Mancini, 1874: 6); the second book, *Commedie d'infanzia*, was published in 1880.

Her ardor and passion for writing plays are clearly visible in the pages of her diary:

In three hours I wrote the first act, all in one breath [...] the company is thrilled and asks for permission to at least begin preparing the costumes. Everyone will have to wear long dresses [...] What joy, what kisses for the impromptu playwright! (Mancini, 2005: 197).

On another occasion, Mancini also played a part on stage in a minor comedy: when holidaying in the Moncalieri Hills between September and October 1858, she was called upon to play the part a certain Madame Cotin – a French writer who, reduced to conditions of destitution, finds work as a teacher; although this was

an amateur production, the predisposition for the theatre, which already seemed very strong in a young girl of only 15 years, should not be underestimated.

Inside the volume *Teatro per fanciulle* – the subject of my analysis – we find four separate plays, all with different plots and settings³, but all featuring as protagonists women and girls whose vicissitudes become increasingly adventurous and extravagant, culminating in a catharsis and/or reckoning, in line with the best tradition of the denouement so necessary in a narrative and theatrical plot. For explicitly educational purposes, I have chosen to analyse two comedies that most seem to favour a structural framework bent on forging and propagating admirable examples of virtue and upright and honest behaviour, in line with the moralising suggestions that spread profusely through the vast and numerous publications which, in the second half of the 19th century, went under the guise of “feminine etiquette”.

3. Vices to quash, virtues to sow

The first – and in my opinion the most interesting from a pedagogical perspective – comedy that we encounter in the volume is *Il sistema di Licurgo* (*Lycurgus’ System*); constructed in a single act, it is composed of thirteen juicy scenes, within which it is easy to discern a beginning, a plot development, a climax, and, finally, a catharsis and denouement with the indispensable happy ending. The initial apparatus presents us with seven female characters from different social backgrounds, and gives us an idea of the geographical context in which the plot takes place, a “village near Modena”⁴.

The outline of the first scene provides a brief description of a peaceful bourgeois interior; the action is to take place in a living room, which seems to be the most central place of the dwelling, leading on to numerous rooms and a beautiful garden. The room is sparsely furnished, but there is a small table where the tools of “women’s work” are on display, significantly alongside several books; there is also a wardrobe containing women’s clothes, and, finally, a cage that houses a canary. All the action takes place on this bare stage.

In the first scene, we see the entrance of the old maidservant Marianna, who is complaining to herself about two events that have upset the regular course of her days as a maid in the house: first of all, the “young ladies” have just arrived

3 Specifically, *Il sistema di Licurgo* (pp. 7–24); *La Lotteria di Milano* (pp. 25–54); *Il Segreto* (pp. 55–88); *La Figlia di Adozione* (pp. 89–123).

4 In the early years of marriage, the Pierantoni family lived in the town of Modena. See Gori, 2010.

from college – a clever narrative stratagem which informs us that it is probably the school holidays – and this arrival has caused upheaval and disorder, so much so that poor Marianna no longer has even “an hour of peace”. This causes us to deduce that the girls are boisterous and eager to cross over the boundaries of correct behaviour, that considered most appropriate to well-bred young ladies. The maidservant finds the second event even more strange: Erminia, sister of the lady of the house, has arrived from America; the very word America, that distant and mysterious land and the unknown universe hidden behind it, immediately brings to Marianna’s mind a sort of upside down world; “who knows what strange habits she will have brought from America. Can you imagine! a country of blacks and monkeys, a country where lions and tigers walk the streets like cats and dogs do here” (Mancini, 1874: 9), she says.

In reality, the newcomer has only been away from the household for ten years, a short time marred by mourning and misfortune: first the death of her brother-in-law, then the death of her husband. So Erminia, returned from America, has decided to devote herself to the education of her three nieces, both because she does not have her own offspring, and in order to help her sister in the difficult task of raising the three young girls to be healthy and virtuous.

The brief reference to the fundamental purpose behind Erminia’s *nostos* becomes more evident in the second scene, which features the three young ladies as exclusive – and somewhat intrusive – protagonists. It is immediately apparent that Giulia, Ernestina and Lisa move and act outside the canons of respectability and etiquette suited to their sex and age; returning from the garden, they chatter, scream, quarrel amongst themselves and insult the young peasant girl Ninetta, by which, with careful attention to detail, Mancini abundantly illuminates their negative peculiarities. Ernestina has climbed a tall tree to pick peaches; the result is a woefully torn and dishevelled dress. This has been a serious breach of the rules laid down by her mother, but, undeterred, she nevertheless intends to further disobey her mother’s rules and go and pick hazelnuts; in order to avoid any reproach, she orders the maidservant not to tell. Giulia, on the other hand, insults poor Ninetta, guilty of reminding her that there are things that should not be done without asking for permission; she badly mistreats the girl, giving in to a strong surge of anger and vexatiousness, which, however, comes as no surprise to her sisters, who are accustomed to her terrible temper. The youngest sister, Lisa, for her part shows signs of excessive vanity; she begins to take expensive and fashionable clothes from her mother’s wardrobe, putting them on herself and gazing admiringly at her reflection in the mirror, casting aside her more modest girlish clothes in disgust. Her preening is a sign of immoderate narcissism, which demands that everyone else acknowledge her beauty and elegance.

What strategy does clever aunt Erminia devise? In front of her nieces, she begins to behave as they do, adopting their own mannerisms and attitudes; she demands total submission from the maidservant, asserting, in a very insulting tone, that “in America slaves are treated with a whip”; she exalts anger as a virtue (“indignation is the son of a noble soul”); and finally sets Ernestina’s canary free (“I cannot stand to see birds in cages”). Such actions engender in the girls first surprise and then a strong reprimand for their aunt, whom they accuse of being in turn angry, vain and cruel, to the point that her talents and virtues, so much praised while she was away, are no longer recognisable, saying “changed in America, yes, yes, changed into a viper”.

Erminia rages mercilessly against people and things, to the extent that her sister Giaacinta decides to confront her openly to ask her the reasons for such cruel behaviour; at this point, Erminia reveals her strategy and, once the poor behaviour and vices of her nieces are so unmasked, it forces them to repent and ask for forgiveness. In the final cathartic scene, the hidden motivation inherent in the title is also cleverly revealed: Lycurgus educated the young Spartans by showing them examples of vice and virtue, well understanding that “example was worth more than any other lesson”. Thus the story ends happily, with all protagonists being fully satisfied.

4. Wealth, poverty and generosity

The second comedy that reveals interesting insights on the portrayal of the female characters and their transition towards new models of identity is the last in the collection; entitled *La figlia di adozione* (*The Adopted Daughter*), its narrative is much more complex than those of the preceding comedies, and the moral values that are illustrated are treated in a more analytical and convincing manner. The plot revolves around a series of mysteries, which are explained in the final denouement, that determine the characters’ existential events. The protagonist who best embodies the ideals of Grazia Mancini is undoubtedly the young Maria; the women on the stage for the first four scenes in the first act speak much about her, and communicate to the audience that an injustice has been done to her; from their lines it is understood that there was an inheritance that could have made the protagonist rich and content, but has instead relegated her to a condition of poverty and marginalisation by the other relatives of the wealthy but erstwhile lady Elena, whose funeral has just been held after a long illness that had led to her death. Various different witnesses reveal that there is an alternative truth: the deceased had written a second will, which, however, has failed to materialise. It not being found, the Countess Livia, sister of the

deceased, and her daughter Fiorenza, have taken possession of all the assets of their dear departed relative.

The contrast between two very different and contraposed worlds is immediate, and a recurring theme throughout the comedy from the very first lines; on the one hand there is the world of the nobility, driven only by money and appearances, devoid of feelings and morality, and strongly inspired by individualistic selfishness, while on the other, there is a universe populated by female characters belonging to the more humble classes, who instead embody honesty, solidarity and true affection, and act for the common good. The two social environments are also opposed in their geographical location: the ethical divergence between the city – corrupt, frivolous and based on appearance rather than substance, and the countryside – a place of sincere feelings, goodness and mutual aid, is often emphasised.

The unfortunate protagonist Maria is at the centre of a series of events beyond her control, these arise from the very beginning of the play, as in the plot of a fairy tale, from a painful event, a separation. In the scene preceding the second act we find a narrative insert that, in flashback mode, takes us back to the past so that we better understand the present: when Maria was only a ten-month-old girl, her mother had given in to a request by the rich and noble lady Elena to adopt the baby, having no children of her own. Driven by poverty and the desire to ensure a better future for her little girl, Rita (the name of the peasant woman) consented, signing the official documents that would take Maria away from her, making her child Elena's adopted daughter in the eyes of the law. The pain of separation and her remorse for the gesture were immense and immediately apparent, but Maria was kept in the dark until she became seriously ill. Maria's illness caused lady Elena to call Rita to the bedside of her daughter, perhaps fearing that she would not see her alive again. There was a witness to the scene, Maria's trusted friend Ida, who reveals to her the hidden truth; Maria has always believed herself an orphan, but as Ida tells her what she saw, she learns the existence of her true biological mother.

IDA It was a story. Well! Listen to it, since you want it, but don't interrupt me. Last year you were seriously ill; one day your recovery was in doubt. I watched over you alone; lady Elena was resting in the next room. Suddenly I heard her talk to an unknown woman, a peasant woman. The door was ajar, I saw them both in the mirror before me and involuntarily I heard the words ...

MARIA (anxiously) What did they say?

IDA The peasant woman wept and prayed; lady Elena spoke warmly. Eventually they both entered your room and went over to the bed, on which you lay unconscious. That woman looked at you for a long time, then stretched out her hands and blessed you...

MARIA (joining her hands with a cry) My mother! (Mancini, 1874: 99–100).

The plot twists abound: Maria finds her real mother, and decides to live with her in the countryside, to abandon the corrupt city and noble life in which she has lived until then. Awareness of her condition of poverty does not frighten her, but it is precisely when she makes this decision that the will of her adoptive mother, making Maria universal heir to all her assets, comes to light. As a result of this discovery, the two noblewomen, the Countess Livia and her daughter Fiorenza, decide to wage a corrupt campaign of delegitimisation against Maria; they promise her a large sum of money if she tears up the will and renounce her legal claim to inherit. The plan fails; Maria, highlighting her morality and purity of mind, decides to accept the inheritance in an act of pure philanthropy: she will devote her wealth to bettering the conditions of the poor and illiterate children who populate the countryside. She also reveals her generosity, giving the two noblewomen the residential properties of the deceased.

The ending of the comedy reveals once again the profound divergence between the behaviours of the two parallel and contrasting social worlds; it is well highlighted in the differing fates that await the characters: returning to the affections of her real mother, Maria would go to live in the countryside and, thanks to the excellent instruction received from her benefactor, who had enabled her to graduate from high school, would put her education to work for the children, towards their social and cultural improvement. The two noblewomen, on the other hand, satisfied by having recovered part of the wealth they had believed lost, were preparing to shine in the sparkling social life of the city, setting as a priority the realisation of a good marriage for the young Fiorenza, one that would allow her to make her debut in high society; they show no signs of the moral repentance that one might desire, and seem blissfully unaware of the possible modernisation of the roles and functions that women could play in society.

5. Not only good intentions

So then, what elements of novelty appear in Grazia Mancini's comedies, and how may they be considered important for the education of young girls?

Her modernity consisted of not resigning herself to accepting the preconceived social notion that women should be relegated only to the domestic sphere – as daughters, wives and mothers – without, until the second half of the 19th century, any opportunities for putting their remarkable skills to work in other areas. After the Unification of Italy, girls were no longer educated solely in the home, but also in the increasingly crowded schools, and this change, the possibility of transformation of the social structure through education and

a role for women that would no longer be marginal, was clearly foremost in our playwright's mind. In her comedies, Mancini was extremely critical of the female figures from the upper classes, portraying them as morally weak and inept, devoted to vice and the display of good breeding in the reception rooms of the aristocratic families of the time. Not merely a negative opinion, but a condemnation: compare the total passivity of her representations of female nobility, and those of the new emerging social classes. It is not, the playwright seems to want to tell us, only a metamorphosis of the female identity: what really seemed relevant to Mancini's philosophy was a collective vision in which women would play an active role. New energies, combined with a strong progressive vision, furthered her aim to change society for the better; it is no coincidence that the positive figures in her plays are the teachers, creators of an epochal change in the very concept of the female role, at the same time providing virtuous examples for other women; the engine of progress can only begin with education, with a view to improving the living conditions of both girls and boys.

This dream, so well represented in her comedies, would be the lifeblood for a change that, after a few short years, would be readily apparent in the Italy of the early 20th century.

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Dorena Caroli

Ludmila Durdíková, teacher and writer for children from Prague to Paris (1899–1955)¹

Abstract: The purpose of this chapter is to analyse a number of children's books by Ludmila Durdíková (1899–1955), a Czech teacher at the Institute for Disabled Children in Prague, one of Europe's leading establishments in the field, and a collaborator with František Bakulà (1877–1936). The books are analysed in relation to the history of education and the educational principles that underlie their text are studied. Durdíková, who worked under the pseudonym Lida, can be considered one of the leading authors of picture books in France during the 1930s. She was part of the generation of writers and artists who emigrated from Central and Eastern Europe and Russia to France, especially Paris, whether for personal, artistic or political reasons, and spent the rest of their lives there. After a brief introduction, the article is divided into three sections. The first of these presents Durdíková's biography. The second section analyses her two long stories on childhood disability, blindness and other physical and motor impairments, which were inspired by her experiences as a teacher. The final section is dedicated to an analysis of the famous cycle of illustrated books known as *The Novel of the Animals*, which were published as part of the Père Castor collection. Illustrated in an avant-garde style, the books contain short stories about animals that are metaphors for a range of traditional and non-traditional family structures, all of which form the basis of positive relationships. The mutual respect and personal growth that are exemplified respect the natural inclinations of all family members.

Keywords: Ludmila Durdíková, Paul Faucher (1898–1967), František Bakulà (1877–1936), history of education, history of disability, history of children's literature

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse a number of children's books by Ludmila Durdíková (Prague, 1 April 1899 – Paris, 8 March 1955), a Czech writer who emigrated to Paris after meeting Paul Faucher (1898–1967), a French pedagogist who was considered one of the main exponents of the so-called *éducation nouvelle* (new education), whom she married in 1932 (Gutierrez 2010, 2011). Among those

1 The author is grateful to Meggy Lacassagne and Iris Clément for their valuable help in assembling sources relevant to Ludmila Durdíková's life, and also to Elizabeth Stone for her patient and precise editorial assistance.

20th century women who gave an important contribution to children's books, Ludmila Durdíková plays a very significant role, and investigating her books in detail reveals her personal and artistic position with respect to the principles of *éducation nouvelle*.

Ludmila Durdíková conceived education as a period of active and creative growth with the aim of achieving autonomy and independence, this being particularly relevant for disabled children. After arriving in France in 1933, she collaborated with the Père Castor imprint that had been founded by her husband Paul Faucher in association with the publisher Flammarion, and had published its first two illustrated books in 1931. For someone like Paul Faucher, who supported *éducation nouvelle* and its principles of activism, illustrated books were the best way to spread this new form of pedagogy among the younger generations (Blanchu 1999; Piquard 2011). The history of Père Castor is well known, with its success in the 1930s partially being explained by the high-quality illustrations that were commissioned for its books from Russian artists and artists who had emigrated to Paris after the 1917 Revolution. This exile was not the same for all artists, however: some of them were driven by a personal choice or by a desire to seize opportunities linked to the avant-garde. Through their illustrations, artists such as Natalie (Chelpanova) Parain (1897–1958), her friend Héléne Guertik (1897–1937), Alexandra Exter (1882–1949), and Fedor Rojankovskij (known as Rojan, 1891–1970) gave a fundamental contribution to the success of the books published by Père Castor, and in other spheres as well (Defourny 2017).

Ludmila Durdíková trained as a teacher but also had a deep passion for literature. She began to write in Prague, publishing three short stories inspired by her autobiography: *Šarkan* (1921), *The Juggling Children* (*Tuláci: historky čtyř z Bakulovy družiny; Les enfants baladins*, 1926/1993) and *The Dull-Eyed Children* (*Děti zhaslých očí; Les enfants aux yeux éteints*, 1929/1984), and in the late 1920s she also published some translations from Russian into Czech. Between 1934 and 1955, under the pseudonym Lida, she wrote fourteen picture books for Père Castor, one of which was published posthumously.

Lida's books were illustrated mainly by Russian artists such as Fedor Rojankovskij and Héléne Guertik, with other French illustrators contributing, particularly after Rojan's emigration to the United States and the premature death of Héléne Guertik in 1937: *The Père Castor Farm* (*La Ferme du Père Castor*, 1934, ill. Héléne Guertik), *Panache the Squirrel* (*Panache l'Écureuil*, 1934, ill. Rojan), *Froux the Hare* (*Froux le Lièvre*, 1935, ill. Rojan), *Plouf the Wild Duck* (*Plouf Canard sauvage*, 1935, ill. Rojan), *The Kingdom of Bees* (*Le Royaume des abeilles*, 1935, ill. Ruda), *Bourru the Brown Bear* (*Bourru l'Ours brun*, 1936, ill. Rojan), *Scaf the Seal* (*Scaf le Phoque*, 1936, ill. Rojan), *Quipic the Hedgehog* (*Quipic le*

Hérisson, 1937, ill. Rojan), *The Kingfisher* (Martin Pêcheur, 1938, ill. Rojan) and *Cuckoo* (*Coucou* (1939, ill. Rojan). Between the 1940s and into the post-war years, she continued to write, titles including *The Animals of the Zoo* (*Les Animaux du zoo*, 1941, ill. Rojan), *The Gardener's Bouquet of Flowers* (*Le Bouquet du jardinier*, 1941, ill. Angèle Malclès), *Red Hen* (*Poulerousse*, 1949, ill. Romain Simon) and *The Great Summer Night* (*La grande nuit d'été*, 1957, ill. Romain Simon). Most of these books were inspired by the life of animals and the world of nature.

This article discusses Ludmila Durdíková's stories about the education of disabled children and those contained in the cycle of eight books known as *The Novel of the Animals* (*Le roman des bêtes*) (Lida, 1947). Using the historical–educational perspective as a key the new educational models are analysed, referring to the principles of *éducation nouvelle* proposed in these stories where active and creative growth, achievement of autonomy and independence, respect for freedom and individuality, mutual aid and, of course, closeness with nature were included. The different narratives present several models of family and/or family relationships that symbolize a multitude of families that are different from the traditional patriarchal form. We will not discuss Ludmila Durdíková's language here, although it would be interesting to delve into the stylistic characteristics of stories about disabled children – a narrative strategy based mostly on dialogue and action – but rather the project at the heart of *éducation nouvelle*.

2. Ludmila Durdíková, teacher at the Jedlička Institute in Prague (1916–1932)

Ludmila Durdíková was born in Prague on 1 April 1899. During the First World War, while still very young, she acted as a nurse for her father, who was a doctor in a field hospitals. She began to smoke at this time in order to tolerate the malodorous environment, in which she was continually surrounded by the wounded and mutilated. This part of her history is brought to mind by many of her later photographs (Defourny 2000, p. 12), and these formative experiences probably began to symbolize her early emancipation. During the war, in 1914–1915, Ludmila joined an institute run by Dr Rudolf Jedlička (1869–1926) specialized in the treatment of motor disabilities in children, but in wartime welcomed disabled adults alongside disabled and non-disabled children (Faucher 1998, pp. 31–33). In 1916, she was part of a team put together by the teacher František Bakulà (1877–1957), who had arrived at the Jedlička Institute a couple of years before Ludmila; he described her as a shy and determined girl with great dedication to work. On his initiative, a new department was opened, initially welcoming six children and adolescents with different types of physical and mental

disabilities. A craft workshop was organized for them, recalling some aspects of John Dewey's educational theories such as laboratory educational strategies, based on active manual work and the active learning of subjects (Alix, 2017, pp. 122–129) from which Bakulà most likely took inspiration – thus developing an active educational method that in Europe was ahead of its time. According to the educational programme developed for disabled children, the active learning of academic subjects was envisaged alongside these manual activities, this being based on a principle of self-management that aimed to give disabled children autonomy. Initially, children were punished for disobedience or disorder, but Bakulà's reading of Tolstoy's pedagogical writings, based on his experience of founding a school at Yasnaya Polyana, which Bakulà shared with Ludmila, led to these practices being suspended, considered useless (Itzl, 1998; Volodina 2019, pp. 29–39).

Although he was an experienced teacher, Bakulà chose not to set an official curriculum with activities that were the same for all children but tailored the teaching to pupils' individual abilities. His aim was the achievement of autonomy, and thereby economic independence, with mutual aid being part of this process. One of the most touching cases was that of Votja, a fourteen-year-old boy, who had no hands yet learned to paint with his feet – a moving example of Bakulà's creative teaching skills.

In 1916, the Institute carried out an audit of educational methods in Bakulà's department and requested that he should issue school certificates according to the path that pupils followed. This audit revealed the innovative aspects of Bakulà's pedagogy, which led children into adulthood via activities that were divided into three phases (following the child's individual development) and included art, music and architecture. Thanks to the implementation of these principles, Bakulà was eventually able to transform the department into a stand-alone institute, founded on the belief that children and young people shared responsibilities and earnings according to their abilities. In 1917, for example, the Institute's main activity was the manufacture of toys. Everyone participated in this work, and one of the first children to arrive, named Ruda, was appointed president of the Institute.

Teaching was not desk-based but active and original. Reading *Just So Stories for Little Children* (1902) by the English writer Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936) gave the children ideas for educational activities of various kinds, both theoretical and practical (Brogan, 1987). Kipling's book is a compilation of stories about animals that all undergo a metamorphosis, usually thanks to human intervention (Faucher 1975, pp. 111–113; Durdíková 1993, p. 110). Examples are “How the Whale Got His Throat”, in which we discover the whale had a grating put in

its throat by the man who had been swallowed by it; “How the Leopard Got His Spots”, in which we find the leopard’s skin was painted by an Ethiopian; “The Elephant’s Child”, which explains how the elephant’s trunk became so long: it was stretched by a crocodile; and “The Sing-Song of Old Man Kangaroo”, in which a kangaroo is chased across Australia by a dingo, after which he has long hind legs. After an episode in which Šarkán, a nine-year-old boy, wanted to make a kangaroo out of a hammer, Ruda, who was older, decided that all the animals of the *Just So Stories for Little Children* could be made – and dressed in different national costumes. Visits to Prague’s Zoological Museum, the Museum of Natural History and libraries ensued, and the children learned about national costumes so they could dress the animals accurately. Information about the animals’ natural environment was also actively explored, through the study of encyclopaedias and consultation with specialists at the Institute of Botany. Ludmila Durdíková, who continued to collaborate with Bakulà, assisted the children in their daily pursuit of knowledge and skills (Faucher 1975, pp. 113–116).

Following the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in October 1918, Bakulà left the Institute because he was denied promotion to director. He was followed by a group of fifteen boys and, thanks to financial assistance he received from Minister of Education M. Habrman, was able to open his own community; this was to be self-financed with the production of toys and puppet shows. During the summer of 1918, the boys were accommodated in a Red Cross summer camp, but this was soon unavailable: all they were left with was a little theatre and the puppets they had made. To earn her keep, and provide for the children, Ludmila Durdíková devised a series of puppet shows that they toured around the country for about a year and a half. This remarkable experience inspired her first story, *The Juggling Children* (Defourny 2000, p. 15).

In February 1920, the children were hosted in a room at Prague’s hospital, which had also become a centre for poor and abandoned youngsters. They continued with their previous activities, and in addition Bakulà set up a children’s choir – which soon became famous throughout the world. Thanks to the 3,300 concerts that the choir held in Europe and the United States to great acclaim, and a prize of \$25,000 awarded by the Red Cross in 1921, Bakulà was able to open the new and progressive Institute for Disabled Children, which also catered for poor children. He presented the Institute’s results during the Fourth International Congress of Pedagogy in Locarno (1927), where he met Paul Faucher, president of the French *éducation nouvelle* group. Faucher became so interested in Bakulà’s educational methods that *Trois pionniers de l’éducation nouvelle*, the first book in his collection “Pédagogie créatrice”, focused on his work (Ferrière 1928,

pp. 157–244) (besides the Italian Giuseppe Lombardo Radice and the German Hermann Lietz).

Thanks to this contact with Faucher, the children's choir was invited to France by the teachers' union (Syndicat National des Instituteurs Français) in 1929. It was on this occasion that Ludmila Durdíková met Paul Faucher, and they married in 1933 – Faucher having visited Bakulà's Institute in Prague in 1932. Also in 1933, the Institute was forced to close as a result of the world economic crisis (Faucher 1975, p. 164). Shortly before this took place, she followed her husband to France and they moved to Forgeneuve in the Limousin region. There they welcomed Ferdinand Krch, pedagogist and illustrator (1881–1973), and Ladislav Havranek (1884–1961), known for his teaching of drawing. Thanks to his educational and literary experiences, Havranek played an important role at Père Castor in the 1930s.

3. Child disability in relation to artistic education and the quest for autonomy

Ludmila Durdíková was very interested in literature. She read widely and alongside her work as a teacher in Prague at the beginning of the 1920s, she was a member of the literary and artistic circle named “Devětsil” (“The Nine forces”, *Umělecký Svaz Devětsil*), a group linked to the literary avant-garde; its members also included František Halas (1901–1949), Jaroslav Seifert (1901–1997) and Vitezslav Nezval (1900–1953) (Defourny 2000, p. 17). The young teacher began to write herself, and in three books she dealt with the previously unexplored theme of disabled children, a subject familiar to her through her collaboration with Bakulà. Equally innovative was the fact that the illustrations for two of them were provided by two boys with artistic talent, something that had been nurtured by the educational methods used at the Institute for Disabled Children.

Ludmila Durdíková published her first book, *Šarkán*, in Prague in 1921. *Šarkán* was a disabled child with muscular atrophy in his legs; his “anger, fury and combativeness” meant that he was quite rebellious, and he was also hostile to the usual rules of hygiene. Bakulà's team managed to channel his vitality into artistic activity, and his illustrations were published as an accompaniment to the educator's study of his psychological profile (Durdíková 1921/1922; Defourny 2000, p. 29; Šubrtová 2010, pp. 177–178).

Later, Ludmila Durdíková published two longer books: *The Juggling Children* (*Les enfants baladins*, 1926) and *The Dull-Eyed Children* (*Les enfants aux yeux éteints*, 1929) (Durdíková 1926/1993; 1929/1984; Šubrtová 2010, pp. 178–179). These too were inspired by her educational experience – but while the former

narrated her experiences in the summer of 1919 with a group of disabled children from Bakulàš Institute (Defourny 2000, p. 19), the latter was fictional, although inspired by her work as a teacher in Prague. The first book recounts a lived experience, while the second is set in a remote location in the mountains, where the children live alone with their teacher, immersed in a sensory journey in nature.

The Juggling Children recounts Durdíková's experiences with a group of homeless disabled children as they attempted to earn a living with the puppet theatre that they had made between summer 1918 and winter 1919. Puppet theatres have a rich folk tradition in Czechoslovakia, and she proposed to the children that they should follow in the footsteps of the legendary Matthieu Kopečký (1762–1846), a former soldier and father of twenty children, who on his return from the Napoleonic wars began to construct puppets in the town of Mirovice. Considered the founder of the puppet theatre tradition in Czechoslovakia, he awakened a national spirit among rural populations with his travelling shows (Durdíková 1926/1993).

After accompanying the youngest children to the village of Bezkydy in the mountains of Moravia and Silesia, where she arranged their accommodation, Durdíková went on to numerous locations with three older children: thirteen-year-old Ruda, limping; twelve-year-old Yarka, with deformed hands; and eleven-year-old František, without arms. Later, *Šarkán*, who was eleven years old at the time and skilled in drawing, joined them. They went on to Bohemia and Slovakia, eventually joined by even the youngest children, who had earned some money from the puppet shows they had held in Slané and Kladno. The narration of daily life and the group's journeys, which continuously tested their quest for autonomy, highlights the way in which mutual aid solved critical and even economic problems. The dialogues between teacher and children reveal the otherness of disability, which induces silence and thought in order to overcome obstacles.

Durdíková's group travelled by train, their luggage made up of theatre and puppets, throughout South Bohemia, Wallachia, Silésia and Ostrava, and found hospitality in makeshift accommodation and convents. During the journey, Lida observed the conditions in which the farmers of Wallachia and miners of Ostrava were living. The themes of the plays they put on and details of the characters are described with rapid strokes, apart from the episode in which a typical Czech puppeteer, Kašpárek, joins them when they visit Ostrava: his character, inept yet brave and honest, and his many humorous adventures are ably recounted. Disabled children are seen to collaborate in the setting up of scenes according to their individual abilities. This experience of active education, with

direct knowledge being gained of the different locations they visited, was tiring but very positive. The story ends when the children return to Prague and meet their teacher on Christmas Eve. After decorating a Christmas tree, they thank her for believing in their abilities and for being a model of “thought and action”. Their experiences have not led them to lose heart, and they are moved by feelings of altruism and faith in others. They are described as ignoring “jealousy, petty interests. They ignore love for one person, that love that often makes us unfair to others. They embrace the whole universe”, “always strong, they are ready to support those who fall. They live and live intensely: they are the personification of life” (Durdíková 1926/1993, pp. 100–101).

This vital force and intensity, which derives from compensation being made by unaffected senses, is a trait even of blind children, who are the protagonists of Lida’s second book. In *The Dull-Eyed Children* (*Les Enfants aux yeux éteints*), originally published in Czech in 1929 (and in French in 1931), the protagonist, Claire, aged eighteen, learns that six blind children have not gone on holiday with their parents, probably because of their disability. She agrees to accompany them, provided she is able to be alone with them in a house in the mountains. The description of nature is idyllic. Upon arrival at the house, Claire immediately establishes an educational relationship that is based on friendship and not on authority, telling them they should not consider her as someone “above them” (Durdíková 1929/1984, p. 18). The signs of blindness were printed on children’s faces, as real impairments, at the beginning horrible for the young girl especially; yet the narration reveals the change in perception that occurs among the blind children during their stay in the mountains. They begin to perceive reality in a more intense way, even experiencing synaesthesia linked to past memories: “they feel that all this is very new, but at the same time, so intimately warm and familiar. For those who had at least heard this kind of music when they were very young, the music is reminiscent of the family home and their mother’s tender arms, so many sweet moments lost” (Durdíková 1929/1984, p. 21).

Claire takes advantage of this sensory development (of hearing, touch and smell) to actively organize natural science lessons and introduce the children to nature. Birdsong is the beginning of an ornithology lesson. The perfumes and consistency of fruits give an opportunity to learn or remember their names, thanks to their smell and touch. For example, apricots are fruits with “human skin” and their smell is linked to memories. More difficult is teaching what birch trees are and what the sky is like, because the children can neither touch nor smell them. These are explained as obstacles that the children should not perceive as such, because Claire too, when confronted with a stream bridged by a tree trunk, closes her eyes to overcome the fear of crossing it on the children’s

advice. Darkness and a lack of images can be obstacles but can also be advantages. Moreover, blind children are able to learn through the use of concrete concepts, as Claire notes when she teaches them how to read using a board on which the Braille alphabet is engraved (Durdíková 1929/1984, p. 42).

Claire becomes aware of a richer sensory life because “to what point did she perceive the colours and shapes of the words hidden behind a certain concept – so clearly and automatically that it was not even necessary to think it through?” (Durdíková 1929/1984, p. 65). The children in turn become more aware of fruits and flowers, and their increasing sensory knowledge trains them in botany: thanks to plants’ individual fragrances, they learn to distinguish between the flowers of the meadow (Durdíková 1929/1984, p. 67). This cognitive and sensory path is described as being the starting point from which children can become active adults. The story ends with the return of the children to their home city.

In both these books, a new pedagogy of disability, whether motor or sensory, emerges, and it is this on which the Institute for Disabled Children was based. As part of their education, children undertook manual work, making not only puppets from natural materials but also wooden toys. Lida was one of the leading teachers who used this process, and when she moved to France she published two books that included Ruda’s illustrations, he being one of the first children who was assisted inside the Institute with motor disabilities: *I Build My Toys with Plants* (*Je fais mes jouets avec des plantes*) on behalf of Bakulà’s Institute and *The Bee Kingdom* (*Le royaume des abeilles*) with an original text by Lida (Ruda 1936/2000; 1936/2003).

The first book was a manual for creating models of animals from cheap natural materials (branches, pine cones, acorns, beans, larch fruits, branches, roots, chestnuts and other items). For example, pine cones and beans could be used for heads, curved branches for body, arms and legs. These activities were based on the principles of education through manual work, taking into account sensory and aesthetic development. Children could learn the different textures of natural materials and, using their imaginations, could develop new characters and invent stories – perhaps remembering Kipling’s characters. Similar to puppets, animals with flexible limbs could become fairy tale characters such as those featured in *The Fox and the Stork* by Jean La Fontaine (1621–1695) or *Monsieur Seguin’s Goat* by Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897). The illustrations in *I Build My Toys with Plants* present scenes from these fairy tales, with characters and setting constructed from natural materials (Ruda 1936/2003, pp. 22, 24).

The Bee Kingdom (1935), by Lida, with drawings by Ruda (Lida 1935a), describes both the organization of the bee kingdom and the social hierarchy of

working bees, which all have different tasks – from those that fly to flowers to collect pollen to those that prepare the hive's walls with wax. The transfer of the kingdom from one queen bee to another is described as a cruel but natural process, while the cover picture illustrates the inside of the hive as a pyramid. Here, a symbolic message is expressed of activity taking place that has an existential dimension in the lives of individuals, regardless of how rulers and heads of government seize and exercise their power (Lida 1935a). The story, which Lida wrote in parallel with *The Novel of the Animals*, has more anthropomorphic features than the latter: the illustrations show the hive as a house with rooms and the bees have different uniforms according to their tasks, while in *The Novel of the Animals*, the animals are described in their natural habitat.

4. The illustrated books from *The Novel of the Animals* – ideal media for *éducation nouvelle*

The former educator Ludmila Durdíková began to collaborate with the Père Castor (Flammarion) imprint the year after her arrival in France, when Paul Faucher proposed a series of books that would become tools for his educational concept, illustrated in colour and just a few pages in length (Soriano 1967, pp. 233–240; 1998). In 1929, he had the opportunity to discover Soviet picture books in an exhibition that was organized in Paris by the Swiss children's writer Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961). Faucher realized that the October Revolution had changed the overall concept of children's books into something more artistic, a move that was led by Samuil Marshak (1887–1964) and Kornei Chukovskii (1882–1969) (Caroli 2018, pp. 149–185). An exhibition held in Amsterdam in the same year helped to spread the new style more widely across Europe (Stommels and Lemmens 2015, pp. 137–170). The first two albums in Faucher's series were *I Make My Masks (Je fais mes masques)* and *Cutout (Je découpe)*, which presented Nathalie Parain's constructivist colour illustrations; these lent themselves to being cut out and encouraged play.

Durdíková had been involved with the literary avant-garde in Prague, but her realistic style was more effective when she began to write new animal stories. Probably inspired by the many animal stories she had heard during her time as a teacher in Prague, she wrote eight books that, as we noted above, together formed the famous *The Novel of the Animals*. Published between 1934 and 1939, the titles were as follows: *Panache the Squirrel (Panache l'Écureuil, 1934)*, *Froux the Hare (Froux le Lièvre, 1935)*, *Plouf the Wild Duck (Plouf Canard sauvage, 1935)*, *Bourru the Brown Bear (Bourru l'Ours brun, 1936)*, *Scaf the Seal (Scaf le*

Phoque, 1936), *Quipic the Hedgehog* (*Quipic le Hérisson*, 1937), *The Kingfisher* (*Martin Pêcheur*, 1938) and *Cuckoo* (*Coucou*, 1939) (Brown 2008, pp. 202–204).

These books have three major characteristics. The first is the presence of exceptional illustrations by Fedor Rojankovskij, who illustrated the entire cycle and surely deserves more attention than can be given to him here (Allen and Allen 2014): he can be considered one of the greatest animal painters of the 20th century. A Russian artist who emigrated to Paris in 1925, he made his fame when he illustrated *The Living Alphabet* (*Zhivaia Azbuka*) by Russian poet and writer Sasha Cernyi (1880–1932), which was published in Paris in 1926 (Caroli 2020). Rojan's mastery is expressed by his presentation not only of magnificent colour images of trees, vegetables, birds and insects, but also black and white illustrations for educational purposes. Pictures in the foreground and the background, even across a full page, are particularly successful, as they appear to show children nature from an animal's perspective and from one animal to another: from a branch among leaves, from a hole in a wall. The dynamism with which the artist manages to draw the sinuous nature of squirrels and hares as well as their movements, hedgehogs' spines and seals' skin, which changes colour when they swim, is remarkable.

The second characteristic is Lida's text, which presents the young reader with short stories about the lives of animals. These lend themselves to being read out loud by an adult as bedtime stories, mainly because of the large amount of dialogue. The texts offer metaphors of human life and symbolic educational models that usually would be completely new to young readers. The stories have no basis in fairy tales and are devoid of magical elements and the genre's mysterious metamorphoses (Rodari, 1970/2004). However, they are imbued with Slavic tradition, with Lida attributing anthropomorphic characters to animals, with names, the gift of speech, personality, emotions and feelings, and family relationships. In fact, thanks to her experience teaching with Kipling's animal stories (Barker 1996, pp. 282–294), she had learned that stories about animals could convey new ideas about life, as well as different values and interests, to children of the 1930s. The animals' world is a series of metaphors of human life, of the family and its relationships, while the stories also provide the reader with greater knowledge of animal species and their natural habitats.

The third characteristic is the fact that all the stories in *The Novel of the Animals* take place over the course of a year, with the succession of the four seasons being seen in a succession of natural (or almost natural) habitats – in a forest (in two stories), in a pond, on a marshy plain, in a brook, in a vegetable garden, on the ice pack, and finally once more among the trees. The stories explore the natural world in a scientifically precise manner, as if a documentary

(von Merveldt 2018, pp. 231–245), while presenting it as something wonderful that children in urban areas have no opportunity to observe. The animals' presence, even if they are invisible, is rendered by a great wealth of onomatopoeia. For instance, Froux the hare discovers that he is not alone thanks to the onomatopoeia that resonates through the wood: the “cou-cou” of the cuckoo, the “bzz-bzz” of the hornet, the “couac-couac-couac” of the frogs and the “cocorico” of the cockerel (Lida 1935b, p. 12).

The stories are simple, concerning the life of animals within their families – in which all members play different roles. As French historian Michel Defourny, specialized in the history of Père Castor, reveals, “most of the albums are built according to the same scheme. The story tells the first year of a small one among his own. At the end of this, when the four seasons have passed, he has gained his autonomy; here he is ready to begin his adult life. Evidently the most restless is the hero of history, the one who does not hesitate to take risks, who tends to disobey sometimes [...] He always manages to win and his parents are proud of him” (Lida 1934/2013, p. 36; Defourny 1999, pp. 107–127).

In order to deepen our interpretation of Lida's stories and to highlight the new educational values that they were designed to convey, the overarching pedagogical project, and above all Lida's experience as a teacher, must both be taken into account. These stories illustrate models of family relationships as metaphors of different structures and types of human families. The relationships between animal parents and between animal parents and children are all based on different values of respect, freedom and mutual aid (and not authoritarianism, punishment and humiliation): their aim, in terms of education and care, is the free growth of children until they reach autonomy and independence.

As the laws of nature act upon a variety of animal families, the situations in which the animals find themselves may be interpreted as archetypal and symbolic for human families. Usually the stories begin with the arrival of the little ones and with the different attitudes of the adults as parents towards their children. The metaphorical families of animals certainly refer to gender differences between parents and children, as Florence Gaiotti rightly argues: “In this way, the hybrid form of the series of *The Novel of the Animals* lets us understand different discourses: if the comparison between male and female through the animals evoked brings back certain gender stereotypes, the partial process of fiction sometimes allows another discourse to emerge: a critical discourse on the place, role and respective behaviour of males and females, boys and girls” (Gaiotti 2015, p. 190).

In the naturalistic narration, there are various metaphors presented: for traditional and non-traditional families with parents and children, a family with

parents until death separates them, the lack of family, an adoptive family and a family community. The most traditional ones, illustrating parents living with their children, are those described in *Panache the Squirrel* and *The Kingfisher*. In the first of these stories, both parents prepare a nest on the trunk of an old fir tree before welcoming the little ones, who are taught by their parents as they grow up. The squirrel father shows how he puffs out his tail (so that the baby squirrel can learn how to climb faster), while the mother teaches the names of animals in the forest, including the most dangerous ones, as if the traditional roles of the parents have been reversed – although they are a united couple and show foresight in looking for food supplies for the winter (Lida 1934/2013). The story of the kingfisher depicts a traditional family: Martin and Martina always take care of everything together, preparing the nest, feeding and teaching the little ones to fly, and remaining in the valley when the youngsters depart: “they live for each other, share the joys and miseries, and love each other like the first day” (Lida 1938/2016, p. 28). The family serenity is interrupted by Martin’s death, after which Martine mourns him until the end of her life. The children separate, with two flying over the same stream and the others elsewhere, indicating metaphorically their different fortunes and paths (Lida 1938/2016).

The family of *Quipic the Hedgehog* (*Quipic le Hérisson*, 1937) is composed only of Mama Baguette and three spiny children, a metaphor for the single mother raising her young. She is not protective, but lets them grow up and have their experiences, positive and negative, without reproaching them for their estrangement from her (Lida 1937/2014). In *Froux the Hare*, in contrast, there are no adults to take care of the children’s education. The little ones have to grow up on their own depending on what Mother Nature has given them: “Mother hares don’t take care of their little ones’ education, and no doubt because to each hare that comes into the world Mother Nature gives three gifts: an invisible coat, two magic little ears and seven-league boots” (Lida 1935b, p. 4). These three qualities help Froux to orientate himself and to defend himself from dangers.

The family in *Plouf the Wild Duck* (Lida 1935/1991) is a metaphor for a family that lives separately, perhaps because of the demands of parental occupations. After the brooding period, Maman Plumette finds herself with eight ducklings sleeping under her wings until they learn to move, imitating their mother’s movements, and in single file behind her they move across the pond towards a bay of water lilies. The father, Colvert, shows up on two occasions, first to tell the children to obey their mother because he “can’t take care of your education” and then, when he returns with differently coloured feathers, to tell them that plumage is one of the most important elements of their life because it marks

the entry into adulthood and provides gender identity for males and females. In fact, it is primarily the mother who educates her children, teaching them how to grow and orient themselves, which animals are friends and which are enemies. The “great piles of stones” are the houses of men, also enemies that they should not approach (Lida 1935/1951, p. 26). Although the mother is the reference figure within the family, it should be noted that at the end of the story the father reappears to take care of a sick duckling, while the others migrate, indicating that each must follow his own path.

The family in *Bourru the Brown Bear* is also a metaphor for an unconventional model, in which the parents are present but live separately and the older children help the mother to raise the younger ones. The mother is not really in charge of her children’s education because they have to teach themselves in the forest school. In fact, “Pluche is not one of those mothers who spend their time scolding their young. ‘Stay still, play then’; ‘come here, answer me, be quiet’. No, she lets them play in their own way, except in a case of real danger. She also encourages daring deeds, licking the faces of the bravest ones” (Lida 1936a, p. 11). During the first year, the little ones go into the forest alongside her, while in the second year they have to prepare themselves for life alone. In this particular family, there is also a description of positive relationships between brother and sister, who meet to recount their experiences to each other. Again, curiosity, which is an important element of growth, means learning from one’s mistakes, namely that in the hive, in addition to good honey, there are also bees that sting.

The family described in *Scaf the Seal* (Lida 1936b) is unique because it is a herd of seals; it is not the parents who educate the children, but instead they are adopted by the whole herd. It is undoubtedly one of the first and most original stories to be set on the Arctic ice Pack. Seals are distinguished by age and gender through the colour of their backs, which change depending on whether they are under water or in the snow. The leader of the pack is Dag and his favourite is Scaf, who takes the lead in moving a group of old seals, male and female, sons and grandsons, to the “seventh island”, where the people of Greenland live, with the help of his friend Slim who knows the currents, in order to save the herd from sharks and Eskimos. The island they reach is a haven of peace and life, and there they can be joyful once again. After Dag’s death, he is succeeded by Scaf, who marries eight of his cousins “according to family custom”. The happy ending of this story is that Scaf has “beautiful little ones and ruled his pack wisely”. In this case, the tale refers to the idea of the community family, which has to face dangers together and act to save itself, even from human beings (Lida 1936b, p. 30).

In the last story in *The Novel of the Animals, Cuckoo*, there is the metaphor of a mother who does not have the instinct to protect her children. It is the story of a cuckoo mother whom everyone fears because she feeds on other birds' eggs and places her own in the tit's nest, where it is hatched out of the smaller bird's generosity and maternal instinct. The cuckoo's behaviour is a law of nature, which has not taught her to "feed and caress her young! She can't make a nest. She can't hatch and that's why she lays her eggs in other people's nests" (Lida 1939, p. 17). In the end, the little cuckoo becomes so big that it cannot get out of the hollow in the trunk in which it has grown, and it is freed by a child. This is the only place in the stories where the human presence is positive; otherwise, humans are constantly hunting animals.

Allowing children to achieve autonomy and independence is the goal of every educational process, but the lives of the animals portrayed in these stories indicate that this process does not involve parental education for everyone. For example, Froux, the hare, educates himself because he discovers the world on his own and learns to defend himself from dangers. In his own way, he is a hero – and he teaches us to trust in happiness. After having risked being killed by men, he finds with great joy his Capucine, with whom he plays games and somersaults, and whom he marries on the day when the flowers are in bloom (Lida 1935b, p. 4). Achieving autonomy, however, must be gradual: Panache the squirrel, who was "disobedient, curious and greedy" and moved too far from his three brothers, ended up in a cage before being set free (Lida 1934/2013, pp. 20–21). The story of *Quipic the Hedgehog* ends with the separation of the children from their mother as they search for a refuge for the autumn; the children in *The Kingfisher* go to live freely "between the sky and water less blue than their wings" (Lida 1938/2016); and for Plouf, the duck, autonomy means defending himself (from a hawk or a dog) and learning to fly. Rojan's magnificent illustrations with bird's-eye view landscapes show us clearly the immeasurable value of learning to flap our wings and freely fly.

5. Conclusions

This article has analysed the biography and some of the main works of writer Ludmila Durdíková, during her time as a teacher in Prague and later as an author for Père Castor in France. This analysis cannot disregard her experiences as a teacher or the educational theories of her teacher František Bakulá and her husband Paul Faucher, the main representative of *éducation nouvelle* in France; otherwise our understanding would be limited to the literary aspect of picture book development in France. In fact, her story books and picture books had

an educational purpose. This article has focused mainly on stories about disabled people that illustrate innovative educational methods based on activities related to art and fantasy, which compensate for different disabilities. The stories contained in the picture books about animals can be considered as metaphors for human families and the relationships of their members, all different but evolving and changing according to universal laws of nature. In the education of disabled and normal children alike, the pedagogy of Bakulà and Faucher respected and appreciated the abilities of every individual, with free initiative, mutual aid and everyone's aspirations to be seen in the context of an autonomous, independent, serene and happy life.

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Ada Boubara

Penelope Delta: the most leading figure in Greek children's literature¹

Abstract: The aim of this chapter is to present Penelope Delta (1874–1941), a figure who is considered a pioneer for children's literature of Greece. Her perspective is progressive and even revolutionary for her time and Delta's contributions present a fundamental chapter for both Modern Greek literature and children's literature. Among her many works, I will focus on her autobiographic novel *Τρελαντώνης* [*Trelantonis*] (*Crazy Antonis*), published in 1932, a work that constitutes an important reading not only for children, but for adults as well. Delta narrates pioneering stories for her time and opposes stereotypes from the 1900s dealing with themes such as: racism, discrimination, freedom of religion, the Battle of the Sexes, the dynamism of the female gender, the difference between appearance and reality, the position of woman in society, and other discussed and presented themes.

Keywords: Greek society, moral conventions, stereotypes, Penelope Delta, women's emancipation, Modern Greek literature

1. Introduction

Speaking about children's literature and especially focusing the discourse on Greece was a challenge that I willingly accepted. In this discussion, I aim to present this emblematic figure of Greek literature and children's literature, whose works generations upon generations of children have grown up with. These works assume a fundamental role in Greek literature.

The writer, Penelope Delta², was the daughter of Emmanuel Benaki, who was an important figure for the economic, political, and social life of Greece at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th. During the time in which the family lived in Alexandria of Egypt for Emmanuel's trade purposes, Penelope was born in 1874 along with her siblings Alexandra, Antonis, Alexander, and Argine. Together, they spent their childhood in the upper-middle class Greek community of Alexandria. In 1895, she married Stephanos Delta with whom she

1 The text was translated in English by Samuel De Natale.

2 For additional information on the body of work of Penelope Delta see the following site from the National Book Centre of Greece: <http://www.ekebi.gr/frontoffice/portal.asp?page=NODE&cnode=461&t=153>.

had three children, and in 1905 she met the diplomat, politician, and scholar, Ion Dragoumis, with whom she fell in love. However, ethical, moral, and social beliefs of the time brought the demise of this love affair. Penelope asked for a divorce from her husband, a revolutionary act for the era. She was ill from multiple sclerosis and ended her life committing suicide by ingesting poison on May 2, 1941, a few days after the German occupation of Athens.

Her literary career began in 1909 with the book entitled *Για την Πατρίδα* [*For the Sake of the Fatherland*] and writes incessantly until 1937, the year in which her historically based work of fiction *Τα Μυστικά του Βάλτου* [*The Secrets of the Swamp*] was published. In addition, as Meni Katsaouni writes,

When Delta began writing for children in the first years of the 20th century, an essential narrative for children that took in consideration both the need for fun and at the same time the necessity for new knowledge and character formation did not exist. Delta paved the way for the next generations of writers and, at least for children's novels, lays the foundation for Greek children's literature³.

As a pioneer of this literary genre in Greece, we can say that her viewpoint is progressive and even revolutionary for her time. It is important to emphasize, however, what progress and evolution means to our writer, especially taking into consideration that she lived and was a part of the cosmopolitan and upper-middle class Alexandrian and Athenian society. At that time, social models were indissolubly linked to the corresponding mentality of the early 20th century, whether it be tied to family, social class relations, the position of women, and women's societal role.

It is necessary to clarify that for Penelope Delta,

Progress is to create in children's books real, emotional, and vivacious characters. Progress consists in installing a system of values that transmits values to children such as: the love for the homeland, diligence, the notion of duty and responsibility, and respect for one's self. However, in the same way, progress consists in going beyond limits and obstacles of the time for the female gender and creating female characters with opinions, personality, and dynamism⁴.

3 Κανατσούλη, Μένη. *Προλογικό σημείωμα*, στο Πηνελόπη Σ. Δέλτα, *Τρελαντώνης*, Εκδόσεις Ψυχογιός, Αθήνα, 2017, σσ. 13–14. [Kanatsouli Meni, *Introduction*, in Penelope S. Delta, *Trelantonis*, Psychogios Publications, Athens, 2017, pp. 13–14].

4 Κανατσούλη Μένη., *Προλογικό σημείωμα*, στο Πηνελόπη Σ. Δέλτα, *Τρελαντώνης*, Εκδόσεις Ψυχογιός, Αθήνα, 2017, σ. 15. [Kanatsouli Meni, *Introduction*, in Penelope S. Delta, *Trelantonis*, Psychogios Publications, Athens, 2017, p. 15].

According to research and critics⁵, not only is our writer undoubtedly one of the most important figures in Greek literature, but she is also important for the social and political life of the first half of the 20th century. Her education is that of daughters of families of the upper-middle class and she grew up in social and political circles definitive for the political and cultural life of Greece of the time. The interests reflected in her works also contribute to the formation of society that was in a phase of continuous evolution both from a historical-political point of view and from a social and cultural point of view.

As a result, the case of Penelope Delta constitutes a fundamental chapter for Modern Greek literature and for children's literature, and I consider it my duty to speak about her to a non-Greek speaking audience. Amongst her many works, I would like to focus on her autobiographic novel, *Τρελαντώνης* [*Trelantonis*] (*Crazy Antonis*), published in 1932. As the scholar Kanatsouli claims, the female autobiography as a literary genre is particularly important because it contributes to the discussion of gender and the feminine discourse, but it also does so in the field of children's literature⁶.

Penelope Delta transforms her personal experiences into a novel and presents us with one of the greatest periods of her childhood. In the summer of 1881, the young Penelope and her siblings spend their vacation in Kastela, a neighbourhood of Pireo, in the house of her uncle and aunt Zorzi and Marietta Mitoraki⁷.

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- 5 Σακελλαρίου Χάρης, *Πηνελόπη Δέλτα, Η ζωή, οι έρωτες, το έργο της*, Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Αθήνα, 1997 [Sakelariou Haris, *Penelope Delta, Her life, her loves, her work*, Ellinika Grammata, Athens, 1997]; Σταυροπούλου Έρη, «Πηνελόπη Δέλτα», *Η παλαιότερη πεζογραφία μας, Από τις αρχές της ως τον πρώτο παγκόσμιο πόλεμο*, τόμ. ΙΑ', 1900–1914, Σοκόλης, Αθήνα, 1998, σσ. 78–105 [Stavrouloulou Eri, «Penelope Delta» *Our oldest prose, From its beginnings to the First World War*, vol. ΙΑ', 1900–1914, Sokolis, Athens, 1998, pp. 78–105]; Μαλαφάντης Κωνσταντίνος, «Χρονολόγιο Πηνελόπης Στ. Δέλτα (1874–1941)», *Διαβάζω*, τχ. 300 (9. 12. 1992), σσ. 58–63 [Malafadis Konstantinos, «Chronology of Penelope S. Delta (1874–1941)», *Diavazo*, issue 300 (9. 12. 1992), pp. 58–63].
- 6 Κανατσούλη, Μένη, *Ο ήρωας και η ηρωίδα με τα χίλια πρόσωπα. Νέες απόψεις για το φύλο στην παιδική λογοτεχνία*, Gutenberg, Αθήνα, 2008, σσ. 78–79. [Kanatsouli Meni, *The hero and the heroine with a thousand faces. New views on gender in children's literature*, Gutenberg, Athens, 2008, pp. 78–79].
- 7 Δέλτα, Σ. Πηνελόπη, *Πρώτες ενθυμήσεις*, επιμ. Π. Ζάννας, Ερμής, Αθήνα, 1985, σ. 64. [Penelope S. Delta, *First memories*, volume editing P. Zannas, Ermis, Athens, 1985, p. 64].

2. Main themes of the story

The protagonist of the book, Antonis, spends his vacation pleasantly and carefree together with his siblings Alexandra, Pouloudia, who is the “literary character”⁸ of the writer, and the youngest sibling, Alexander. Various games, walks, and get-togethers with the family entertain and educate the children, but also the mischief and disorder of Trelantoni, while being a source of entertainment, is a daily source of concern and anxiety. Until the end of the vacation, Antonis, despite imposed harsh punishments, does not stop causing mischief and breaking the rigid discipline that the adults want to impose on the children. This is the general summary of the story that projects the “self” of the writer and externalizes her train of thought. Through various chapters of the story, we can identify certain elements, thoughts, and behaviours that, without a doubt, break stereotypes of the time, and we can also anticipate discourses and issues discussed.

First and foremost, the main themes that emerge are those of the social classes of the time and consequently inform us of the cultural and historical coordinates. We see the figure of the king⁹, but above all the queen¹⁰, and the behaviour of the princesses and princes of Athenian society. All of the social classes are described in a detailed manner: the upper and middle class, everyone that works for rich families, and of course the social class that does various works such as selling ceramic pots.

Furthermore, we can identify the model of the Athenian bourgeois family, and in particular, the role of women. Seeing that Aunt Marietta is the leader of the house and of social life, the character and relationships of service women emerge when they interact with the family members for whom they work. Their role is carried out in the daily life of the guests, of Trelantonis, and the sisters.

8 Κανατσούλη Μένη. *Προλογικό σημείωμα*, στο Πηνελόπη Σ. Δέλτα, *Τρελαντώνης*, Εκδόσεις Ψυχογιός, Αθήνα, 2017, σ. 25. [Kanatsouli Meni, *Introduction*, in Penelope S. Delta, *Trelantonis*, Psychogios Publications, Athens, 2017, p. 25].

9 King George I of Greece, (Copenhagen 1845 – Thessaloniki 1913).

10 Olga Konstantinovna of Russia (Pavlovsk 1851 – Rome 1926) was the second queen of Greece and regent for a brief period in 1920. Together with King George I of Greece they had eight children. The queen had an important role in the social sector and a symbolic role from a political standpoint. In Athenian social life she was a point of reference and a model for behavior in church, public life, and fashion of the time. In addition, the queen received, as seen in the work we are examining, women of high society and travelers in Greece who asked to meet her. For the life and role of Queen Olga, see the following: Καρόλου Ιουλία, *Όλγα η Βασίλισσα των Ελλήνων*, Στέμμα, Αθήνα, 2017. [Karoulou Iouliia, *Olga the Queen of the Greeks*, Stemma, Athens, 2017].

This is the space and time in which the story unfolds, and as stated before narrates the writer's formative years. The summer spent at the house of her uncle and aunt is both a narrative and a real space, and for Penelope Delta, it becomes a privileged space to define and emphasize an unconventional female protagonist. Penelope takes on a literary identity under the name Pouloudia and creates, as Kanatsouli claims a "literary character"¹¹.

In the whole text, the role of Pouloudia is fundamental. As Giorgopoulos claims in his doctorate thesis, "in general the female presence, the dynamic interaction of interpersonal relations and their narrative discourse"¹² break the stereotypes of society and women's position in it.

Furthermore,

a story different from the dominant one can be illuminated through the relationships of identity and conflict between Pouloudia and her brother, the gender differences regarding imagination and dreams, women's attitude toward dominant values and norms, the relationships between the groups of girls but also their relationships with boys too, the role carried out by the aunt and uncle and the female service personnel, matters such as gossip and female combativeness, playing with dolls, sensitivity and self-punishment, and wounds within the relationship with the mother¹³.

In this context, it is important to highlight that through the work, Penelope Delta emphasizes many revolutionary themes, and furthermore takes into consideration the socio-historical context of the time. In one of the scenes, the protagonist plays with a black doll which assumes a broader dimension. Firstly, the girl playing with a doll that is different from the usual dolls shows that she accepts a different world. Pouloudia and her attitude constructs a world in which different races are not marginalized but, on the contrary, can create closer and more intimate ties. It indicates a freedom of thought that counteracts the human differences based on geographic origin, skin colour, and race.

11 Κανατσούλη Μένη., *Προλογικό σημείωμα*, στο Πηνελόπη Σ. Δέλτα, *Τρελαντώνης*, Εκδόσεις Ψυχογιός, Αθήνα, 2017, σ. 25. [Kanatsouli Meni, *Introduction*, in Penelope S. Delta, *Trelantonis*, Psychogios Publications, Athens, 2017, p. 25].

12 Γεωργόπουλος Διονύσης, «Το γυναικείο φύλο στα λογοτεχνικά και αυτοβιογραφικά κείμενα της Πηνελόπης Δέλτα: Γυναικείοι λογοτεχνικοί χαρακτήρες και έμφυλες αποτυπώσεις τους» Διδακτορική Διατριβή, Επιβλέπουσα Μένη Κανατσούλη, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Τμήμα Επιστημών Προσχολικής Αγωγής και Εκπαίδευσης, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2015, σελ. 205. [Giorgopoulos Dionissis, *Gender in literary and autobiographic texts of Penelope Delta: feminine literary characters and gendered presentations*] Ph.D. Thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2015, p. 205.

13 *Ibid.*

Without a doubt, when put in today's context there is an overall theme that touches upon racism and the fear of difference. I would say it is a prophetic scene that, when decodified within today's terms, can transmit the message of acceptance of emigration and of human beings, regardless of their territorial and racial origin.

In another chapter of the story we confront the friendship between Pouloudia e Alis, who is a girl that lives near the aunt and uncle's house where Trelantonis and his siblings spend their vacation. However, when they discover that Alis is Jewish, their behaviour with each other changes and they confront racism and prejudice. Here, the uncle's role is fundamental with a long discourse that overcomes the myths of Jewish people being bad and the children then realize their mistake. Through this scene, the writer clearly emphasizes the theme of tolerance and the acceptance of the other regardless of religious and ideological beliefs, and of course opposes racism and discrimination.

A third theme that is seen throughout various points of the story is the competition at the level of combativeness between Pouloudia and her brother. According to Susan Okin's claim, the stereotype of a successful female presence exclusively in the private sphere maintains the dichotomy of different roles for men and women¹⁴. Furthermore, we see,

Pouloudia, embodying the dynamism and abilities of her gender, removes the primacy of Antonis in his privileged space: in the masculine games that he is expert in. In this way the author proves that women have the opportunity of equal participation in all areas¹⁵.

Freedom of thought prevails, and at the same time Penelope Delta's voice is revolutionary, a voice that projects a different female figure regarding the conventions of her time. Other than the previously highlighted themes, various problematic scenes and chapters emerge in the novel that concern feminine beauty according to the standards of beauty of the era and here we encounter the revolutionary spirit of the writer and the collapse of the stereotype and fascination of women.

14 Okin, Susan Moller, *Women in Western Political Thought*, Princeton NJ, Princeton University Press, 1992, p. 320.

15 Γεωργόπουλος Διονύσης, «Το γυναικείο φύλο στα λογοτεχνικά και αυτοβιογραφικά κείμενα της Πηνελόπης Δέλτα: Γυναικείοι λογοτεχνικοί χαρακτήρες και έμφυλες αποτώσεις τους» Διδακτορική Διατριβή, Επιβλέπουσα Μένη Κανατσούλη, Αριστοτέλειο Πανεπιστήμιο Θεσσαλονίκης, Τμήμα Επιστημών Προσχολικής Αγωγής και Εκπαίδευσης, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2015, σελ. 224. [Giorgopoulos Dionissis, Gender in literary and autobiographic texts of Penelope Delta: feminine literary characters and gendered presentations] Ph.D. Thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, 2015, p. 224.

A distinctive example of the rebellious attitude of the writer is the scene of the ritual of the painful hair combing to keep her hair tightly pushed back and curly. Pouloudia also revolts here and does not accept this form of beautification. While her brother makes fun of her unkempt hair, she does not leave space to be influenced by his comments. She shows instead that beauty is not in external appearance, but in the gifts of the spirit and mind. Likewise, on many occasions we encounter scenes that show the norms of good behaviour for an upper-class woman, for example on a stroll, in church, in lounges, and with the service personnel.

In all cases, Pouloudia-Penelope reactions help create a female profile that assumes the characteristics of the emancipated girl and formulate a call for women of her time for social liberation.

3. Conclusion

It is worthy to note that the emphasized elements of Delta's writings based on the work *Trelantonis* presents a diachrony referring exactly to many social aspects that continue to be points of debates and controversies. In conclusion, through this text, the great writer of children's literature has questioned and criticized the dominant mentality and goes against female oppression.

The protagonist finds herself in continual search for her identity through confrontations with her brother and his identity and looks to fight her battle against the dominant social context of exclusion and marginalization that thus embodies the call of women of this time for social liberation. As a result, the writer

breaks the standard of a calm, afraid, and disciplined girl that acts exclusively in family contexts and environments that are rigorously defined. She breaks standards of beauty and good manners. She removes the dichotomous approach of masculinity and femininity. She justifies the opposition to oppression and refers to women's capacity to excel anywhere¹⁶.

This is, thus, the writing of Penelope Delta presented through her work *Trelantonis* from 1932, the year of the first edition which until today has been reprinted constantly and constitutes an important reading for children and adults. The contribution of the book consists in the fact that it recounts pioneering stories for its time and is about themes such as racism, discrimination, religious freedom, the

16 *Ibid.*, pp. 250–251.

Battle of the Sexes, the dynamism of the female gender, the difference between appearance and reality, and women's position in society.

Delta and her approach to literature goes against stereotypes of the early 20th century and we can thus claim that she is a voice of the Avant-guard. She has a very contemporary voice: many themes confronted in *Trelantonis* are discussed even today such as racism and discrimination being among the most debated social problems. Penelope Delta's name is synonymous with children's literature and Greek literature. I myself also grew up with her books, the figure of Pouloudia was my favourite heroine. Those in contact with her thinking cannot but recognize the worth of her literary career and her contribution to the formation of free thought based on principles of respect of others, of alterity, and of female identity in society. Her work is a diachrony of striking messages and questions that justify the worth and importance of the writing and thinking of Delta.

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Σακελλαρίου Χάρης, *Πηνελόπη Δέλτα, Η ζωή, οι έρωτες, το έργο της*, Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Αθήνα, 1997.

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Lucia Perrone Capano

Rebellious little girls

Irmgard Keun's *Grown-Ups Don't Understand* and *Child of All Nations*

Abstract: The two novels published during exile by Irmgard Keun (1905–1982), a successful writer in the Weimar Republic, both feature a child as their protagonist and narrator. In *Grown-Ups Don't Understand*, the child protagonist describes, in a humorous, impertinent and disenchanting tone, not only the family situation, but also the social context during the Wilhelminian period. In *Child of All Nations*, a young cosmopolitan girl narrates the pilgrimage of her family into exile in various European cities interacting with the otherness she encounters in emigration. These *Kinder-und Jugendgeschichten* present figures of unusual little girls who do not respond to the planned schemes, anticipating and expressing in an innovative way traits that characterize rebellious girls in later years. Keun takes on an interesting perspective, preferring protagonists who fundamentally question the systematic separation of literature between children and adults. In this way, these stories open up a space for experiments in behaviour and for the conquest of the heroine's autonomy.

Keywords: Irmgard Keun, children's and youth literature, *Grown-Ups Don't Understand*, *Child of All Nations*, exile

*A child is far cleverer and wiser than an adult –
the child must be a thoroughly ironic child.*

Novalis (1997: 26)

1. Crosswriter

Irmgard Keun, a successful author in the early thirties during the last years of the Weimar Republic, who was then forced into exile¹, did not present herself first and foremost as a writer for children, rather, she can perhaps be considered a crosswriter (Kümmerling-Meibauer 249). She wrote important novels

1 Irmgard Keun (1905–1982) was born in Berlin and soon moved with her family to Cologne. She had early stage aspirations, and landed some minor roles before devoting herself completely to writing.

in which she recounts the contradictions of German society before, during and after the Second World War. Keun focuses in particular on the condition of women, young protagonists like Gilgi – a 21-year-old stenotypist – and Doris – an 18-year-old secretary – who seek their own independence. They are the *jungen Frauen* who appeared in those years in the German metropolis, experimenting with the possibilities of life offered by the controversial model of the “New Woman”. The two eponymous novels *Gilgi, eine von uns* (*Gilgi, One of Us*) and *Das kunstseidene Mädchen* (*The Artificial Silk Girl*), published in 1931 and 1932 respectively, in the Weimarian period characterized by important political and social transformations as well as great cultural ferment, met with popular and critical acclaim.

Despite or perhaps because of the relevance and timeliness of her subjects, the National Socialist control committee includes both novels on the list of books branded by the government with the label “Asphaltliteratur mit antideutscher Tendenz” (asphalt literature with anti-German tendencies)². The writer is also questioned by the Gestapo. In 1936, Keun decides to leave Germany and face the difficult path of exile. She first takes refuge in Ostend where she becomes part of a community of exiled authors including Heinrich Mann, Stefan Zweig, Egon Erwin Kisch, Ernst Toller, Hermann Kesten and Joseph Roth, with whom she travels for many months. She moves around many countries: Belgium, Holland, France, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Poland and the United States. When Hitler’s armies invade Belgium, Keun stages her suicide to return to Germany under a false name, where she manages to survive until 1945. During her exile, she wrote several texts³, including the two reference here: *Das Mädchen, mit dem die Kinder nicht verkehren durften* (1936)⁴ and *Kind aller Länder* (1938), expressly defined as “Kindergeschichten” (Rosenstein 129). Keun takes on an interesting perspective, preferring protagonists who fundamentally question the systematic separation of literature between children and adults.

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- 2 Asphalt literature is a term used by the Nazis to designate literature that they considered degenerate because urban and foreign to proper Germanness.
 - 3 As Michael Hofmann in the *Afterword to Child of All Nations* 2008 (henceforth referred to by the abbreviation CAN followed by the page number) points out: “It is striking that those years, of fear, distraction and worry [. . .] saw her best work” (CAN 188).
 - 4 Published in the U.K., as *Grown-Ups Don’t Understand* (henceforth referred to by the abbreviation GU followed by the page number) and in USA as *The Bad Example*.

2. A Bad Example

In *Das Mädchen, mit dem die Kinder nicht verkehren durften*⁵ (*Grown-Ups Don't Understand*) the child protagonist is a narrator in the first person⁶, Keun also uses this narrative style in her other novel, *Child of All Nations*, which is generally considered in children's and youth literature as a means of relating to the target audience. In reality, as I have just said, even in her previous novels the author chooses very young protagonists, who therefore in some way already represent a preference for a seemingly naive point of view. This perspective, however, can perhaps more easily or distinctly reveal aspects of a constricting and complex reality.

Set during the *Kaiserzeit*, in the militaristic Wilhelminian age, *Grown-Ups Don't Understand* contains stories from the life of a little girl who rebels against the traditional role imposed on her by family, school and social authorities. The different stories were written in the 1930s and later compiled into a novel, which was published in German in 1936, when the author was already in exile (and translated into English in the 1950s), but had some success with the public. In the post-war period the novel was also published many times. The girl no one allowed kids to play with is a rebellious little girl who does not have a name: this enables young readers from diverse backgrounds to relate to her (Schüller 2011: 313). However, the perspective does not shift to an idyllic, ahistorical dimension. The narrator not only reports ironically and humorously about her family, but she also provides commentary on her social, economic, and political situation.

The girl without a name is a particular girl, who could be considered a "New Girl", taking up the concept of "New Woman" represented by the figures of Gilgi and Doris in the novels of the Weimaran period. The brave and cheeky protagonist, who stands in stark contrast to the well-dressed girls of her class, ruins her clothes while playing and has an impertinent attitude that marks her as the literary and younger counterpart to the "New Woman"⁷. *Das Mädchen* is not

5 Irmgard Keun's original texts will be quoted from the new edition of the works: Keun 2017: *Das Mädchen, mit dem die Kinder nicht verkehren durften. Das Werk*, 2, henceforth referred to by the abbreviation MK followed by the page number and *Kind aller Länder. Das Werk*, 2, henceforth referred to by the abbreviation KaL followed by the page number.

6 The "first-person child narrator" appears in the modern children's novel in the early 1970s as a result of a changed understanding of childhood. See Hofmann 2010.

7 For the similarities between these two models see Tost 239–255.

afraid, and with her actions and observations she continuously unmasks the double morality of adults. Irmgard Keun portrays a girl who is unwilling to accept her unimaginative fellow human beings just as they are supposed to be.

The defiant and resistant attitude of the girl is evident and reaffirmed throughout the story⁸. For example, she organizes a gang of boys and girls, with equal rights, and meddles in political affairs by writing a letter to the emperor. However, the efforts of the girl and her gang are not very successful, even though their raids touch or undermine aspects of social and political life and highlight the instruments of repression put in place by various authorities. The novel thus clearly overturns the typical course of a story with a little girl at its centre (Tost 239). This phenomenon can also be found in other texts of children's literature of this period, whose "new" protagonists challenge traditional models and gender stereotypes, and who are intelligent, active, rebellious, independent⁹, and eager to explore areas of action and development dominated by male children¹⁰. Parents here try in vain to educate the child to be feminine, to take the bold ideas of independence out of her head and to force her to straighten her posture: "Now they have bought me a back-straightener. [. . .] It is wretched having this straightener [. . .] and when I am wearing it I can't do any climbing and I can't even move and the straps rub my shoulders all red. [. . .] I have asked God to send a burglar into my room in the night to steal my straightener" (GU 29–30)¹¹.

8 Cf. Stupperich 22.

9 "Deren neue Protagonistinnen durchbrechen traditionelle geschlechtsspezifische Verhaltensmuster und Klischees, sie sind klug, aktiv, aufmüpfig, unabhängig und nehmen Dinge nicht mehr ungefragt hin" (Tost 239). "Their new protagonists break through traditional gender-specific behaviour patterns and clichés. They are smart, active, rebellious, independent and no longer accept things as they are". Tost cites other authors such as Lotte Arnheim, Tami Oelfken, Alex Wedding, to show how their texts precede Astrid Lindgren's famous Pippi Langstrumpf.

10 "Die 'Neuen Mädchen' dringen in bis dahin von der Jugendliteratur okkupierte Domänen ein, werden zu Anführerrinnen [sic!], übernehmen Führungspositionen, führen Kriege [...] und lesen Indianer- und Abenteuerbücher [...]" (Tost 253). "The 'New Girls' penetrate domains hitherto occupied by boys' literature, become leaders [sic!], assume leading positions, wage wars [...] and read Indian and adventure books [...]"

11 "[. . .] dann haben sie mir einen Geradehalter gekauft. [. . .] Ich bin ganz unglücklich [. . .], wenn ich ihn an habe, kann ich nicht klettern und mich nicht bewegen, und die Riemen scheuern meine Schultern ganz rot. [. . .] Ich habe den lieben Gott gebeten, dass er nachts einen Einbrecher in mein Zimmer kommen lässt, der den Geradehalter stiehlt" (MK 180–181).

Every attempt to bring her back into a pre-established order fails and leads the child to become less obedient and less condescending and, above all, to be unable to control her anger (“[. . .] then an absolutely red-hot demon of rage entered my soul, and I was glad it did and I stamped my feet and shouted ‘I’m *not* ashamed. I’m *not* sad. I’m *not* ashamed’” (GU 11)¹². So the other children will be not allowed to have contact with her. The episodes are not narrated in a chronologically ordered manner, the narrative seems almost to arise from the child’s desire to speak out, in a free way, with a daily language close to the oral and associative. It is not so much the adventures lived that occupy the narration, but the thoughts and feelings of the very young narrator who feels misunderstood by her parents, and by adults in general, but also by many peers:

I want to die. We have got a new baby. They try to tell me the stork brought it, but I don’t believe that, of course, although after all the baby must have come from somewhere. Perhaps the grown-ups don’t know themselves exactly. [. . .] Why did they get me then, when I am a girl, if it was a boy they wanted? [. . .] I know some boys, like Hubert Bulle for instance, who tears the wings off pretty little butterflies, and who can’t pull himself up on the horizontal bars, and screams with fright and falls into the moat in the park whenever I give him the tiniest push. I can’t see how a boy like that is worth more than a girl (GU 41–42)¹³.

The narration therefore serves as a form of communication for the protagonist, in which there is a space for behaviour considered socially inappropriate by those around her. As a result of the protagonist’s insolence she frequently encounters new problems: with teachers, parents, and other authorities of her little world.

The setting of the stories is urban – Cologne is mentioned in some names of streets and places and recalls the Cologne of Keun’s own childhood – even if the city is no longer the space where the movements of the characters unfold as

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- 12 “[. . .] da ist ein ganz glühender Teufel der Wut in mich gefahren, und ich wollte es auch und habe mit den Füßen getrampelt und geschrien: ‘Ich schäme mich nicht, ich bin nicht traurig, ich schäme mich nicht!’” (MK 165).
- 13 “Ich möchte sterben. Wir haben ein neues Kind bekommen. Sie wollen mir erzählen, es käme vom Storch. Aber das glaube ich natürlich nicht, obwohl ich mir sage: Irgendwo muss so ein Kind ja her sein. Vielleicht wissen die Erwachsenen es selbst nicht genau. [. . .] Warum haben sie mich denn nur erst angeschafft, wenn sie lieber einen Jungen haben, und ich bin ein Mädchen? [. . .] Dabei kenne ich Jungen wie Hubert Bulle, der niedlichen kleinen Schmetterlingen die Flügel ausreisst und keinen einzigen Klimmzug machen kann und vor Angst schreit und in den Stadtwaldgraben fällt, wenn ich ihn mal eben reinschubse. Ich kann mir einfach nicht vorstellen, dass so ein Junge mehr wert sein soll als ein Mädchen” (MK 187–189).

in the Weimarian novels where the average city and the metropolis Berlin were closely linked to the actions and aspirations of the protagonist¹⁴. Here the plots unravel in interior spaces, restricted and controlled by authorities, such as the house and the school, and outdoor spaces that reach as far as the woods where the gang tries to escape to in order to carry out their raids, but where they always run the risk of being discovered and punished. To the child's eye, adult behaviour appears irrational, unpredictable and alien, displaying stereotypical patterns of behaviour and hypocrisy hiding under pretensions of morality. The child does not adapt and does not trust anything except what she can verify and experience, questioning what seems unquestionable, especially the rules and impositions of a coercive and restrictive society. She is not afraid of conflict and with her gang she courageously proposes to help the weak and oppressed (MK 172). In this way, conflict with the complicated world of adults occurs time and again. However, the girl is not willing to accept things as they are. With her direct and open-hearted way she holds up a mirror to her environment and especially to the adults.

External events, the war above all and then the coveted peace ("And then the peace came, with special leaflets, at first they didn't want it. I don't know why", GU 91)¹⁵, are observed and reformulated from the child's perspective which interprets and reports in her own way and without fear of the consequences. Keun describes a society that slowly spreads the awareness that the First World War had brought only great suffering. But none dares to say this out loud, except for the child. The anti-militarism, the rejection of discipline and obedience, of all those values that constitute the cornerstones of German society of the time, are revealed through the words and the nonconformist and rebellious action of this very young heroine who records the devastating consequences in everyday life. Unlike the mediated speech of adults, the childlike perspective allows in this way "an immediate access to reality" (Waldow 146) and perhaps also the experimentation of an authentic discourse to be contrasted with the mystifications of official propaganda and the conformism of the *Mitläufer*, the subordinate followers of power.

14 This very young female figure seems to follow the paths of emancipation taken by the non-conformists Gilgi and Doris. The adventures of the Picara girl, however, are placed in a different historical-political context that comes to terms with the dramatic situation in Germany and in a context that does not favor and indeed represses any female desire for independence.

15 "Da kam der Frieden mit den Extrablättern, und er sollte nicht angenommen werden. Ich weiss nicht warum" (MK 216).

This peculiarity of childlike perception in Keun's novels, which can also be considered a way to reflect on language itself without pre-constituted models, is captured and underlined by the Austrian nonconformist writer and playwright Elfriede Jelinek:

Like Martians, the children enter this world as strangers, uneducated, unpre-programmed, and filter the reality they find through an intricate way and innocence, of first-time attitude, so to speak. However, it is not the essential innocence of the ahistorical image, i.e. of the myth, of the frozen ideology, but rather the description receives a twist that suddenly and with one blow reveals the social truth of a process, however complex it may be, unmasking both reality and language¹⁶.

Although the stories bear witness to the passage of time, there is no coherent personal development of the heroine and the novel remains open-ended. In the last chapter, the girl speaks of how love has enveloped her, just as before the punishments were handed to her. With her concealed irony the girl finally realizes against all the melodious sentimentality: "Love is the most awful thing there is in the world, and the pangs of love are something that a girl on her own simply cannot bear. I know all about it now" (GU 160)¹⁷.

3. A cosmopolitan little girl

The daughter of all countries, *Kind aller Länder* (*Child of All Nations* in English, *Niña de todos los países* in Spanish, *Figlia di tutti i paesi* in Italian, and *L'enfant cosmopolite*, as it has been translated into French), is a wise little girl who speaks for herself and has a name: Kully. The name Kully evokes in German the image of a ballpoint pen, which alludes to the fact that it is Kully who writes her perceptions and experiences here. Kully tells her life in a situation of exile, outlining a map of movements through places and non-places. The final "y" gives an international connotation, even if it lacks an explicit English pronunciation,

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- 16 "Die Kinder treten wie Marsmenschen als Fremde, nicht Verbildete, nicht Vorprogrammierte, in diese Welt und filtern die vorgefundene Wirklichkeit durch eine vertrackte Art und Unschuldigkeit, von Erstlingshaltung sozusagen. Nicht jene essentielle Unschuldigkeit des geschichtslosen Bildes ist es allerdings, also des Mythos, der erstarrten Ideologie, sondern die Beschreibung erhält einen Drall, der plötzlich und mit einem Schlag die gesellschaftliche Wahrheit eines Vorgangs, wie komplex dieser auch immer sein mag, enthüllt, Wirklichkeit wie Sprache entlarvend" (Jelinek 224).
- 17 "Liebe ist das Entsetzlichste, was es auf der Welt gibt, und die Leiden von der Liebe kann einfach kein einzelnes Mädchen ertragen, - ich weiss jetzt wirklich Bescheid" (MK 273).

which befits the child's cosmopolitan character and her desire to acquire linguistic skills that her parents with two typically German names, Peter and Anne, do not have. The name also seems to underline the genderless aspect of Kully's character who does not distinguish between male and female forms of play. Kully prefers to take care of the turtles she brought with her into exile, who, in the same way that Kully understands her homeland, carry their home on their shoulders. Kully is ten when with her father and her mother "emigrate[d] to find freedom" (CAN 6). This means nothing more than moving from hotel to hotel and from country to country. Kully quickly understands what passports, visas and border controls are all about:

A passport is a little booklet with stamps in it. Basically, it's to prove that you're alive. If you lose your passport, then as far as the whole world is concerned you might as well have died. You're not allowed to go to anymore countries. You have to leave the country you're in, but you're not allowed to enter a different one (CAN 30–31)¹⁸.

The book was written between 1936 and 1938, when the author, like the protagonist, had left Germany and moved to various places, travelling for many months with the writer Joseph Roth, who died in exile in 1939. After the *Wehrmacht* invaded the Netherlands in May 1940, as previously mentioned, Keun returned clandestinely to Germany. This book would therefore be part of the children's literature written in exile, which is an important and only recently valued chapter of the opposition to Nazism as a form of resistance¹⁹, whereas between 1933 and 1945 even children's literature constantly addressed children as future fighters and soldiers and did not allow any other life project.

Even though Kully had to drop out of school, she receives some lessons from her mother in the hotel room, develops her own common sense and tries, for example, to use mathematics to understand how much coins are worth, immediately realizing that it is a thousand times better to have ten dollars than a mark. Imitating the other children, she quickly expresses the desire to learn the language of the foreign country. She would like to be able to swim or fly instead of visiting hotels in half of Europe following in the footsteps of her father, a writer who had to leave Nazi Germany where he could no longer publish his books.

Kully observes her parents from an apparent distance and does not judge them: an anti-fascist writer on the move and a mother-wife who is a "prisoner" of

18 "Ein Pass ist ein kleines Heft mit Stempeln und der Beweis, dass man lebt. Wenn man den Pass verliert, ist man für die Welt gestorben. Man darf dann in kein Land mehr. Aus einem Land muss man raus, aber in das andere darf man nicht rein" (KaL 551).

19 Michael Hofmann speaks of Keun's "exile's sense of mission" (CAN 189).

the various hotel rooms. They are a family that struggles with residence permits and insurmountable daily financial difficulties. At the same time she frames her parents with great clarity. Her father is charming, but more interested in his own comforts than in the well-being and interests of the family. His mix of charm and self-esteem helps him persuade others to advance a loan or down payment, so what makes him a bad husband and father is also ironically what helps him support the family.

“We left Germany when my father couldn’t stand it anymore, because he writes books and articles for newspapers. We emigrated to find freedom. We’re never going back to Germany. Anyway, we don’t need to, because the world is a very big place” (CAN 6)²⁰. This is how Kully describes the emigration of her family from Nazi Germany: a conquest of freedom from the constraints of national and territorial borders. There is a long list of cities she has crossed: Brussels, Ostend, Lemberg, Prague, Salzburg, Paris, Nice, Bordighera, Amsterdam, and New York. Her migration experience following her parents includes a complex topography with different stations, the crossing of the Atlantic and finally the barely mentioned and unnarrated return to Europe. It is a journey around the world, not chosen and with no point of origin to return to. Germany is the missing centre of the book, we could say. The restlessness is reflected in the non-linear format of the narrative. The story of Kully also does not follow the development of a child protagonist, nor any dynamics of *Erziehungs-* or *Bildungsroman*. The story remains static, even with the constant moving the child is involved in. We find no trace of nostalgia for the homeland, where that might be. The uprooting, indeed the transit, the nomadism are lived as a given experience, which is accepted in its different dimensions. In hotels, where they are not well known, the girl and her mother become collateral for the hotel owners, as the father fails to pay the bills and is always in search of the funds to redeem them. So, in *medias res*, Kully’s narration starts (Schüller 2018: 219) with a beginning that is like the continuation of a repetitive path: “I get funny looks from hotel managers, but that’s not because I’m naughty; it’s the fault of my father. Everyone says: that man ought never to have got married. [. . .] We are left behind as surety [. . .]” (CAN 3)²¹. At

20 “Wir sind aus Deutschland fortgefahren, weil mein Vater es nicht mehr ausgehalten hat, denn er schreibt Bücher und für Zeitungen. Wir sind in die allgemeine Freiheit gewandert. Nach Deutschland gehen wir nie mehr zurück. Das brauchen wir auch nicht, denn die Welt ist sehr groß” (KAL 8).

21 “In den Hotels bin ich auch nicht gern gesehen, aber das ist nicht die Schuld von meiner Ungezogenheit, sondern die Schuld von meinem Vater, von dem jeder sagt: dieser Mann hätte nicht heiraten dürfen. [. . .] Wir bleiben als Pfand zurück” (KaL 528).

the same time the family's hotel stay and hotel bill are paradoxically the only way to establish a sense of time and a form of duration: "Often we have no idea how long we've spent in a place. There's only one unpleasant way of finding out, which is via the hotel bill. Then it always turns out we've been there much longer than we thought" (CAN 150)²². In contrast to her helpless and dependent mother, Kully is brash, smart and bold. A non-linear, zigzag movement regulates the narrative course comprised of continuous movements, which she describes in this way:

Really the only time we're happy is when we're on a train. No sooner have we arrived in a city than we feel this terrible panic we may never be able to leave. Because we never have any money, we feel imprisoned by any hotel in any city, and from the very first day we think of our liberation (CAN 107)²³.

In this way, the story follows the association of thoughts and perceptions of a ten-year-old girl who expresses curiosity and openness to the strangeness, forming her own explanations for events. For example, when Kully does not understand what a border is, she tries to explain it from her point of view, as something abstract and impalpable. Kully discovers that a border is not a garden fence, but something that happens on the train and it is impossible to cross without a passport or a visa²⁴, even if she would prefer to stay on a simple piece of land, build a hut and from there stick her tongue out at the villages on the right and left:

I always wanted to see a border properly for myself, but I've come to the conclusion that you can't. [...] Nor can a border be a strip of land either, because then you could just sit down on top of the border, or walk around in it, if you had to leave one country and weren't able to go into the next one. You would just stay on the border, and build yourself a little hut and live there and make faces at the countries on either side of you (CAN 31)²⁵.

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- 22 "Wir wissen auch oft gar nicht, wie lange wir an einem Ort sind und erfahren es nur auf unangenehme Art durch die Hotelrechnung. Es stellt sich dann immer heraus, dass wir länger in dem Hotel waren, als wir dachten" (KaL 661).
- 23 "Glücklich sind wir eigentlich immer nur, wenn wir im Zug sitzen. Kaum, dass wir in einer Stadt angekommen sind, bekommen wir eine schreckliche Angst, dass wir nie wieder fort kommen werden. Und weil wir nie Geld haben, sind wir jedes Mal in jedem Hotel und in jeder Stadt wieder gefangen und müssen gleich am ersten Tag anfangen, an unsere Befreiung zu denken" (KaL 623).
- 24 "But a border has nowhere for you to set your foot. It's a drama that happens in the middle of a train, with the help of actors who are called border guards" (CAN 31).
- 25 "Ich wollte immer mal eine Grenze richtig sehen, aber ich glaube, das kann man nicht [...] Eine Grenze ist auch keine Erde, denn sonst konnte man sich ja einfach mitten auf die Grenze setzen oder auf ihr herumlaufen, wenn man aus dem ersten Land raus

Typical of these two *Kinderbücher* by Keun is a language that wants to animate things, using just “animistic metaphors” (Schüller 2011:320), with which reality is captured, as is typical for childhood, in its analogical connections as a set of metaphorical interrelated events. Personified things emotionally involve children who tend to establish a dialogue and a relationship with inanimate objects. When Kully is in Lemberg (what was Poland then and present-day Ukraine) with her mother, for example, she describes the strange caps with pendants covering men’s noses and ears for the cold that would otherwise “eat” parts of the human body. Ironically she adds that women, on the other hand, are not attacked because they do not wear these caps: “The men wore black cloth blinkers over their ears and noses, because the cold ate away human extremities. It’s my belief that only the men suffer in this way, because the women never went around with black blinkers on their faces, nor did I ever see one without a nose or ears” (CAN 64–65)²⁶.

The child of all nations does not adapt to what others do, but interacts in an interesting way with the otherness she encounters in emigration. She discovers how her willingness to open up to foreign children and to dare them to do forbidden things becomes a way of integrating: “Even though I know you make a much better impression in a foreign country if you aren’t so terribly good. But of course grown-ups aren’t going to know that, because they don’t spend their time playing with foreign children” (CAN 10)²⁷. Kully is ready to embrace the whole world (and in parallel her family), as she opens her arms on the ship that is taking her to America, and says: “one evening, the captain took me up on the bridge, and I stood miles above the water. I spread out my arms and thought they would get so long that I could reach my father with my left and my mother with the right” (CAN 182)²⁸.

muss und in das andere nicht rein darf. Dann wurde man eben mitten auf der Grenze bleiben, sich eine Hütte bauen und da leben und den Ländern links und rechts die Zunge rausstrecken” (KaL 552).

- 26 “Und die Männer hatten schwarze Stoffklappen auf den Nasen und auf den Ohren, weil eine grosse Kälte menschliche Gliedmassen abfrisst. Aber ich glaube, dass nur Männer angefressen werden, denn die Frauen dort haben nie schwarze Klappen im Gesicht gehabt, und ich habe auch keine ohne Nasen und Ohren gesehen” (KaL 582).
- 27 “Ich weiss aber, dass man sich als Kind viel besser in ein fremdes Land einführt, wenn man nicht so ganz furchtbar artig ist. Das können die Erwachsenen natürlich nicht wissen, weil sie ja nicht mit fremdländischen Kindern spielen” (KaL 533–534).
- 28 “Einmal nahm mich abends der Kapitän mit auf die Kommandobrücke, und ich stand hoch oben über dem Wasser. Ich habe meine Arme ausgestreckt und dachte, sie würden

The de facto cosmopolitanism that runs throughout the story questions any form of belonging to a homeland, to arrive at a new definition of the concept of *Heimweh* (homesickness), a term that is unknown to the girl, as displaced persons cannot be homesick because they no longer have a home: “‘Do you never get homesick?’ an old man asked me, and first I didn’t know what he meant. He explained. I do sometimes get homesick, but it’s always for different places that I happened to think of” (CAN 182–183)²⁹. In place of the *Heimat*, where you do not wish to return, changing and disparate images emerge of an unusual *Heimweh*: “I’m thinking of the singing buses on the Côte d’Azur, sometimes of a meadow near Salzburg, that was a blue sea of gladioli, of the Christmas trees at my grandmother’s house, of the slot-machines in New York, of the giant shells in Virginia, and the snow and sleighs carrying straw in Poland” (CAN 183)³⁰. The strangeness of the meanings is happily experienced, exalting the deep sounding aspect of the language or languages: “[. . .] we all made excited noises together. I was too excited to feel embarrassed in front of the other children, and all at once I could speak as well as they could. ‘Ça va’ they said. ‘Ça va, ça va!’ I shouted back. Now I know more French words than I can count. I don’t know what they all mean, but that doesn’t matter” (CAN 9)³¹.

4. Concluding remarks

Keun’s two children’s books, which are also aimed at an adult audience, do not limit the possibilities of different interpretations of a reality suffered and experienced by children, seen and told by them, trying to remove fear through humorous tricks and bravado. In conclusion, it can be said that the rebellious girl

so lang werden, dass ich links Amerika mit meinem Vater und rechts Europa mit meiner Mutter anfassen könne” (KaL 690).

- 29 “‘Hast du Heimweh?’” fragte mich ein alter Mann, und ich wusste zuerst nicht, was er meinte. Er hat es mir erklärt. Manchmal habe ich Heimweh, aber immer nach einem anderen Land, das mir gerade einfällt” (KaL 690).
- 30 “Manchmal denke ich an die singenden Autobusse an der Côte d’Azur, an eine Wiese bei Salzburg, die ein blaues Meer von Schwertlilien war, an die Weihnachtsbäume bei meiner Großmutter, an die Slotmaschinen in New York, an die Riesenmuscheln in Virginia und die Strohschlitten und den Schnee in Polen” (KaL 690–691).
- 31 “[. . .] wir haben gemeinsam aufgeregte Laute ausgestossen. Ich war zu aufgeregt, mich vor den Kindern zu genieren, und darum konnte ich auf einmal sprechen wie sie. ‘Ça va’, haben sie gesagt – ‘Ça va, ça va’, habe ich gerufen. Ich weiss jetzt so viel französische Worte, dass ich sie gar nicht zählen kann. Ich weiss nicht bei allen, was sie bedeuten, aber das macht ja nichts” (KaL 533).

of the first book penetrates spaces that until then were reserved mostly for their male counterparts – and that finds forms of expression in the many adventure books for boys that exist. She tries to navigate in a world that does not foresee her actions; she does not wear male clothes, but rather gives shape to new models and experiments of behaviour and she embraces autonomy that could encourage other girls to do the same. The child of all nations is also a curious and defiant little girl, who has new experiences with borders and limits (Schüller 2017: 123). Keun's novel could make a good read in school classes not only to carry on the legacy of this author, but also to highlight to kids the inhumane logic of the exile existence and to show them different spaces of experience and survival strategies, that many new classmates may have already experienced. In consideration of the reality of current affairs, this book in particular could be used as a resource in schools with regard to a heterogeneous learning group of children, including children with a migration background. This is not simply to foster empathy with fugitives, but rather to demand self-reflection on this experience, which could make it easier to understand the challenges that foreign children face. With their openness to new and strange experiences in different environments, as well as with their attitude to rebel against convention, the children of both novels defy the fear of barriers that are continually erected, through attempts – albeit only hinted at – to overcome borders confronting difference and foreignness.

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Leonor Sáez Méndez

Islands: hopes, trials and tribulations in the stories of Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe¹

Abstract: Within the large group of Austrian children's and young people literature, we are going to focus on two authors whose production has a remarkable regional and feminist content: Hermynia Zur Mühlen (1883–1951) and Mira Lobe (1913–1995). The former was a Viennese aristocrat; the latter belonged to a Jewish bourgeois family. They both have in common, inter alia, their social sensibility, their belonging to and critical withdrawal from the Communist Party, their departure from their country due to the Nazi persecution and their migration as a consequence of the Second World War. Hermynia Zur Mühlen for criticising racism and defending the Jews. Mira Lobe for being Jewish. The works of both writers integrate the two aspects which characterise children's and young people literature: Entertainment and a pedagogical end, demanding a reflective attitude from readers. The adventures which the characters experience will help them rethink themselves and produce significant changes in their environments. In their tales, they employ different concepts: power, social and economic inequality, identity, racism, violence. However, they also include solidary, fraternal solutions, hope and social changes through individual changes. Ethical reflection is a central part of their tales.

Keywords: Austrian tale, process of liberation, history of mentality, ethics, hope

1. Introduction

From the theory of literary genres, we agree with Schmied-Dengler that “research in children's and youth literature is not a peripheral field of the study of comparative literature but it is central”² (Schmidt-Dengler 2007: 9). Children's literature is connected to the literature of history through themes, subjects and motives. (Seibert following Max Lühti's discussion of 1982) In turn, following Johann Sonnleitner and Ernst Seibert and moving away from Klimbert's universalism, we observe that in the literature there are regional differences including in the

1 The present investigation has been done thanks to public aids of the University of Murcia, conceded by the Vice Rectorate of Internationalisation, for the course 2018/2019 assigning subsidies to stay in a foreign centre for a short period of time to carry out international projects.

space where the language is shared, as seen in the case of German-speaking countries². Moreover, following Philippe Ariès and Lloyd de Mause, we consider that child development can be a process of liberation or a continuation of oppression. The objective of this essay is to analyse tales of Austrian children's and youth literature, representative of the work of Hermynia Zur Mühlen und Mira Lobe, as examples of the history of mentality. We focus mainly on the two stories where both authors treat childhood as a fundamental part of an emancipatory process. Both authors belonged to the Austrian communist party and then later left the party, whilst both keeping the spirit of the Enlightenment alive, where the children's and youth literature were part of the essential ideology of the enlightenment project.

The second objective is to discover the contemporary relevance of both stories by the two writers. The matters that they reflect are current, they address social differences, racism, gender differences, poverty, war and ethics etc. Zur Mühlen and Lobe, despite their difficult life experience, addressed *Hofnungng* (hope)³ as a concept of *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment)⁴, here not as a closed but as an open process. Both writers emphasise two different perspectives: the possibility of manipulating popular emotion and its serious consequences in the Europe of the first half of the 20th century. Hence, we establish a comparison from the thematic perspective and not so much from the chronological one. From the Austrian children's and youth narrative we analyse two tales by these authors that coincide thematically, the migrations stories take place on an island. The migrations that are narrated are given for economic or political reasons. Significantly, the two narratives, developed on an island, do not fully follow the Robinsonadas⁵ scheme.

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- 2 Seibert distinguishes between a pedagogy stemming from Protestantism which can be found in the North of Germany and a pedagogy derived from Catholicism, associated with Late Jansenism in his debate on Jesuit education, which would really belong to the South of Germany, in specific, to Austria. Such difference would go with what Seibert and Sonnleitner thematise in respect of Literature. In various publications Sonnleitner admits the regional and national differences which are manifested in drama and in the Austrian novel as opposed to German. This difference is also corroborated by Seibert, in *Children Literature and Youth Literature*.
 - 3 According to Kant, *Hope* is founded on the concept of the Enlightenment and its three Maxims.
 - 4 The concept of Enlightenment appears in the text in italics when it is understood as the process. If not, it is referring to the period.
 - 5 As inheritors of the literature of the Bierdermeier movement (Seibert 2008: 128–147). Following Seibert's analysis, in contrast to German Literature, in Austrian literature

From the formal perspective of the listener, it is clear that both stories are addressed to children, young people, or even adults. They can be read from a pedagogical perspective, which, without indoctrination, thus losing their great wealth in the European humanist tradition. However, in the two dings the writers lead us to reflect on migration, the status of the different, gender equality and on racism, in short, on the need to build an enlightened Us⁶.

The two tales by Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe have two central categories to children's and youth literature: they entertain the readers and have a pedagogical function; neither of the stories is gender-oriented for readers. The pedagogical function focuses on issues that are still current, as was previously mentioned, even though Zur Mühlen's stories date back to 1920, while Lobe's first edition back to 1947 and to 1951, for the second edition.

Furthermore, the two stories emphasise the change of gender roles through their female characters, who represent challenges to the reflection and construction of our multi-identity or multiculturalism in time of peace. Even more, the characters constitute a critique against economic and intellectual poverty as a result of an unequal economy. The stories criticise capitalism and its devastating consequences on people's lives and on nature. A transcendentalism-gear observation is how the writers remove the Other from the structure of the enemy to incorporate it into a secular fraternity: "Putting yourself in the place of the Other", without humiliating it to build a Us, is not an easy task, as the characters in both stories show. Additionally, this ethical locus is built within societies where the ultimate social purpose is the economic benefit for a few. They denounce that social context is not only unworthy, but contingent, therefore, changeable. The function of writing, as part of an Enlightenment process, is related to the questions of why for them children's and youth literature was a form of both doctrinairism and non-doctrinairism, where the writer is a source of Enlightenment for the new generations. So the authors reflect on what social aspects must be changed for the formation of new ethical social structures? What

there is certain ambivalence when selecting two figures which on the one hand stand for family approaching and on the other hand for distancing. This phenomenon can be found in the ambivalent relation between Telemaco and Robinson. Another Biedermeier's aspect which is reflected in both tales is the overcoming of what distances adulthood from infancy in Romanticism. Another aspect from Biedermeier which is reflected in both tales is the bridge between adulthood and infancy during Romanticism.

6 In this sense, *enlightened* as a constructive process of ethical spaces.

ethical reflections are given in relation to the dignity of the other and their own, to solidarity and fraternity? How do the roles of women, their supremacy, occur within “Us”.

2. Which context are the writers referring to?

In both books social and emotional intelligence are attributed to children. *Die rote Fahne* (tr. *The Red Flag*) by Zur Mühlen presents a world of adults, where the children intervene decisively, whereas *Insel-Pu* presents a world of children where the adults take part. Despite the difference in how the authors approach and address childhood, there are two aspects that allow comparison and structure in the text: how childhood is conceived according to pedagogical concepts and to what social contexts childhood is related.

For the first aspect – how childhood is conceived –, their work gives childhood and adolescence the role of revolutionary subjects, illustrating their characters relatively to an ‘I’ that becomes an adult through social commitment. The authors call for the formation of aesthetic-ethical citizens in order to avoid the horrors of a lives-destroying past. They, therefore, elaborate the assumptions of the Enlightenment to witness a stage in childhood of reflection development. The two stories provide metaphors and symbols within this era, as instruments to build intellectual and emotional structures in order to become agents for social transformation. Additionally, the argument of both authors exceeds the pedagogical demand and creates explanatory problems from the psychohistory, but especially from the history of culture (in the sense that E. Seibert takes from Mario Erdhrim). The writers agree that the engine of social change are children educated according to enlightened principles.

For the second aspect – to what social contexts childhood is related to – the era that the stories are written in, Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe, they also have in common exile and poverty for their political choice and Ethics, but they also share the love for their profession and ideals. Their biographies are not far from the hope⁷ and courage that support the actions of their characters. Through the story and the novel, Zur Mühlen and Lobe expressed their speculative concerns with issues of social critique that show an intellectual concern beyond criticism of National Socialism, but it also implied being critical of the communism of the

7 In the Kantian sense, as is explained in the *Die Kritik der reinen Vernunft (KU)* (*Critique of Pure Reason*) as what I should hope (Was darf ich hoffen?).

Austrian communist party. Both authors' stories opened reflexive proposals to exercise the social and self-criticism based on the social theory of communism. More than this, the two belonged to an Austrian communist party and left the militancy for their disagreement with the praxis of the former USSR.

Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe lived through the Second World War and the social and political changes of their time. For both authors, the construction of the "Us" is based on Marxist criticism against capitalist social models and is linked to a concept of fraternity that is understood from the term of "enlightened dignity". The worlds that Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe describe are dangerous and unsafe because are organised on the division into social classes, where their inhabitants suffer racist and patriarchal discriminations, injustice and lack solidarity, even more, they are frightened and inhibited by fear. Given this undesirable social organisation, it is about seeing how the inhabitants of the islands rebuild a habitable social structure. As much as both the starting points and the paths that lead to solidarity and fraternal ties, the results from the creation of social metaphors are, however, analogous.

The two stories under consideration are on two representations that reveal and guide the creation of new social structures. The metaphors show determination and the resilience of overcoming social conflicts. The characters struggle to establish ties of coexistence based on the recognition of the Other from abroad. The position of the reflexive observer before the barbarity, that Zur Mühlen and Lobe choose, can be analysed bearing in mind Kant's Dynamic Sublime in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft (Critique of Judgment)* (Kant B102–B111 A101–A110). The writes and their characters come to the conviction that restoring coexistence is possible, from ethics and the proposal of a secular fraternity that includes the *die zweite Maxime der Aufklärung (second maxim of the Enlightenment)* (Kant B158 A156).

Both Zur Mühlen and Lobe project the foundational moment of a feeling that opens the doors to ethical categories in childhood. This process can be described including the following steps: amazement-reflection-rebellion-reflection-construction of the other-recognition of the other (ethical steps). Concatenated speech is observed in the writers and their characters; within them is the concept of *Hoffnung (Hope)*, and within the literary figure in the achievement of the goal. Writers and characters stop the clichés of roles that appear in the collection of traditional stories, and particularly the roles assigned to the women. For the writers of such anthologies and canonical tales, they do not reflect reality of women with dignity, but merely reproduce patriarchal societies.

Traditional stories reproduce the symbolic collective of egocentric and identity-nationalist societies, without spaces of coexistence that were enabling

the creation of spaces for perpetual peace⁸. From a feminist ideology, it can be understood that, for the authors, societies that took advantage of the migrations are societies that perpetuate violence; they are reproducers of competencies and struggles, in short, they are characteristic of social organisations with patriarchal foundations, which perpetuate wars and promote conflict as a form of human connections.

3. Islands: hopes, trials and tribulations in the stories of Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe

Lobe and Zur Mühlen resort to the metaphor of the inhabitants on the two islands. The metaphor is beneficial for motivating children and youth, more so, for demonstrating that societies that take advantage of migration are societies that inspire violence; they are reproducers of patriarchal social roles, which encourage wars and promote conflict as the foundation of power structures.

Both Lobe and Zur Mühlen position themselves in one of the ways in which Michael Benedikt establishes criticism of capitalism; where the narcissistic category of *Im-anderen-bei-sich-sein* (*to-be-oneself-in-the-Other*), of Hegelian origin, is schematised in the category of the division of labour, or of private property. Against this social hierarchy, Zur Mühlen and Lobe defend a social order that can be identified in the category of *Von-Sich-Absehen* (*self-avoidance*) (Benedikt 2000: 176–180). Determined from solidarity, from the satisfaction of the needs of the other as a goal of production, these structures appear in the works of Lobe and Zur Mühlen at the centre of reflection.

3.1. Social structures in the story *Die Rote Fahne* (*The Red Flag*) of Hermynia Zur Mühlen

Zur Mühlen's first publication was *Was Perterchens Freunde erzählen* with illustrations by George Grosz published in 1920 in Malik-Verlag (a publishing house). Zur Mühlen's *Die Rote Fahne* was not well-received by critics, because some disqualified it as proletarian and others as doctrinal. The outcome of the story may suffer from this naïve attitude which responds to a simple cause- and-effect chain having a doctrinal nature. Nonetheless, this naïvety does not have an effect on the development of the story... The authoritarian state, the school and

8 In the Kantian sense. (i.e universal peace as in Kant's *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf*).

the church are criticised as reproducers of social fear and perpetrators of power structures.

The state represented symbolically, in *Die Rote Fahne* (*The Red Flag*), by an ogre is based on exploitation and fear, as well as on the division in the civilian population. Zur Mühlen begins with the following paragraph:

The immigrants were cramped in the hold of the ship; one could imagine that these shared so much together! The same suffering and the same longing unite them! They should be more friendly and twinned, but it isn't so! All that spoke the same language were united and look at others with distrust, even with hostility (Zur Mühler, 2019: 493).

Institutions such as the church and school, and symbols such as the flag, are the causes of fear for the Other, the stranger, social weakness and submission. Moreover, the state is symbolised as an ogre, the fears and hatred are distractions from the fight against this ogre which kills and steals life. The success of the social change, in that tale, can only occur through solidarity and later in the internationalisation of the problem. The first social rebellion is channelled by a woman, who has the central function of revealing. The woman in Zur Mühlen's stories, who represents rebellion, provides a space of reflection in order to develop a feeling of rebellion. The book tells the story of the passengers in the ship, where different groups of people travelled hoping to find a place to escape from poverty in their countries. Despite their common situation of anguish and misery, they enter a process of hate and fear for the Other. There is a huge storm and the blonde haired and blue-eyed boy Peter is in danger on the deck of the ship, he begs for help and the only one who puts his life at risk to save Peter is Beppo, a child with black skin and dark eyes. Notwithstanding the difficulties of the language barrier between them, a feeling of fraternity which broke all determination awakened. One night the ship sunk and many of the passengers die; the rest of the shipwrecked arrived on an island carried by the waves. On this island, armed green little men appeared and collected the prisoners, separating them into groups by origin, which, again, led to gestures of empathy and affection between Peter and Beppo.

The groups of people were taken to the centre of the island and soon grasped what they had truly lived in their countries wasn't anything compared to what awaited them. The island was ruled by a monster and his servants: the little green men, who stood as his army. The monster spoke every known language across the world; it was because of this that the monster was able to maintain hostility between the different groups of people and support his power. The

monster knew that his strength was the cause of the rivalry between the groups of people.

That rivalry of the poor allows him to rule over the rest. This metaphor which symbolises the power game between those who have it and those who, really, by number, could have it, turns out a reference to the underlying social structure which is reflected here. The role of the monster and his guardians is to keep the slaves physical, intellectual and emotionally separated. Moreover, the dialect of the “*master and the slave*”, that Hegel in his *Phenomenology of the spirit* touches on, appears in Zur Mühlen’s stories with different metaphors. Zur Mühlen’s separation happened discordantly in various stories, differing from Hegel’s *Im-anderen-bei-sich-sein* (*In-the-other-to-be-with-hissself*). In Zur Mühlen’s case, alternatives are sought within the category of *Von-Sich-Absehen* (*from-himself-foresee*) (Benedikt 2000 176–180a). This dialect was upheld by fear, frustrated hopes, nationalism, through beliefs and symbols etc. Even more, it is worth mentioning that the overcoming of these feelings is not a matter of knowledge, but a question of the union between ethics and aesthetics, in other words, the feeling of empathy and dignity of the Other as the beginning of solidarity. When Peter’s father mentioned the vulnerability of the slaves because of their lack of union, Peter becomes aware of it and questioned the need for such separation and the fear for the Other and the different; furthermore, Peter risks exposing his feelings in public. This leads to the union of Peter, Beppo and other three young people who joined hands publicly to show their dissent and point out the problem. This gesture of fraternity was punished with death. Later, the act of introducing fraternity into the social structure was taken up by the mothers. Peter’s mother grabs the handkerchief that he had stained with blood and hunk it in the window of her house.

She thus created a space away from the facts and collective reflection and awaited the reaction of her fellow citizens.

The feelings of dejection gave way to a rebellion. The rebellion group was so numerous that the monster’s little green men could not subdue them. The group managed to assert authority, thus overthrowing the ogre and throwing out his servants, whilst others fled; the rebels had become the leaders of the work system. From that moment on, it was truly possible that solidarity and union between the different groups was attainable. The message behind the story is that an international union under a red flag, meaning the lost blood, will succeed after having felt what solidarity is to build right societies. The window where the flag was placed bared witness to the miracle of communication between the rebels. Among the populations on the island, an international army is created which is imposed in all places against evil, even more, against exploitation and

abuse of power. The story ends with the warning that, even if we do not see it, if we put our ears on the ground, we can listen to the army of the future is fighting against power and exploitation waving the red flag of solidarity.

It is very likely that this linear progression, which can be appreciated in the observation and the creation of a sufficient considerable rebellion of struggle and social transformation, can be part of a proletarian tale of the time. However, the denunciation and defence of the field of aesthetics and ethics as a motor of transformation, together with the revolutionary subject, surpass the concept of the proletarian tale and instruct in focusing reflection. This interpretation corroborates that, at that time, the tale was condemned and discredited by both conservative critics and critiques coming from the Austrian communist party.

3.2. Social structures in the *Insu-pu* story by Mira Lobe

The tale narrates the story of eleven shipwrecked children from a country at war (Urbie), who all come from different social sectors and emotional worlds. The story begins with: “when I think - Mrs. Morin continued to say to Mrs. Bantock - that in other countries children, right now, are sleeping in their quiet beds and dreaming of things that only happen in peace” (Lobe 2014, 11). Mrs. Morin has two children that are central figures in the organisation of the departures of the convoys of the refugees. Her children write to the president of a neighbouring country: Terranien, where, due to the wisdom of their ruler, they manage to live in peace. The letter addressed to the president of Terrenien asking for political asylum, is not considered by adults but is discovered by the president’s grandson in the bin, which makes him want to help them.

During the journey, eleven of the children of the ship remained on a rescue boat adrift. It leads to the central theme of the story: how will these shipwrecked people organise life on the island? Far from Robinson and William Goldin’s book, *Lord of the Flies*, life on the island is structured from a balanced social organisation, without a tragic end. The children create a “children’s city” where the good of the collective and taking care of life are the central themes. Collectivity do not annul, however, individualism. The division of labour is also a cause for reflection. The tasks are distributed in relation to the capacities, which are equal, the only labour division criterion is the capacity and the equality between all of them. Werner Wintersteiner calls them “expertocracy” (Huemer 2015, 182).

The plot is well elaborated even though there are argumentative moments that break to introduce closing narrative elements. They structure the story giving it a hopeful ending and leaving casualty a role that can even be real, although they are far from reality. The sum of events gives the story a socially hopeful ending which is only played in fiction. *Insu-Pu*, translated into several languages, was

first published in Hebrew in 1947 with the title *I-Hajeladim* and later in German in 1951. However, both versions differ in political connotations and in the different perspectives of the Second World War, leading to various interpretations. We focus on the German-language version, where Mira Lobe's own daughter thematises the difference.

Regarding the structure of the story, we observe that it is divided into 26 unnumbered chapters, preceded by a prologue and closed by an appendix. In the prologue of the 2014 edition, reflecting on the book, the author establishes a dialogue with her critics (children to whom she asks for an opinion). An interesting take at this point is the question posed by one of the readers of whether the work is a fiction or narrates factual history.

The conclusion is that the difference between reality and fiction is not important for any literary work, this is owing to the point that history can have happened. Therefore, the legitimacy of the topic is clear. On the other hand, it is also interesting that this difference is what marks the discrepancy between the German and Hebrew versions. Regardless of the controversy about the author's intention, in this context we can understand that the work has a visionary function, it prepares us for what may happen (the case of the German version), or to reflect on the past (the case of the Hebrew version). This difference is reflected in the version edited in 2014, in the attached appendix of the author's daughter. According to Claudia Lobe, in the Hebrew version the countries in question are England and North America, they are not fictitious countries. According to Lobe, her mother picked up two historical moments of World War II, a bombing of London and the story which she knew about two children who moved to countries in peace. Whilst in the German version her daughter refers to the following:

A few years later, when Mira Lobe prepared the German version of *In-su-pu*, she did not like the reference to the historical facts. She had considered the story of lost children, because she was convinced that children, despite of how they are individually, regardless of which country they come from, what era they belong to, or what war they have lived in, could always build a common life on an island forgotten by the world (Lobe 2015, 255).

In this sense, for Karl Müller the history of *In-su Pu* includes any of the situations of emigration, exile, deportation. However, on the contrary, it does not refer exclusively to the Second World War.

Focusing on the German version, it is noticed that the author leads us to reflect on two issues that are highly topical: the travel of refugees and the need to question social organisation. Moreover, the central thesis is "without solidarity

the Life is not possible". Mira Lobe denounces, with her work, with this story, as causes of the difficulties of coexistence, economic differences, ecological problems, the criteria that support the division of labour, the situation of the marginalised, and the roles of genre...

A central point for survival is the division of labour. The essential tasks to maintain life on the island are not structured from the social classes to which each of the children belong, nor from the use of knowledge to transform it into abuse; knowledge is not used to dominate. In the society on the island, there is no one left over, each child brings their experience and knowledge, which are all as equally important. These two starting points are collected on an island, organised from a hierarchy that even reflects on how to name itself. Oliver, who detects that position given that he is the oldest and was a scout. When he decides what he is to be called, he ends up dismissing words like boss, director, etc. The ideal word to name his role is that of an elder brother. Social roles are also themed in the story. Social roles are even criticised using traditional story names so as to move away from experiences like those of Little Red Riding Hood or Cinderella. In this story, Lobe manages to establish symbols of the characters who already appeared in traditional stories (Huemer 2015, 181). Her stories are pedagogical, cheerful and fun. Analysing her characters, we observe that Mira Lobe, gives great importance in the social structure to the figure of the marginalised; in *Insu-Pu* it is Wolfgang the musician, who does not find in the tasks a certain place in the collective. This is a musician who is unskilled for survival.

As for the questioning of gender roles, Lobe shows four paths for female identities and that can be understood as contrasts: Diana's character, who comes from a circus family, who did not have a formal education due to her father's choice, the most important clown in Urbine. Diana is the most important role since she is an independent and free woman. She says: "Of course, I am a girl. But not the one like they have to be; I am the one who fights, not the one who plays with the dolls and goes to dance class. I would have been a great boy. What a pity!" (Lobe 2014, 144). This figure is associated with someone who is not very thoughtful and can be deceived and attracted to power, although her sense of improving life will make these choices be subject to the care and the good of the community. Another emancipatory figure of women, but reflective, is Claudia, the baroness, who discovers her social and supportive sense of existence on the island. The third identified female figure is Lina, who represents an authoritarian mother, she is the most traditional figure and, by her prejudices, the least attractive and the most pragmatic. She does not have a sense of respect for nature, her consumerism is not oriented to sustainable use. By contrast, Katrin's consumerism is

focused on sustainability. She represents an environmentally-friendly figure: the scientist, a convinced and practising ecologist. Lobe thus manages to show experiences of women not only from different social classes: hardworking, aristocratic, bourgeois but with different social projects.

Male identities are also broad. Sepp has a pragmatic and social sense, coming from a poor social stratum; he is a socially punished child, with a sick mother who has not had money to heal, and an exploited father who works tirelessly to be able to feed the family poorly. Sepp is a figure of union and central to the proper functioning of the group for his skills and generosity. Oliver is the big brother is the one who administratively organises daily operation. Among his supporters is Stefan, one of the brothers who wrote the letter to the president of Terranien; his brother Thomas is Diana's inseparable friend, whose sense of limitations and his good orientation to get out of frustration is his best message. The two brothers were the reason why Michael, the president's grandson, does not rest until he finds them, not accepting what adults had done: they had declared the case closed. They agreed that the children had died in the wreck. From the suspicion, and the hope of not giving up that which remained unproved, Michael fights against the adults who treated him as if he was crazy and admitted him into a mental hospital.

Michael was a persistent child when it came to his beliefs, who managed to randomly find the eleven shipwrecked children. Another remarkable character is Paul, a figure that goes socially unnoticed, but has an important social function, for his collaboration where he is needed. The dissonant figure, which leaves an open question, is Kurt Konrrad. He is a child raised without love and who becomes a tyrant and a coup. But Oliver's wisdom, his sense of dignity and responsibility, joined by Estefan, Katrin and Claudia, argumentatively, manage to defeat Kurt and "reform him". Faced with his constant destruction of living together in peace, he enters a chain of arguments with Oliver, leading to the questioning his position of "big brother". There is a strong confrontation between Kurt and Oliver which ended up leaving the rest of the children having to choose between Kurt and Oliver. The dispute was rooted in the arrogance of Kurt, which made Oliver denounce him instead of relying on ignoring the evil and tyranny as he had naively done on other occasions. There are elections and Oliver wins, causing Kurt to leave the group. After a few days, during Kurt's absence, he faced a life-threatening situation: without food and dehydrated. The rest of the children responded empathically and in solidarity. After his recovery he realises that, without solidarity, there is no possible life on the island.

The moral of the story is that only solidarity was able to save the life of the eleven shipwrecked people and to maintain hope until chance played in their favour, where they were rescued and taken to their final destination.

4. Who are Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe?

We are to highlight personal and family traits of both writers in order to help appreciate their work. Hermynia Zur Mühlen and Mira Lobe were contemporary. They shared publishing house⁹ and social proposals. They lived in Vienna through World War II and its consequences, but it is unlikely that they were simultaneously present, nor met in the city.

Hermynia Zur Mühlen died in England in 1951, in exile, unable to return to Austria¹⁰. Mira Lobe arrived in Austria in 1951 in exile from Germany to Israel, where she had resided for 14 years. Both Zur Mühlen and Lobe criticised the differences caused by economic, gender, ethnicity, the social division of labour, family, etc. in their broadest senses. The two writers felt responsible for seeking alternatives to their social context, criticising their privileges. They use language as an accessible metaphor for the defence of equality, solidarity and fraternity as alternatives. For Zur Mühlen and Lobe, literature is an exercise in public activity.

4.1. Hermynia Zur Mühlen

The Zur Mühler's children's story collection is practically unknown and classified with the epithet known as proletarian tales. The content of these stories is much more complex than the proletarian tales due to the criticism of the European mentality and the defence of the social-ethical project which it presents, as we have outlined through *Die Rote Phane (Die Rote Phane)*. Hermynie Zur Mühler¹¹ was born in Vienna in 1883 and died in Radlett in 1951, furthermore, Zur Mühler is the daughter of a family of the Viennese aristocracy and diplomacy. Due to her ideology, she is known as the Red Countess. A nickname that had already been given to her uncle. The relationship with her mother was problematic, her mother took up the role of the father figure, taking care of her education, after the death of her maternal grandmother when she was 14 years old. Her maternal grandmother and uncle are her point of reference for her stories.

9 In *Globus* the publishing house of the Communist Party.

10 After the end of the war, she could not come back to Austria due to her economic situation, and until the very last moment she regretted not having being invited to return. She could not recover her inheritance given that she could not sign a document as it was a precondition that she had to be Aryan.

11 For more info about her life, see the articles.

It is notable that her personality and social commitment are remarkable since her childhood is revealed with the creation of a newspaper of family run. During her time, she said her privilege made her feel protected in a glass box from a dangerous world. The denunciation of social inequalities is the subject of her reflection. In her 1929 work *Ende und Anfang*, referring to her grandmother, Hermynia states the following: “In our private crystal home [. . .] As a child, I looked at the problem of wealth and poverty out of all problems, which then were called ‘the poor’ [. . .] only was by one thing I was totally convinced: of all the misery in the world, the aristocrats were guilty” (Zur Mühlen c, 28).

Since childhood zur Mühlen showed signs of being a precocious girl. At 8 years old, she stated that the government was always wrong. At thirteen she created the “Society for the Improvement of the World” “Anker -Verein”. She stated, taking Christianity as a reference, the conviction that all humans are equal before the eyes of God and the personal responsibility for the welfare of the other. The vindication of living from her work encouraged her to study teaching, although she was not allowed to exercise her teachings due to her nobility. She confronted her first husband Victor von zur Mühlen for the working conditions to which his hired workers were subdued. This fight, among health problems, led her to Davos to Switzerland to a sanatorium where her work on literature, both as an author and as a translator, leads to her profession. There she met her second husband (Stefan Isidor Klein): a Jewish intellectual who did not belong to the Ghetto. The couple was persecuted and unworthily treated by National Socialism.

Regarding her publications, she refused to retract her criticism of National Socialism, and acted against the complaints in newspapers and in several of her publications (*Unsere Tochter, die Nazinen* published in Vienna in 1938, *Als der Fremde kam* also published in Vienna in 1947). The foundation of her coherence can be deduced from the quotation we produced from a letter that was published on October 26, 1933 in the newspaper:

[...] I prefer, to this “better” society, solidarity with those who in the Third Reich, to follow their principles, were locked in concentration camps or “shot dead in flight”. [...] As regards to the recrimination of treason to the homeland (if we want to use this word so pathetic), I confess that I would commit, as an Austrian, a betrayal of my country [...]. If I did not fight the Third Reich with my modest forces (Altner, 1997, 10)

Hermynia Zur Mühlen was persecuted, her work was banned, and she ended up on the list of censored works which appeared in Leipzig in 1939. She arrived in England on June 19, 1939. The travel costs were handled by the Arden Society. On leaving Austria, she renounced coherence, despite her economic situation and her

illness, to her maternal inheritance. She refused to sign the official documents, as prescribed at the time, saying “authentic Aryan”. The Gestapo closed her bank accounts. If she had accepted the blackmail, she could have transferred her legacy to Czechoslovakia, but she would have had to accept the conditions of *Schweinerei* (closed), a nickname with which she referred to National Socialism. She began a new era of projects after the break in her literary work in recent years in Austria. In 1948 the marriage from London to Readletten resulted in a poor situation and she was left seriously ill. Without having achieved special recognition of her work in Austria, in 1945 she fell back into writing in Austria and Germany, but only in the Globus publishing house, the publishing house of the communist party. A part of her literary production had been lost, until 2019, when her work was reissued. The following paragraph, by Altner, is self-evident:

Hermynia Zur Mühlen is really a tragic case [. . .] There is mostly news of her in the well-known History of Literature and in the representations of the time in the period between wars, only in the annotations outside the Federation of Proletarian Writers -Revolutionaries (BPRS) or in “the proletarian” youth or children’s literature while references appear almost nowhere in their novels and when it appears only in a few lines (Altner, 1997, 10).

4.2. Mira Lobe

If one were to ask about the symbolic contribution to Austrian children’s and youth literature in the last century, Mira Lobe’s work would be the central reference. Her literary career in Austria begins in 1950, when she established herself in Vienna. At the end of this year, she obtained Austrian nationality. Therefore, she is an Austrian author born in Germany and a migrant in Jerusalem, since it is from her publications in Austria where she begins to become recognised. Her daughter, Claudia Lobe, said the following about her mother’s identity: “My mother lived gladly lived in Vienna and had many friends, but she was not a Viennese”. Her work includes elements of various cultures and universal ethical principles. However, several critics agree on the great capacity to adapt her production to the time and places where she lived. Literary criticism corresponds with the incorporation of Viennese culture into its writings.

Mira Lobe was born in Görlitz, Germany in 1913 and died in Vienna in 1995. Her name was Hilde Mirjam Rosenthal: “At the wish of her father they named her Hilde, her mother gave her the name Mirjam. She later renamed herself Mira, which meant “one of peace” based on the Russian word peace which is ‘*Mir*’ and her genitive ‘*Mira*” (Huemer, 2015, 30). She was the second daughter of the Rosenthal family, and came from a Jewish bourgeois family, of social

democratic ideology. Her mother was part of the literary society and the Görlitz Art Association. (cf. Huemer, 2015, 30). There are two anecdotes that collect several publications and help to understand her critical position. The beginning of her writing profession dates to her teenage years. She writes a story named *Schwalbenkind* (The Swallow Child). The quality of the work made her teacher doubt his authorship. Her well-known teacher found it impossible to acknowledge that Lobe had composed such story. The reaction was a surprising account of her nature: "I thought, when a teacher finds your writings so superior, that he does not conceive that they are written by you, then, obviously, you do not lack talent. [...] Then you can maybe later write stories" (Huemer, 2015, 31).

Similar to Hermynia Zur Mühlen, it was poverty that sensitised them socially from a young age. In this regard, she says: "Next to me sat a girl who had lice. Curiously, it didn't disgust me, but a feeling of suffocation, which I later identified as a social conscience of guilt" (Huemer, 2015, 31). It is this unacceptance of social injustice that makes her join the Youth of the German Socialist Party (SAJ), without consent of her parents. In relation to this, she says: "He had a dark tendency. I suffer from feeling guilty, right? And on that occasion, they were strongly unleashed, and I had a certain feeling of guilt, that I was doing so well, and I knew that others were doing less well." (Huemer, 2015, 31). Lobe met the father of her children in Palestine: Friedrich Lobe. An intellectual of German origin, he was the son of a humble Orthodox Jewish family. Before exiling to Palestine, he had been an actor and theatre director and accumulated fame. In Tel Aviv he also worked in the theatre, although he faced language difficulties. Given their disagreement with the constitution of the state of Israel, because of their social commitment and ideology, the couple migrated to Vienna in 1951, taking advantage of a job offer at the Neue Theatre in der Escala. After some time without working in Austria, Lobe was offered a contract in East Berlin in 1956. There the family remained until 1958, later deciding to return to Vienna again with a contract for him from Theatre in der Josefstadt. She would die that same year. Mira Lobe would have stayed in Vienna.

At the beginning of the 1950s, Lobe joined the communist party; various Jewish intellectuals also had joined the party, who played a critical role in the creation of the Israelian state. Mira Lobe took part in the Collective of communist writers and was quickly one of the successful authors of the children's magazine *Unsere Zeitung* (UZ). Her early works already allow us to observe the creation of an Austrian author. Neither anti-Semitism nor the persecution of the Jews form part of the theme of her books (cf. Karl Müller, 145).

The Schönbrunn Publishing House published four children's books: *Der Tiergarten reisst aus!* (tr. *The Tiergarten Leave!*), 1953, *Der Bäbu*, *Die Sieben von*

Bärenbund (tr. *The Bäbu. The Seven of the Bear League*), 154; *Bärli Hupf*, 1957; *Bärli Hupft*, 1968 and a historical novel for young people, *Der Anderl*, (tr. *Anderl*), 1955. They also all have a strong connection to Austria. (Huemer 2015, 33)

In 1957, as a form of protest in the events of Hungary, she left the communist party but did not abandon her ideology or her interest in politics. Hans Goldschmidt was her sentimental partner after the death of her husband and had a great influence on her career. He had worked at Globus-Verlag and Schönbrunn-Verlag. From 1957, Mira Lobe worked and retired as a librarian until her death in 1984. Mira Lobe founded the group of authors of children's and youth books with A. Ekker and Käthe Recheis, which were also part of the illustrators. Her work has received several awards.

5. The impact of the work of both authors

Both authors did not enjoy the same recognition in life, while Mira Lobe received several awards, and her books were well received by critics, Hermynia Zur Mühlen on the other hand, is hardly recognised or known even in academic circles. As for their socialist and communist ideologies, both women published their work in the Globus publishing house, the publisher of the Austrian Communist Party, but the political ideals that collect their work, both in Lobe, and in Zur Mühlen are not doctrinal, you can follow an ideological evolution in their works. Both writers also coincide in transversality and in the choice of topics, as well as in the way of dealing with them. They have, apart from their regionalism and their theme and claim, an intercultural and international perspective.

Regarding the dissemination of the work, we see that the degree of notoriety between them varies. The difference between the two regarding the impact of their writings is great, as we have pointed out. Mira Lobe's stories were published and are still found today, they were part of children's reading for several generations. In secondary literature she is recognised as one of the most influential authors in several generations of the second half of the 20th century. The stories of Hermynia Zur Mühlen, on the other hand, although they were translated into several languages, were not well received, nor subsequently, have such dissemination. Hermynia Zur Mühlen's work is currently coming to recognition, in part, thanks to the research work of writers. Although the recognition, for example, only appears in university curriculums¹². In the 2019 edition, the illustrations of her stories are missing.

12 In the University of Vien H. Sonnleitner y E. Seibert s's works are worth mentioning.

There is little secondary literature on them found on both writers, until 2015, Georg Huemer mentions that there is no monograph on Mira Lobe, however, there are more reviews that can be found on Hermynia Zur Mühlen. An important difference between them was the possibility of Mira Lobe to create and be part of the “Group of authors of children’s and youth literature”, “Gruppe de Wiener Kinder- und JugendbuchautorInnen”, a centre for discussion and support, for all who were part of the profession of writers and illustrators. Another important difference between them is the social recognition of their figures and their works. In 1980 Mira Lobe received the “österreichische Würdigungspreis für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur” and had public recognition of her work several times. Hermynia Zur Mühlen died in England, almost destitute, without being invited to return to Vienna. Her true and desired surname Hermynia Kleinova appears on her gravestone; a right that was not recognised throughout her life even though she had married Klein.

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Veronica Pacheco Costa

Suffragist plays in the UK and in the USA: propaganda and political texts to protect children and young ladies

Abstract: In one of the most famous images of a British suffragist poster used in 1912 during the march from Edinburgh to London we may read the following sentence: “We want the vote to stop the white slave traffic, sweated labour and to save the children”. In fact, one of the topics that appears in many the plays written in the UK and in the USA is precisely how children and young ladies lived at that time and how women could help them to improve their lives once the female enfranchisement got passed eventually. This chapter aims to analyse how these plays were used to show, portrait and denounce how young ladies and children lived in these two countries when women did not have the same rights as men.

Keywords: Suffragist movement, USA & UK Theatre, women, children

1. Suffragist Theatre in the UK

In the United Kingdom, spectacle and performance were key elements in the women’s suffragist publicity campaign. As indicated by Cockcroft (2010: 38), the suffragist movement was the first social protest movement to use photography, press and illustrations to raise awareness of their activities. Suffragists organised parades and protests, occupying the public space designated for men. These demonstrations were carefully organised, placing particular emphasis on image: they were all dressed in white with purple, white and green sashes; marching with supreme organisation, carrying banners, and with marching bands and drummers accompanying them.

Within this staging of the movement, as I have already noted in my previous works, theatre played a fundamental role in the political propaganda of British suffragists, since it is the “visible” literary genre par excellence, carried out on stage, equivalent to the political podium. Of particular importance were two British suffragist organisations that were linked with this literary and at the same time political medium: on the one hand, the *Women’s Writer’s Suffrage League*, and on the other, the *Actresses’ Franchise League*. As noted by Sheila Stowell (1992: 42), the *Actresses’ Franchise League* saw plays as a new medium for propaganda and opened a dedicated department under the direction of Inez Bensusan,

who reviewed and published the plays. As proof of this conviction of the influential power of political theatre, issue 12 of the suffragist periodical *The Vote*, published in December of 1913, included an interview with the playwright Cicely Hamilton who talked about the difficulty normal people have understanding new ideas that are presented to them, and how she expected that those who did not feel much sympathy toward the demands of women might enter the theatre, even under false expectations, and eventually be convinced through the plays they saw performed there. These “false expectations” were due to the fact that the works were not in themselves subversive or aggressive propaganda, and so they did not at first glance put off audiences who were not sympathetic to the suffragist cause. However, through the use of irony and humour, they did in fact constitute a very powerful subversive discourse. In this respect, Sheila Stowell claims that suffragist theatre was undoubtedly written as part of a consciously organised system to spread political ideas (1992: 439). As Aston notes (2000:4), the style and content of these plays were largely determined by the political reality of the time. The message had to be clear, accessible, educational and entertaining, with a style that Aston dubbed *agritpop comic-realism*, (2000: 5).

Stowell (1992: 66, 67) explains that these works offered female playwrights an opportunity to develop their ideas and their work, away from the highly limited structures imposed by the patriarchal hegemony that dominated commercial theatre at the time. In this regard, Cockin (2007, Volume I, iv) explains that theatre gave female activists the chance to appear in public in a safe environment whilst at the same time rehearsing for their public speeches by means of other types of activities. However, and in spite of this freedom to write, suffragist literature in general was not innovative in terms of experimenting with new forms, but instead was based on the description of events that had taken place in their activities, such as their meetings, arrests, demonstrations and strikes. This was a consequence, clearly, of the ultimate purpose of these plays: propaganda. In fact, many of these plays portrayed conversions of men and women over to the suffragist cause, always maintaining the same social structure, so that women were not a threat, and neither were their demands. As explained by Cockin (2007, volume III, ix), the setting for many of the plays was the interior of a house, which highlights the challenge of translating the domestic sphere, its realism and naturalism, to the public and political landscape. Furthermore, as indicated by Joanou, writing or acting was an attempt to “challenge anti-suffrage arguments, such as those that supported the notion that men and women occupied separate spheres” (1998: 132).

One of the initiatives of the *Actresses' Franchise League* and the *Women's Writer's Suffrage League* was the association known as *The Pioneer Players*

founded in 1911 by Ellen Terry as president, and her daughter Edith Craig as stage director, actress, producer, designer and director alongside her partner Chris St. John. The plays produced and performed by this association dealt with many issues apart from suffrage, such as inequality at work and in the salaries of women in comparison to men, maternity, and divorce, among other topics (Croft, 2009: 11). In general, the plays were short, often monologues, to be performed in the afternoon to small audiences, by means of a subscription system. As noted by Holledge (1981: 123) the aim of this association/theatre company was to produce plays because “a play is worth more than a thousand speeches”, according to Edith Craig, playwright and founder of *The Pioneer Players*.

2. Suffragist theatre in the USA

In the United States the situation was not the same due to the different political structure that meant that the two suffragist movements developed different tactics and strategies, even their goals were also not the same, initially at any rate. Furthermore, the puritan background of American society meant that many of the activities carried out by British suffragists were not entirely well-received. Although there were no suffragist organisations of writers or actresses, as we have seen in the case of Britain, Mary Chapman and Angela Mills (2012: 2) explain how American suffragists wrote propagandistic texts in the form of pamphlets, songs that were in turn complemented by more elaborate literary texts such as stories, poems, plays, and autobiographies, among others. Many of these texts were published in suffragist journals, which encouraged readers to send in their texts, such as *The Woman's Journal*, supported by the AWSA. As Chapman and Mills explains: “the tradition of suffrage literature in the USA is vast, creative and stylistically interesting, but has not yet received adequate attention from historians, rhetoric scholars, or literary critics because the tradition has been obscure and individual texts are out of print” (2012: 3). There are three main features that may explain this difference. First, as I have explained previously, the tactics and organisation in the UK differ from the ones in the USA. Thus, the lack of a specific suffragist group in the USA made up by suffragist writers and actresses as it happened in the UK had a clear consequence: the American suffragists did not have a highly developed system to write and produce hundreds of suffragist plays.

The second feature is the belief in 1850 in the USA that the ideal medium for influencing public opinion was the novel, together with the press and pamphlets, as published by the American weekly literary journal founded in 1847 *Literary World* and cited by Barbara Bardes and Suzanne Cossett (1990: 4). These authors

add that in 1844, the *North American Review* noted: “the novel has become an essay on morals, on political economy, on the condition of women, on the vices and defects of social life”. In this regard, Byam (1984: 214) notes that in 1850 the novel was “conscripted by the reviewing establishment as an agent of social control”, in which the gender struggle is significant.

Finally, the third feature is the fact that in 19th century the system for producing and putting on plays in general in America was chiefly private, as explained by Moody (1969: 615): “Amateur home theatricals constituted a widespread middle-class family amusement through the last twenty-five years of the past century”. This situation has been studied recently as a cultural situation limited to the 19th century in the United States rather than something strictly literary. Halttunen (1982: 175) explains in detail in a chapter of her book how “parlor theatricals” became from 1850 onwards a very common form of entertainment among the American middle classes in their living rooms. Because such performances were generally put on in private homes there is little written material to attest to the plays performed: no programmes, literary reviews, and in some cases not even the texts of the plays themselves. On occasion, if too many people gathered together for the performances, hotel lobbies were hired, and over time clubs and drama societies were created, which hired out theatres and charged a token entry fee that would be donated to a charitable cause. Friedl (1987: 3) notes that this system of performances, which were private or which served a charitable function, fostered the acceptance of theatre, which was considered *a priori* to be a frivolous pastime.

In the late 19th Century and in the turn of the 20th century, this situation regarding theatre in general and suffragist plays in particular changed. In the suffragist campaign, in the 1910s the political tactics developed with the ideas of Alice Paul and the suffragists increasingly blurred the lines between the streets and the stage as any public space could be turned into a theatre. Plays, as it happened in the UK, were part of suffragists’ media strategy and comedy and irony were key elements to entertain and to educate the public opinion. Tylee explains that theatre, and performances, may both reinforce ideologies and create the potential for change as “the main vehicles for transmitting social values and for challenging them” (1998: 140).

The first drama schools were founded in the 1880s and the number of stage performers in the USA increased significantly from around 2,000 (in 1870) to nearly 10,000 by the end of the century (Glenn, 2000: 13) and some women undoubtedly became professional writers and actresses in this type of theatre, such as Mary Shaw, and theatre started to become a key tool in the Woman Question; these facts combined meant that, once again, as with fiction, the

domestic and the public spheres integrated and produced suffragist propaganda theatre. Friedl describes the first suffragist plays written immediately before or just after the American Civil War as plays that were centred on a popular burlesque style in which the possible consequences of changing gender roles were developed (1987: 5). There is very little written testimony to these early works, although some of them were short enough to be published in the magazines mentioned earlier and which were used as a means to spread suffragist ideas, such as *The Woman's Journal*, which in fact published a large number of short plays.

As with British suffragist theatre, these plays were written with a clear purpose, which was political propaganda and their performance within the campaign they were running. In many cases, they reflected and denounced the situation of women, whereas others were educational, clearly explaining what was being done to secure votes for women. These plays deal with several topics related to women and their right to vote in different ways such as to represent real events of the suffragist movement or the characters do not explain what they are doing in the parade but they actually put one on stage.

Many of the plays use the dramatic mode of comedy and the common structure of reversal and conversion. Thus, the play begins with an initial situation of anti-suffragism, and then the social order is upset through the intruding idea of suffrage; eventually the initial order is established but with a twist towards suffrage carried out by a process of conversion. Suffrage plays are commonly set in a domestic space, a family home, a conventional dining-room for example, that belongs, not to the suffragists, but to respectable and conservative wealthy families. When the idea of suffragism enters in the house, the home and the family do not collapse, as it was thought, but the home is used to represent the space that would benefit from women's suffrage: the domestic sphere. Regarding structure, many of these plays are one-act plays which is an aspect that deserves to be analysed in my project. This type of dramas structurally resemble full-length plays since they have all the elements required but they have a more simplified stage setting which was more appropriate for the amateur theatre in the USA in the 19th century. According to Auflitsch (2004: 57) during the period 1910–1930 the production of one-act plays were frequently promoted by women's associations and clubs to such an extent that one of those clubs became *The Drama League of America* in 1910. Auster (1984:85) explains that, in the early 20th Century, American suffragists realised that theatre was a very useful tool for persuasion and the dissemination of ideas, whilst actresses such as Mary Shaw and Lillian Russell became more radicalised in their suffragist activities

3. The portrait of children and young ladies in the suffragist theatre in the UK and in the USA

In the play *Pot and Keettle* written by the British suffragist writers Cicely Hamilton and Christopher St. John, one of the characters, the suffragist Nell describes perfectly an antisuffragist meeting in which the traditional female roles as wife and mother were usually stressed: “Cheers for the wife, cheers for the mother, cheers for the ‘appy ‘appy ‘ome? Gentelmen in white waistcoats assuring you how they revered their mothers in spite of the fact that they considered them far too idiotic to vote” (Hamilton, 1909, 2014: 55). According to the antisuffragist movement women had to be “womanly” and it meant that any other activity that was not being a wife and a mother should be rejected. Those women who dared to fight for their rights, the suffragists, were described and caricatured as ugly, angry and violent women and if they had kids then they were pictured as mothers who abandon their children. The objective of suffragist plays in this regard was to tell the audience and the society in general that the suffragist women were not as they had been described and to show the reality of women with no rights as citizens. Not having the right to vote had many consequences in women’s daily life: they did not have to right to own properties, to keep their kids when they got divorced, to be protected in their jobs, to be protected from sexual assaults and to protect their kids. All these problems are reflected in the suffragist plays.

One of the most common problems was the fact that young women were not protected in their jobs as they did not have labour rights even though they paid their taxes. The British writer Edith Lyttleton (1865–1948) is known for her connection to the social group, the “Souls” and her campaign against sweated labour and long hours for women (Gale, 2012: 151). She wrote several plays that describe these labour conditions of young women. In her play *Warp and Woof* (1904) sets out the harsh conditions faced by seamstresses. The owner of the business, Madame Stefanie, needs to make a considerable number of gowns for a party. The seamstresses complain because they cannot work any faster, and one of them, a young lady called Phoebe, is ill. But Madame Stefanie does not care: “No buts for me, the gowns are to be finished. Do you suppose I can disappoint these ladies? It’s your own fault, for not organising better” (p. 175). At the end of the first act, the employees talk about the need to denounce the terrible working conditions and poverty they are enduring, even though some of them express an absolute lack of trust in the protection system. In the second act, Madame Stefanie instructs the employees as to what they are to do if a work inspector appears: “If by chance we are caught, you’re all of you to refuse to answer any questions, do you understand?” (p. 184); and she forces them to

work into the night to finish the gowns on time, in spite of the doctor's warnings about Phoebe's risk of haemorrhage. In scene V of act 2, the inspector, Miss Donaldson, enters the shop and speaks to the girls and to Madame Stefanie: "You have already tried to mislead me, Madame Stefanie. And if you will not terrorise them I believe they will tell me the truth.(. . .) The law is for your protection, but it can do nothing if you yourselves try to defeat it" (p. 186). Eventually, one of the employees, Theo, tells the inspector about their situation. In spite of this confession of working slavery, and as a consequence of it, the young seamstress Phoebe dies from a haemorrhage. Madame Stefanie shows no remorse, however, only relief that the girl died in hospital: "Dead! Well, I never! Good Lord, what a mercy it didn't happen in the workroom, there'd have been an inquest. . . I always said she wouldn't last" (p. 204).

Bessie Hatton wrote a play for titled *Before Sunrise* that was performed in the Alberto Hall Theatre, in London, in 1909. The play describes a situation placed back in 1867 in an early Victorian house in Kensington and it begins with a conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Sewell. This first scene deals with a real historical event when John Stuart Mill submitted an amendment to the Parliament according to which he asked to change the word "man" for "people" in the People Bill that opened enfranchisement to all men in Great Britain. Mill's amendment was rejected and the two characters of the play feel happy for this and even Mrs Sewell adds that "the great affairs of the state do not concern women at all" (400). The couple changes the topic of their conversation and they talk about their daughter, Caroline, and her suitor, Tom Bullock. Mrs. Sewell wonders if it is convenient for Caroline to attend a few months of tuition, but Mr. Sewell considers she is properly educated as "she can play and sing nicely, writer a neat ladylike hand, speaks a little French, sews and embroiders and no one expects any more from a woman" (401).

Everything has been planned for Caroline: marriage. Her friend, Mary, on the contrary, is earning her living as a writer under a male pseudonym, and feels hopeful about women's future to earn her freedom:

MARY- We ourselves shall see great changes if we live three score years and ten allotted to man. Your daughters will be free women, Caroline.

CAROLINE- Oh, Mary, I don't want to marry. I haven't seen you lately to tell you that Mr. Tom Bullock as proposed for my hand and today I have to give him an answer.
(Hatton, 2007: 407)

Mary almost manages to convince Caroline that she is able to do other things rather than to accept a marriage she does not want, and imagines her life in Paris earning her life as a tutor of English language. Caroline's mother enters in the

room and rejects all the ideas of freedom for her daughter and Mary is invited to leave the house. Eventually, Caroline accepts Tom Bullock's marriage proposal since she does not see any other thing to do. Society in general envisions no other role for women, and Sewell family is a portrait not only of the lack of liberty for women, but also and more importantly, the lack of ambition many women had at that time.

Margaret Nevinson's *In the Workhouse* (1911) is an example not only of the propagandistic features of these plays but also their power to change the situation of women. This play illustrates the appalling living conditions in the workhouses in the UK and that, according to the Coverture Act, a married woman had no separate legal existence from her husband and was forced to enter the workhouse, as the author clearly explains the situation in the prologue:

(. . .) In this play I have attempted to illustrate from life some of the hardships of the law to an unrepresented sex, the cruel punishment meted out to women, and to women only, for any breach of traditional morality, the ruin of the girl, the absolute immunity of the male, the brutality that attacks an idiot, the slavery of the married women, the singular advantage a clever woman can take of laws apparently made for the maintenance of a wickedness and vice and punishment of virtue. (. . .) In writing this little play, I make no apology for its realism that is true, I have tried to show the parlous conditions of 20th century womanhood under the unjust Gilbertian muddle of unisexual legislation (. . .). (Nevinson, 2007: 195)

In this play some of the women in the workhouse have to survive the cold temperatures, the bad behaviour of men who also live there and the lack of food with their kids as we may read from the very first line of the play when Lily has her baby in her arms while she sings a song and tells him: "Don't cry my beauty! We're going out tomorrow, my pet! And father is going to marry us" (Nevinson, 2007: 200). However, she is not the only woman locked in that workhouse by their husbands: Mrs. Jarvis, lives there with her twins; Monica, also lives there with her last baby and she does not know where the other two babies are. Two years after the play was first performed by *The Pioneer Players*, the law changed and banned the husbands to be able to send their wives and kids to the workhouses, largely owing to this and many other plays that denounced the situation of women.

This absence of labour rights made possible that that many young girls who worked cleaning and cooking in someone else's house were abused by the landlord of the house, got pregnant and then fired from their jobs and ended up living in the streets with their babies. Sometimes they had to go to prison even though they were not responsible but the law did not protect them. The fact that women did not have the right to vote made them impossible to have representatives in

the House of Lords to change the laws that might defend their rights. This situation is described in Elisabeth Robins' play, *Votes for Women* (1907), in the second act when the main female role, Vida Levering, has taken the floor to talk in Trafalgar Square:

(...) You've seen the accounts of the girl who's been tried in Manchester lately for the murder of her child. (...). This was about a little working girl, an orphan of eighteen, who crawled with the dead body of her new born child to her master's back door and left the baby there. She dragged herself a little way off and fainted. A few days later she found herself in court, being tried for the murder of her child. Her master, a married man, had of course reported the "find" at his back door to the police. (...) The girl cried out to him in open court, "you are the father". He couldn't deny it. The Coroner at the Jury's request censured the man, and regretted that the law didn't make him responsible. But she went free. And that girl is now serving her sentence in Strangeways Gaol. (Robins, 2009: 78)

Another example of the consequences of not having the right to vote, and therefore not having laws aimed to protect women and their children might be found in gender violence examples as we read in the play *At the Gates* (1909), written by Alice Chapin. This play is based on the real events carried out by the British suffragist movement that consisted in picketing at the gates of the House of Commons from July 5th to October 28th in 1909. The play presents several encounters between the suffragist at the gates and various passers-by that include a seamstress that is beaten by her husband and supports the suffragists because that gives her hope to an end of her and her children situation:

SEAMSTRESS- I know. I'm poor and wore out. Likewise knocked out by a beauty I married. He did that for me (motions to her disfigured face). Made me a nice object, didn't he? The magistrate was awfully pally with 'im. Rather cottoned to him so I thought.

SUFFRAGETTE- Didn't he send him to prison?

SEAMSTRESS- Prison? Lor, bless you, no. Prison? Not he. Told him not to do it again and let him off with a fine. (...) I had a fever and they sent me to a hospital where I worried my heart out over my children. (...) A neighbour looked after them. Trust the poor to help each other.

(...)

SYMPATHIZER- Do you ever go on strike?

SEAMSTRESS- Strike? What, with children to feed? Strike with no Union back of you? (Chapin, 2009: 130)

Among the suffragist plays I have analysed there is only one which has included a baby as the main character even in the title, *A Suffragette Baby*, written by the American suffragist playwright Alice C. Thomson in 1912. This play deals with the modern dilemma of professional women who do not depend economically on a husband but find quite difficult to reconcile their new-born independence

with their desire to have children. The four suffragist women of the play participate actively in the campaign and they are very concerned about the individual rights and the possibilities of their self-fulfilment. As it usually happens in the suffragist plays, this one also shows the arguments in favour and against in this debate. The four ladies in the comedy find a solution to their maternal instincts by means of a joint adoption of a baby they have rescued from an orphanage:

SUSAN- It is perfectly absurd, girls. I'm afraid the child would be better in an institution. Besides, we- that is, you all have your work. And what about our mission? Oh, don't let us forget that. Let us be faithful. (*Seizes banner.*) Girls, you must choose between them. (*Stands beside baby holding out the banner with "Votes for Women" on it, and looks sternly ahead as if seeing into the future. Helen picks up the baby. Anna and Sybil rise and stand beside her, each putting an arm around her.*) Alas! Divided interests!

SYBIL- No, no; united interests. Come, Susan.

MRS MCGINNIS- (*Going toward Susan.*) That's right. United we stand up, divided we fall.

(...)

SUSAN-She belongs to all of us. We've adopted her. We're going to bring her up in the true faith. She's going to help us to win. (Thomson, 1987: 229)

Finally, I wanted to leave the play *Something to Vote For*, written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in 1911 until last, as an example not only of the propagandistic features of these plays but also their power to change the situation of children. As Friedl (1987: 25) argues many suffrage associations in the USA did not receive the support of women's clubs though they worked for a big variety of social causes. In this play Gilman shows how the members of a club learn that public health issues have strong political implications and that they needed the right to vote to control their own interests, in this play the milk to feed the babies. In the play the joint efforts of a female doctor and the good inspector for the new milk reveal how the corrupt methods used to sell good milk to the rich and impure milk to the poor. At the end, the play shows the conversion into suffragism of the club members to protect their babies:

MRS. CARROLL- And so have I, Mr. Billing. I'll see that Mr. Arnold keeps his place. We need him. You said this club could carry the town; that we women could do whatever we wanted to here, with our influence! Now we see what our influence amounts to! Rich or poor, we are all helpless together unless we wake up to the danger and protect ourselves. That's what the ballot is for, ladies, to protect our homes! To protect our children! To protect the children of the poor! I'm willing to vote now! I'm glad to vote now! I've got something to vote for! Friends, sisters, all who are in favour of woman suffrage and pure milk say Aye! (Gilman, 1987: 161)

In regards of the topic of the play, according to a research carried out in 2008 in the USA by Grant Miller, he argues that in 1906 “a critical assessment of milk station activities led the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor to conclude that providing clean milk to infants just scratched the surface of the potential health benefits of good hygiene, and that educating mothers about household hygiene more broadly was the most promising approach for improving infant and child survival” (Philips, 1909: 22). This conclusion was the beginning of a “new public health”: milk stations and sanitary engineering had fulfilled much of their promise, and further health improvements depended critically on providing widespread information about the benefits of good personal and household hygiene (Miller, 2008: 4). Miller goes on explaining that historians are relatively silent about the relationship between women’s suffrage laws and local hygiene campaigns, however it is quite clear since the data suggest that women’s enfranchisement improved child survival through its impact on public health spending. Thus, within a year of suffrage law enactment, the local public health spending rose by roughly 35 %. And this growth was critical for increasing intensive door-to-door hygiene campaigns. The consequence of this increase was that the child mortality declined by 8–15 % in the USA. Miller concludes that:

The extension of suffrage rights to American women allowed children to benefit more fully (or rapidly) from the scientific breakthroughs of the bacteriological revolution. Simple hygienic practices – including hand and food washing, water and milk boiling, meat refrigeration, and renewed emphasis on breastfeeding – were among the most important innovations of this revolution in knowledge about disease. Communicating their importance to the American public required large-scale door-to-door hygiene campaigns, which women championed at first through voluntary organizations and then through government. Consistent with the predictions of standard models of electoral competition, support-maximizing politicians responded immediately to perceive changes in the distribution of electorate policy preferences as women gained the right to vote. The result was greater local public health spending that fueled hygiene campaigns, leading to fewer deaths from leading infectious childhood killers of the day (Miller, 2008: 13).

However, the fact that child mortality dropped by as much as 15 % was not the only consequence of female enfranchisement. In the USA, Dartmouth College’s Na’ama Shenhav, Bucknell University’s Esra Kose, and Southern Methodist University’s Elira Kuka have carried out a new study that shows that, across the board, children were more likely to stay in school. These researchers have studied the data of early 20th century in 500 USA cities with at least 10.000 inhabitants and analysed the teenagers who were fifteen years or older when women got the

right to vote and compare them with those who were still in school or about to start. Their conclusion is that women's suffrage had a positive effect in kids and they stayed more time in the school (Kose, 2018).

4. Conclusions

The plays I have analysed in this paper show the importance of children and young ladies in the suffragist movement for several reasons: the first of them is because the suffragist were accused of not having maternal instincts and to be working in a men's world which gave them male attitudes; secondly, because the suffragists felt that they, somehow, had to choose between the maternity and the fight for their rights; and thirdly because women, suffragists and antisuffragists, learnt that they needed the right to vote to protect their children and young women. We have seen in this selection of plays the life of women in an industrialised world in which female workers, young female workers and children were paid less than men, endured worse working conditions, and their demands and requests were not heard or taken into account purely because they were women and did not have the status of citizens. In February 1918, British women won the right to vote and have the first female members of parliament, and in August 1920 the American women got the 19th Amendment passed and as a consequence of these two events they were given a voice to express their social, civil, working and family demands. Undoubtedly, this was thanks to the work of these plays, which had an important role in the suffragist campaigns.

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Monika Woźniak

A feminine touch: Hanna Januszewska as cultural mediator in Poland for Charles Perrault's fairy tales

Abstract: Hanna Januszewska (1905–1980) belongs to the large group of Polish writers for children who were born at the beginning of the twentieth century, debuted in the period between the two World Wars, and then pursued their careers in the very different context of post-war communist Poland. Under the ideological pressures of the regime, they sought to adapt their texts without giving up their creative originality. In the case of Januszewska, this stance manifested itself through a continual rewriting of her own texts, which took on different forms in each successive edition, but also had an interesting twist in her adaptations of fairy tales. In 1961, Januszewska was given the task of preparing the first Polish translation of Charles Perrault's fairy tales, until then known in Poland only through free adaptations. Despite writer's truly remarkable effort, the volume *Bajki*, published in 1961, did not find favour with the readers. Some years later Januszewska decided to retouch it, or rather to rewrite her own translation – a creative itinerary with striking parallels to that of Angela Carter a little later, although profoundly different both in the intent and cultural significance. Januszewska used fragments of the original translation, but adapted the plot to appeal more to children's sensibilities, and radically “Polonized” the style of the texts. Subsequently, in 1971 the new volume of *Bajki* came out, and was a resounding success with the public. In fact, it became the canonical version of the most famous tales, thereby superceding the previous retellings. To this day, Perrault's perception in Poland is filtered through Januszewska's adaptation, which is far removed from the original-language version. This chapter traces the strategies used by the Polish writer in the transition from translation to adaptation of the fairy tales, focusing above all on her great ability to understand the preferences and tastes of younger children.

Keywords: fairy tales, Charles Perrault, Hanna Januszewska, fairy tales' translation, fairy tales' retelling, female storytelling

1. Introduction

Fairy tales are, almost by definition, polymorphic and elusive entities, even when they are inscribed in the apparently defined form of a literary text. This is also the case with Perrault's *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé avec des Moralités*, published for the first time in 1697. Almost all the texts in this small volume, which contained eight stories in total, would enter the restricted canon of the

most well known and loved fairy tales in Western Europe, and later became part of globalized culture. And yet, in spite of it, or maybe for this exact reason, passing through the ages, cultures and languages, they were ceaselessly shaped and censored, rewritten and reworked, becoming a kind of a palimpsest, with each subsequent version overlying the previous one, which in turn had already been modified: “Even where there is a strong pretext”, Stephens and McCallum noticed, “retellers are most likely to use intermediary versions – to produce a retelling of a retelling” (4). Obviously, the practice of rewriting also concerns other classic fairy tales, but in the case of Perrault it has certainly taken on the most radical form. It is unlikely that today an average reader has ever read the original literary text of the French writer: in some countries, he could not do it even if he wanted to, because critical editions of *Stories or Tales of the Past* do not exist or are difficult to find. In his famous study on Perrault’s fairy tales in 1968, Marc Soriano called them a “text without an author” and a “text without a text” (15). Other classical fairy tales, those by the Grimm brothers and those by Hans Christian Andersen, suffered the same fate, but in the case of Perrault the phenomenon was particularly distinct, probably because his work dates to the most remote historical period. At the same time, this temporal distance could be indicated as one of the factors that contributed to triggering the feminist response to the classic fairy tales that has developed since the 1970s. Perrault wrote in the historical-cultural context of late seventeenth-century France and his texts reflect the mentality and social norms of that era. Even rewritten and reworked, his fairy tales contain traces of the cultural system in which they were born. But while the analysis of the literary texts of the past usually considers them against the background of the era to which they belong, critics rarely apply this approach to Perrault’s fairy tales. Above all, often they do not consider the original audience they were addressed to. As Zipes rightly observes, “Numerous critics have regarded Perrault’s tale as written directly for children, but they overlook the fact that there was no children’s literature [...] Certainly, if Perrault intended them [tales] to make a final point in the *Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns*, then he obviously had an adult audience in mind who would understand his humour and the subtle manner in which he transformed folklore superstition to convey his position about the ‘modern’ development of French civility” (73).

Therefore, interpreting Perrault’s tales in the light of modern sensibilities leads almost inevitably to the contestation of at least some of their contents, which may not be fair towards the author and his original text, but over the last 50 years it has stimulated a great amount of discussion within fairy tale criticism and inspired several interesting retellings. They have flourished especially since the 1970s, reinvigorating the genre. However, the trend towards reinterpretation

of classic fairy tales has not shared the same characteristics in all countries: just as Perrault's tales were born in a specific historical context, so the way they are read today is embedded in the historical and social tradition of a given receiving culture. For example, while the dark and adult-oriented retellings abound in English-speaking countries, most retellings in German, Dutch (Joosen 2) or Italian are still written for children; "twisted" or "fractured" fairy tales for adults are known in those countries mostly in translation. It can be argued, therefore, that it would be misleading or at least reductive to apply mechanically the same theoretical framework – such as postmodern or feminist approach – to the reinterpretations of fairy tales, without taking into consideration their diversified cultural landscape.

2. Male and female agency behind fairy tales' storytelling

A state of constant flux in which fairy tales seem to exist is linked with another fascinating, gender-related phenomenon, which eludes easy generalization, namely the transfer from the female to the male and again back to the female voice of the storyteller. While the art of storytelling has been traditionally associated with women, the most important classic fairy tales were all shaped by male agency – Perrault, Grimm brothers, Andersen. This shift was of course noticed by the feminist criticism, which often interprets it as the male attempt to control female voice (Haase 2004: 16). "To have the antiquarian Grimm Brothers regarded as the fathers of modern folklore is perhaps to forget the maternal lineage, the 'mothers' who in the French veillées and English nurseries, in court salons and the German Spinnstube, in Paris and on the Yorkshire moors, passed on their wisdom. The Grimm brothers, like Tereus, Ovid, King Shahyar, Basile, Perrault and others reshaped what they could not precisely understand" (Rowe 68).

It is worth remembering, however, that the idea of the female voice behind the tales was shaped by the male voice as well, to begin with none other than Perrault, who famously named his volume *Les contes de ma Mère l'Oye*¹. The book's frontispiece proposed the image of the eponymous Mother Goose as an old woman spinning and speaking to a group of aristocratic children gathered around a fireplace. The importance and the impact of this illustration was

1 This was the title of the handwritten manuscript prepared in 1695 and decorated with hand-colored gouache illustrations. In the 1697 edition, the title was changed to *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé*, but the former denomination was still visible in the frontispiece image (cfr. Jones 2014: 4) and this is the title under which the volume became popular.

enormous: reprinted again and again in French and foreign editions of the tales, in the original or in a modified, “updated” version, with time it acquired a canonical iconographic status and undoubtedly played an important role in fixing the perception of the fairy tale as an oral-derived folk narrative, transmitted by the female storyteller². To a degree, a similar strategy was later used by brothers Grimm, who tailored their chief storyteller, Dorothea Viehmann, “to suit an idealized image of their contributors, the image that their readers were to carry with them” (Hafstein 2015: 25). Her portrait, drawn by the third Grimm brother, Ludwig Emil, appeared in the tales since the second edition in 1819. Over the nineteenth century, it was reprinted in numerous German and foreign editions, becoming a new model of Mother Goose, an idealized storyteller. It was also made to appear “authentic” because it was given a name and a backstory, but in fact the Grimms’ account of their contacts with Dorothea Viehmann was very much moulded to fit their literary purposes (Hafstein 29).

But if this first shift from the female to the male storyteller of fairy tales is ambiguous and open to various interpretations as to its real dynamics and meaning, the second step, from the male to the female voice again, is much more tangible. Women as translators and retellers of fairy tales became more and more numerous, if not necessarily more visible over time. Traditionally, indeed, translation has been considered as an inferior and therefore “feminine” activity, limited to a reproductive, passive function (cf. Martin 28). This is especially true when it comes to the translation of fairy tales, once they were appropriated by children’s literature – peripheral and less prestigious than the “adult” one. However, in the second half of the twentieth century, and above all with the development of feminist studies in the 1970, women took a central place both as translators and retellers of classic fairy tales, although the female voice in translation of fairy tales still attracts less scholarly interest than the strategies of their rewriting. This is true – or rather was true until recently – even regarding Angela Carter, the most famous and influential female translator and reteller of classic fairy tales of late³. At the same time, some general assumptions developed by

2 The frontispiece of Perrault’s tales and its cultural importance have addressed in many scholarly works, among them a seminal paper by Louis Marin (1987) and, more recently, detailed analyses by Segolene Le Man (1992) and Catherine Vellay-Valentin (2010).

3 Martine Hennard in her seminal study about Carter’s translational practices underlined that “Translation is a little explored facet of Angela Carter’s rich creativity, even though it formed the background for and counterpoint to her fairy-tale rewritings” (Hennard 1).

the mainstream feminist fairy-tales scholarship may prove not universally true when confronted with the phenomena present in so-called “minor” cultures. As Donald Haase cautioned, “To test generalizations and to theorize the role of gender in folktales and fairy tales, scholars need to expand the focus of feminist fairy-tale research beyond the Western European and Anglo-American tradition, and even within those traditions to investigate the fairy-tale intertexts in the work of minority writers and performers” (Haase 29).

From this point of view, the case of Hanna Januszewska, Polish translator and reteller of Charles Perrault’s tales, is the perfect example of just how different and yet meaningful a role can be played by a female voice when it comes to reinvention and relaunch of the classic fairy tales. In a way, there are some uncanny affinities between Angela Carter’s and Hanna Januszewska’s creative encounter with Perrault’s tales. Both were writers in their own right, who at a certain point in their careers received a proposal to translate *Histoires ou Contes du temps passé*. Both had given much thought as to how to translate 300 years old texts for twentieth-century readers and chose a distinct stylistic strategy to do so. Later, inspired by this translating experience, they both went on to produce their own versions of the classic tales. And finally, both authors created rewritings which had an important cultural impact, although in Januszewska’s case it has been limited to her own country, so not really comparable to the enormous international influence of Carter’s work. On the other hand, the trajectory of their experience could not have been more different. Januszewska’s approach to the translation of the original text, her stylistic strategies and the goal of the retellings she eventually proposed were deeply conditioned by the Polish cultural and social context of fairy tales. It would be difficult to understand her creative choices without at least a short foray into the history of fairy tales’ presence in Poland.

3. Perrault’s fairy tales in Poland

Shocking or maybe even unbelievable as it may seem, Januszewska’s rendition of *Stories of Tales of Past*, published in 1961, was their first ever Polish translation. Although Perrault’s tales were known among Polish elites already in the eighteenth century, they circulated in the original language: the first Polish versions appeared only in the second half on the nineteenth century and were, without exception, free adaptations of individual stories, published under the name of their Polish retellers. A typical early example of this practice is the volume *Trzy baśnie: Mądry kot, Księżniczka głogu, Kopciuszek* (Three Fairy Tales: Clever Cat, Hawthorn Princess, Cinderella) published in 1878. The author, Władysław

Ludwik Anczyc, wrote three amusing tales, mixing motifs taken from various versions of the original fairy tales and liberally adding his own ideas. The chatty style of the texts is typical of Polish children's literature: the tales expand the original stories, offer new descriptions, dialogues, scenes and episodes – often comical. Several Anczyc's ideas are charming, for example in the *Hawthorn Princess* (the title he gave to the *Sleeping Beauty*) the fairies invited by the king to his daughter's baptism appear at the castle unexpectedly at dawn, causing a great stir when "everyone half-asleep and half-dressed" rush to the courtyard to welcome them; in the *Clever Cat*, the eponymous animal, having drunk too much wine, recklessly promises the king that he will bring him partridges with red beaks, and then has to accept help from an obliging mouse to fulfil the task. *Cinderella* is a peculiar mixture of motives taken from Perrault, Grimm, and the local variant of the tale, which appeared in the 1837 volume *Klechdy, starożytne podania i powieści ludu polskiego* by Kazimierz Wójcicki. All in all, the texts are so far different from the original pattern that they cannot be called adaptations: they are new realizations of traditional fairy tale themes, not devoid of their own literary value. Among them, the *Hawthorn Princess* gained most popularity and soon began to be included in collections of "Polish fairy tales". As such, it has been reprinted to this day.

In the following decades, more and more similar publications would emerge, even though often – especially when it comes to such fairy tales as *Sleeping Beauty* and *Little Red Riding Hood* – it is difficult to say whether they are adaptations of works by the Brothers Grimm or by Perrault. Polish authors usually followed Anczyc's strategy of retelling: they expanded, polonized and domesticated the fairy tales. A frequent practice was to give the characters Polish-sounding names (Stach, Jaś, Kasia, Marysia, and so on), to emphasize the folkloric aura of the tales and to introduce comic elements. No Polish publisher came up with the idea of publishing *Mother Goose Tales* as a separate book for children; nor did they include Perrault's name in the individual fairy tales editions. Accordingly, not all Perrault's stories were widely read. In fact, only the three selected by Anczyc gained wide popularity: *Sleeping Beauty*, *Puss in Boots* and *Cinderella*. *Little Red Riding Hood* was usually associated with the Grimm brothers; *Bluebeard* (*La barbe bleue*) appeared in a few publications but did not catch on, similarly to *Little Thumbling* or *Hop-o'-My-Thumb* (*Le Petit Pucet*) and *Donkeyskin* (*Peau d'âne*). Other tales, such as *Diamonds and Toads* (*Les fées*), *Riquet with the Tuft* (*Riquet à la huppe*) and *The Ridiculous Wishes* (*Les souhaits ridicules*), were practically unknown. This situation did not change significantly in the first half of twentieth century, when free adaptations and rewritings of the most popular fairy tales still prevailed. It is also telling that until well into the third decade of the

twentieth century even the titles of the stories had no established form: *Puss in the Boots* could be translated as *Mądry kot*, *Pan Kot*, or *Kot obuty*; *Little Red Riding Hood* as *Kapelusik czerwony*, or *Czerwona czapeczka* and *Cinderella* into *Szklany pantofelek* or *Popiełuszka*, before they finally assumed their present-day canonical titles: *Kot w butach*, *Czerwony Kapturek* and *Kopciuszek*.

The period immediately after WWII in Poland, characterized by the pressure of socialist realism, was not favourable to fairy tales, which for some years almost disappeared from the Polish book market. It was only in 1956 that the first post-war collection of twenty-two fairy tales by Grimm brothers was issued. Regularly reprinted (ten editions till 1988, each one at least one hundred thousand copies), it remained for a long time the most widely read collection of classic fairy tales on the Polish book market. When five years later the publishing house Czytelnik laudably undertook to publish the first Polish translation of Charles Perrault's fairy tales, the project was more modest: the print run was very low for that period, amounting to only twenty thousand copies (today they are very rare antiquarian items). The translator was Hanna Januszewska, a renowned author of children's books. Born in 1905, Januszewska belonged to the copious ranks of Polish female writers, alongside Zofia Rogosówna, Janina Porazińska, Kazimiera Iłakowiczówna or Ewa Szelburg-Zarembina, who began their activity in the 1920s and 1930s and promoted an ambitious literary model of poetry and writing for children, based on folkloric inspiration. In the beginning of the 1960s, Januszewska's work consisted of almost 40 titles, among them two long-lasting bestsellers for children: a volume of folk poems *Jawor, jawor* (Sycamore, sycamore, first edition 1932) and a rhymed narrative *Baśń o wędrującej Pyzie* (Fairy tale about wandering Pyza, first editon 1937). She was known for her keen interest in linguistic stylization, and in the Polish tradition of folk and fairy tales. She seemed, therefore, an ideal choice for the task of rendering Perrault's tales in Polish.

4. The challenges of Polish translation of Perrault's tales

Januszewska's situation was made all the more difficult by the fact that there were no earlier translations which could provide the her with a point of reference for her own work. Undertaking a translation of Perrault's fairy tales, the author was therefore confronted with the necessity of introducing culturally, historically and stylistically distant texts in such a way as to make them comprehensible to the young reader without departing from the spirit of the original. Undoubtedly, she drew on her experience as an author. "I am a great enthusiast of historical themes in the strictest sense in children's literature", she said in an interview (see

Skrobiszewska, 137). Episodes from Poland's history appeared indeed in many of Januszewska's works for children, which provided her with the opportunity to master the ability of creating a plausible – yet comprehensible – model of archaic literary language. Nevertheless, as already said, in the case of Perrault's tales she could rely only on her own linguistic intuition, having no ready-made models to follow. She also had to tackle the problem that is faced by all Polish translators of works from distant historical epochs: seventeenth-century Polish is not just an archaic variety of the contemporary Polish language, but a variety that is very marked and homely, strongly evocative of the Sarmatian atmosphere of the Polish landed gentry's country manors and rural style of life. Therefore, by choosing to introduce archaic flavour to the language of her translation (admittedly rather sparsely used, for the sake of young readers) Januszewska inevitably steered the texts toward domestication practice, so typical of Polish fairy-tales tradition, but in this case imposed by the stylistic tradition of the Polish language itself, far removed from the elegant style, refined simplicity and discreet irony of Perrault's classical-oriented French.

Another problem that the translator confronted were several elements of the texts embedded in the sociocultural context of seventeenth-century France, exotic to the Polish reader not only because of the temporal but also cultural gap. All tales are full of references to the time and place of their origin: Bluebeard's widow buys with her inheritance captain ranks for her brothers, Sleeping Beauty upon awakening is wearing a now unfashionable dress "buttoned up to the collar", the miller's sons in *Puss in Boots* do not want the judge and the notary to be present at the partition of property because their fees are too high. Descriptions of clothes, furniture, tableware, the food on the table – all these details are concrete and precisely mirror the reality of 17th-century France. Even more important is the set of concepts appearing in the fairy tales and crucial for the milieu and cultural climate of Perrault's times, for instance *gentilhomme*, *esprit*, *honnêteté*, *humeur*, *grâce*, *politesse*, *galanterie*, *société*, which, despite common expectations, do not always have equivalents in other languages or the existent equivalents are misleading. For example, the word *honnêteté* is not equivalent to Polish *uczciwość* (honesty), since in the original context it refers both to moral and aesthetic values: Richelet's dictionary (1680) defines *honnêteté* as *civilité, manière d'agir polie, civile et pleine d'honneur, procédé honnête et qui marque de la bonté* (civility, acting politely, civilly and honourably, behaving honestly and kindly) (cf. Perrault: 334). Likewise, the semantically complex term *politesse* cannot be simply brought down to Polish *grzeczność* (politeness).

Faced with such a variety of complex cultural and linguistic problems, Januszewska did her best to find a reasonable balance between preserving the original literary character of Perrault's fairy tales and striking the right stylistic

cord in the Polish language. Despite her evident effort, the result cannot be considered completely satisfying. The Polish text, read without reference to the original, sounds correct and is stylistically consistent; its discreet archaization does not disrupt its readability. However, even the most cursory comparison with the original reveals a considerable change in stylistic register even in seemingly easy-to-translate passages. For example, in the *Diamonds and Toads*, the Polish version is not able to convey the almost geometrical harmony of the tale, rigidly structured on the series of oppositions between two protagonists. The contrast between *douceur* and *l'honnêteté* of the younger sister and her *orgueilleuse* and *desagréable* older sibling in the Polish translation was reduced to a banal piece of information that the younger girl was *miła i uprzejma* (kind and polite), while the elder daughter was *nieuprzejma* (impolite) and *odęta* (in a huff).

In the source text, the fairy, who first appears to the younger girl as a poor old woman, asks for some water because she wants to test her *honnêteté*, and then changes into a distinguished lady and turns to the older girl with the same request to prove her *malhonnêteté*. In the translation, this well-calibrated structure disappears: the fairy first turns into a peasant woman to find out about the girl's politeness (*uprzejmość*) and the second time appears as a princess also to find out about the older girl's politeness, which makes the fairy appear as a rather naïve character. Together with semantic imprecision goes the simplification of syntax and stylistic structures, for instance the first sentence of *Diamonds and Toads* is divided in Januszewskas translation in as many as three simple sentences. Similarly, parallel structures typical of Perraults style, as well as repetitions and emphatic expressions (e.g. *une des plus belles filles qu'on eût su voir*), vanish in the Polish version. The resulting colloquialization is particularly striking in dialogues, which generally considerably lower the social status of the characters as well as change the context in which the story is set. Lowered stylistic register and inconsistency of lexical choices, present in all translated tales, disrupt the artistic cohesion of the source text and often distort its message. This is particularly visible in *Cinderella*, perhaps the most "courtly" or "Versailles-like" of Perrault's tales. Admittedly, the translator preserved the information that Cinderella's father was a *nobleman* (*szlachcic*); however, she added many elements transferring the fairy tale to a poorer rural context typical of Polish fairy tales. The heroine speaks to her fairy-godmother more like a buxom wench than a refined young lady, and on her way to the ball, the lizards accompanying her are turned into *hajduczki* (18th-century Polish footmen in Hungarian dress) wearing *kabaty* (short caftans), rather than liveried butlers as in the original. As a result, *Kopciuszek* inevitably begins to resemble a Polish noblewoman from a country

manor, which in turn clashes with the elements of courtly life in 17th-century France preserved in the translation.

And it is this duality or stylistic indecisiveness that is probably the weakest point of Januszewska's 1961 translation, although at least some blame for this may be laid at publisher's door. Czytelnik, which commissioned the volume, did not specialize in publications for children, so the decision to publish Perrault's tales could indicate the intention to treat them as a literary, historical text rather than a book for children. However, the cover and images inside the book, designed by the famous illustrator of the fairy tales for children, Jan Marcin Szancer, as well as the graphic layout of the book, suggested that it was addressed to the young rather than adult reader. The title page displayed the trust-inducing information "Charles Perrault, *Bajki babci Gąski*. 1697, przełożyła Hanna Januszewska" (Charles Perrault, *Mother Goose Tales*. 1697, translated by Hanna Januszewska), but that source language of the translation was not mentioned at all and the title is incorrect (see note 1). A short preface – not signed, but evidently written by Januszewska, entitled *Pan Charles Perrault* (Mr Charles Perrault), presents a charming (if inaccurate) short portrait of the writer and his times, clearly simplified to be understood by younger readers. A quick glance at the table of contents further undermines the philological reliability of the Polish translation, since it lists as many as eleven fairy tales, whereas the 1697 edition included only eight. The Polish volume includes *The Ridiculous Wishes* and *Donkeyskin*, which appeared earlier than *Mother Goose Tales* (the former in 1693, the latter in 1694), and were only added to the French collection in the eighteenth century. Also, in the original version they were written in verse, while in the Polish edition *Donkeyskin* appears in prose, therefore it was probably translated from the anonymous 1781 rewriting. Finally, *Sprytna księżniczka, czyli Przygody Filutki* (*The Discreet Princess; or, the Adventures of Finetta*), placed in the Polish volume between *Sleeping Beauty* and *Puss in Boots*, is in fact an intruder, based on *L'Adroite Princesse* by madame L'Héritier de Villandon, a fairy tale that had been erroneously ascribed to Perrault since the eighteenth century and subsequently included in collections of his works. It seems clear, therefore, that Januszewska did not have the access to a critical edition of Perrault's tales (evidently not easy to be found in the communist Poland) and had to base her version on some popular French edition. However, she did try to translate rather than to adapt the original texts. She preserved the rhymed morals, frequently omitted even in contemporary French editions; she resisted the temptation to censor Perrault and did not cut or soften drastic details. A close comparison of French and Polish versions also indicates that the translation contains very few errors due to the misunderstanding of the source text, while the few small

omissions that do occur may have been present already in the French edition that the translator used.

To sum up, Januszewska on the one hand made an effort to render the historical flavour of the tales, but on the other hand tried to adjust them to the expectations of the Polish reader, especially the Polish child reader. Consequently, neither of these goals was fulfilled satisfactorily. Stylistically, the translation is too distant from the source text to give justice to its literary quality, and at the same time it appears too alien to the Polish tradition to be appreciated by the readers. Thus, it comes as no surprise that, unlike the fairy tale collection of the Grimm brothers, *Bajki babci Gąski* failed to conquer the audience, even in the context of the communist book market which was literally starved for children's books. The book received only two scant reviews – tellingly, one of them bore the title *Zapomniany bajkopisarz* (The Forgotten Fabulist) – and was not reprinted until the 1990s.

5. From the translation to the adaptation: Januszewska's second take on Perrault's tales

The failure of the Polish translation of *Mother Goose Tales* did not end Hanna Januszewska's engagement with Charles Perrault's work. The translator clearly drew conclusions from the unsuccessfulness of this first attempt at introducing the French storyteller to the Polish readers, and some years later published her adaptations of two of Perrault's fairy tales, *Cinderella* and *Puss in Boots*, as two separate books. Encouraged by their immediate success, she then produced a volume entitled: *Charles Perrault, Bajki, opracowała Hanna Januszewska* (Charles Perrault, Fairy Tales, adapted by Hanna Januszewska), published by Nasza Księgarnia⁴ in 1971. There were many similarities between the 1961 volume and the new one. The 1971 book replicated the information (moved from the title page to the frontispiece): *Tytuł oryginału Contes de ma mère l'Oye. Data pierwszego wydania 1697* (Original title: *Mother Goose Tales*. First published in 1697). The preface, *Słowo o Panu Charles Perrault* (A Word about Mr Charles Perrault), is a shortened and simplified version of the 1961 introduction. The fairy tales themselves were not rewritten from scratch, as well: they reproduce whole passages from the previous translation. However, the tone and character of these two volumes are completely different. First of all, the 1971 volume contains only

4 Unlike Czytelnik, Nasza Księgarnia was the leading publishing house for children's books in Poland since the 1950s.

eight tales: *The Discreet Princess*, as well as *The Ridiculous Wishes* and *Bluebeard* (the least known and least liked of Perrault's tales in Poland) were dropped. As for the other changes introduced by Januszewska, they can be divided into two categories: modifications of the plot and a radical shift in stylistic register. The most radical transformation of the former regarded *The Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Little Thumbling*. *Little Red Riding Hood* gained a new character, namely the amiable *Kapitan Ruszt* (Captain Grill), and in *Sleeping Beauty* the tale ends with the princess's awakening and wedding. *Little Thumbling* has been rewritten completely: the hero and his brothers are no longer abandoned by their parents but simply lose their way in the woods, the macabre episode with the werewolf mistakenly slitting the throats of his seven daughters disappears, and *Little Thumbling* does not use deception to convince the werewolf's wife to give away all her wealth. However, modifications are present in all the tales included in the volume. In *Donkeyskin* it is no longer the protagonist's father, but her stepfather that falls in love with her; in *Diamonds and Toads* the protagonist is ill-treated by her stepmother, not by her mother and the information about her elder sister's miserable death deep in the woods is omitted. In *Cinderella* the eponymous character does not go as far in her magnanimity as to look for husbands for her evil sisters; in *Riquet with the Tuft* the ugly but intelligent younger princess finds herself a husband and is no longer doomed, after her sister grows smarter, to remain a forgotten frump. Even in *Puss in Boots*, the relatively most faithful adaptation of the original tale, the information that the main character initially intended to eat his cat and sell his skin is nowhere to be found.

However, the distinctness of this version of Perrault's fairy tales in comparison to the earlier translation lies no so much in the changes of the plot as in the radical shift in the narrative style. Januszewska expanded the stories by adding new dialogues and descriptions; she replaced irony with good-natured humour, removed rhymed morals and replaced them with cheerful nursery rhymes weaved into the text. She eliminated the elements alien to the Polish culture, as well, introducing instead numerous details understandable to the Polish children – perhaps not in terms of their own experience but rather in terms of the tradition preserved in Polish fairy tales. Above all, she gave the tales a chattier, more intimate tone, turning the narrator into a friendly adult telling a child an absorbing story. To understand her strategy better, let us give just one example, the evolution of the *Diamonds and Toads* tale opening:

French original text:

Il était une fois une veuve qui avait deux filles: l'aînée lui ressemblait si fort d'humeur et de visage, que, qui la voyait, voyait la mère. Elles étaient toutes deux si désagréables et si

orgueilleuses, qu'on ne pouvait vivre avec elles. La cadette, qui était le vrai portrait de son père pour la douceur et l'honnêteté, était avec cela une des plus belles filles qu'on eût su voir. Comme on aime naturellement son semblable, cette mère était folle de sa fille aînée, et, en même temps avait une aversion effroyable pour la cadette. Elle la faisait manger à la cuisine et travailler sans cesse (Perrault 1981: 165).

1961 Januszewska's translation [back translation into English]:

Once upon a time there was a widow. She had two daughters. The elder – the Mother's spitting image, her face as well as her disposition. Both of them were so impolite, always in such a huff that one could not stand them. The younger daughter, the very image of her father, was kind and polite, but also an exceptionally beautiful girl.

Since we appreciate in others that which we recognise in ourselves, the mother loved the elder daughter madly, while she felt an uncommon repulsion towards the younger. She ordered her to eat in the kitchen and work ceaselessly (Perrault 1961:76).

1971 Adaptation [back translation to English]:

Once upon a time there was a widow. She had a daughter and a stepdaughter. The woman was very impolite, huffy and pert, and her daughter Fran really took after her mother. The stepdaughter was nothing like the widow's daughter: she was never impolite; she always had a smile on her face and a kind word for everyone. Everybody in the neighbourhood liked her and smiled at her charming figure and beautiful face. But the widow loved only her daughter and disliked the stepdaughter and burdened her with the hardest chores (Perrault 1971: 123).

The change is striking: the style, already simplified in the translation comparing to the source text, in the adaptation has none of the elegance of the syntactic structures and rhetorical figures so typical of Perrault's prose. The replacement of daughter with stepdaughter changes the text's meaning: there is nothing unusual in the fact that a biological daughter takes after her mother, while the stepmother's ill-treatment of a stepdaughter is a recurrent motive in the tale. As a result, the disturbing idea that „naturally, we love those who resemble us” is replaced by a very rational and predictable conflict. Also, the description of the main characters is more familiar: the widow becomes “a pert woman”, the stepdaughter has “a charming figure” and “a beautiful face”, she is polite and always smiling, liked by everyone in “the neighbourhood”. Finally, the passage where the mother oppresses the younger daughter by making her eat in the kitchen (which in the French context meant an obvious social degradation), in the translation is vaguely summed up by “hard chores” that the stepdaughter must perform. Taken separately, these semantic shifts appear irrelevant, but together they add up to a familiar image of Polish rural culture. Its elements, as mentioned before, appeared also in the 1961 translation; however, in the adaptation they were emphasized and brought to the fore, while the omission of references to

French courtly culture has given the story cohesion and has put it within the established convention of traditional Polish storytelling for children. Januszewska used these strategies consistently in all the tales. Cinderella is a “good and hard-working lass”, the fairy-godmother lives “in a cottage, next to the father’s farm”, Donkeyskin risks becoming spoilt “like a beggarly whip” (a Polish idiom), but eventually grows up to become a person who is “prudent, kind-hearted and sensible” as well as “thrifty”. In *Riquet with the Tuft* cooks fry “pork chops” for the wedding reception, while in *Puss in Boots* the king’s favourite dish is “a hare with beetroot”. In those fairy tales where the royal court – almost never present in Polish folk tales – is a vital part of the story, it is made more familiar and cosy thanks to the introduction of comical or trivial descriptions: for example, at the ball attended by Cinderella “crystal goblets sparkled as bubbles of the world best orangeade burst in them”, the castle of Sleeping Beauty is guarded by “robust king’s guards, ruddy, chubby, broad-shouldered, moustached and with red noses”. The main characters are presented in a similar way: they look, behave and speak comically or in a very homely manner: for instance, the king in *Puss in Boots* is “stout and stately”; Donkeyskin excels at “the skill of baking various pretzels, croissants and pancakes”; the fairy-godmother in Sleeping Beauty plays at “Giggle and Chuckle”. The infantilization of the style is emphasized by numerous diminutives, as well as nursery rhymes, weaved into the text. The author is skilled at her craft, and so the narrative runs briskly and with charm, subject to the strategy of repeating well known and recognizable stylistic formulas rather than to the search for new original forms of expression. The vocabulary is limited; syntactic structures are simple, short and clear; dialogues abound in onomatopoeias and exclamations; all characters: Little Red Riding Hood, the king, the fairy-godmother use the same colloquial language which the Polish child knows from everyday life.

6. Conclusion

Despite the superficial fidelity to Perrault’s plots, Januszewska’s adaptation is, in fact, a completely polonized construct, situated light years away from the spirit of the original and its linguistic finesse on the one hand and from the twisted contemporary feminist retellings on the other. Her goal, admittedly, was hardly revolutionary. She didn’t aim at finding a new meaning in the classic fairy tales or at contesting their narrative. On the contrary, she wanted to make Perrault acceptable for the Polish audience and since the readers were not ready to accept them in translation, even as domesticated as the one proposed by Januszewska in 1961, she took a further step. The cultural impact of the volume was noticeable.

Restyled according to the local tradition of storytelling, Perrault's tales won over the Polish readers and became widely popular. Up to 1989 the book was reprinted five times and sold several hundred thousands of copies. Individual tales, above all *Cinderella*, which is on the primary school reading curriculum, have been reprinted as separate books as well as included in collections of fairy tales by various authors. Gradually, they replaced numerous earlier variants of the most popular tales written by Polish authors and became the main, almost canonical version of Perrault's stories. One could object that there is no much Perrault left in the 1971 volume, but undeniably it did make the name of the French author finally universally known in Poland. In many aspects, Januszewska's approach to children's literature followed the trajectory traditionally associated with female translators and retellers of fairy tales. However, her feminine touch had been decisive in shaping the "Polish" Perrault, and her storytelling was anything but invisible.

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Beatrice Wilke

“Language is the most important thing” Christine Nöstlinger’s children’s and youth books in the mirror of their Italian and English translation

Abstract: My chapter analyses potential problems of translation from Austrian German into Italian and English in the texts of Christine Nöstlinger, an award-winning Austrian children’s and youth book writer translated into more than 30 languages. In particular, I would like to examine how Austrian German is translated into Italian and English and whether those specific elements of the original language and culture, which represent the originality of Nöstlinger’s works and at the same time act as important carriers of cultural identity, are preserved in the translation process, or whether the texts lose their local colour in translation.

Keywords: Christine Nöstlinger, children’s and youth literature, translation, Austriacisms

1. The author, her works and her reception in Italy and in English-speaking countries

Christine Nöstlinger is one of the most important German-language authors of children’s and youth books. Born in Vienna in 1936, where she lived until her death in June 2018, the author grew up in the working class environment of the Viennese suburbs and was strongly influenced by it. After graduating from high school, she attended the Academy of Fine Arts. Her literary activity began in 1970 with the publication of *Die feuerrote Friederike* (En. *Fiery Frederica*, It. *Federica rossofuoco*), which she herself illustrated. Christine Nöstlinger wrote more than 150 books, mainly illustrated books, children’s stories and books for young people. She has also published volumes of essays, poems, radiograms, film scripts and some cookbooks. Nöstlinger received numerous awards, including the prestigious Hans Christian Andersen Award (1984) and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award (2003)¹.

1 For an overview of Christine Nöstlinger’s biography, cf. Fuchs “... im Kleinen und Halben” – *Biographische Notizen zu Christine Nöstlinger*” (319–324) and Pirker.

Koppensteiner divides Nöstlinger's works basically into two categories: most of her production – the youth books – consists of “realistic narrations and novels, family and environmental stories”² (107). In these works, Nöstlinger deals with everyday reality and adopts a humorous approach in order to address important issues for young people, such as friendship, affection and first loves, problems with parents or family members, difficulties at school, but also sexuality and problems related to puberty (Neis 75), all topics that have long been considered taboo in children's and youth literature. The writer focuses on the conflictual relationships between people, the mistakes made by adults, and the needs and fears of children and adolescents. Nöstlinger always described the realities of childhood in imaginative and amusing ways. She speaks up for children, defending their rights and condemning discrimination, “[. . .] her books [. . .] always have a sense of social justice [. . .]” (Hahn 424).

Representative examples of this category that I will take into examination are:

- a) *Stundenplan* (1992, I ed. 1975)
Ora di crescere (2009), translated by Fiammetta Giorgi
Four days in the life of Lisa (1977), translated by Anthea Bell
- b) *Das Austauschkind* (2006, I ed. 1982)
Scambio con l'inglese (1994), translated by Mario Sala Gallini
But Jasper Came Instead (1983), translated by Anthea Bell

The second category includes books in which the author uses a sort of “fantastic realism”. These works always focus on the same themes but, although they are strongly anchored to reality, the fantastic breaks in continuously, giving rise to a “grotesque and bizarre world” (Koppensteiner 108). In Nöstlinger's works, the fantastic element is very different from what we find in other children's books. In fact, Nöstlinger has never been “[...] a proponent of nostalgic and sugar pink coloured childhood worlds with the last unicorns and princesses in golden robes” (Mießgang³). Meibauer-Kümmerling defines Christine Nöstlinger's writing as a new “[...] form of ‘emancipatory children's literature,’ which is drawn from the fund of fantastic literature” (789).

Examples of these fantastic narratives taken into consideration here are:

- c) *Wir pfeifen auf den Gurkenkönig* (2018, I ed. 1977).
Che m'importa di Re Cetriolo (1989), translated by Gianni Pilone-Colombo
The Cucumber King (1984), translated by Anthea Bell

2 The translations, where necessary, are mine.

3 Page not specified.

- d) *Mr. Bats Meisterstück oder Die total verjüngte Oma* (1986, I ed. 1975)
L'invenzione del Signor Bat(man) (1989), translated by Claude Béguin
Mr. Bat's Great Invention (1980), translated by Anthea Bell
- e) *Der Hund kommt!* (2001, I ed. 1987)
Il giramondo (1989), translated by Amelia Bertinelli
A Dog's Life (1990), translated by Anthea Bell

In English-speaking countries, the diffusion of Nöstlinger's works began as early as the 1970s: in 1975, the translation of *Wir pfeifen auf den Gurgenkönig* by Anthea Bell, an acclaimed translator of many of Nöstlinger's books (Bell 235–241), was published in the UK. As Beckett (96) underlines, despite her international reputation, Nöstlinger has not been very successful in English-speaking countries. Only a very limited number of her stories were published in English and they are mostly out of print.

However, their reception was more positive in the UK than in the USA: although it is not easy, as Bell (239) points out, to get English publishers interested in foreign-language children's books, Nöstlinger's books have had some success with English-speaking reading audiences. This could be attributed to the fact that their stories combine seriousness and humour – partly with fantasy – and Nöstlinger thus contributes to the “continuation of a serious-humorous tradition” (Bell 238) in children's literature, which is typical of both cultures – German and English.

In the United States, however, Nöstlinger had less success, although, according to Christine Nöstlinger's own statement, her

[. . .] English books [. . .] are properly translated. They are sometimes even funnier than my own, because the English language, with its dry, short humour, can sometimes be even funnier than German, and the translator [Anthea Bell; author's note] is a funny woman⁴.

This is partly because, as Metcalf (324–325) points out, in American translations from the 1970s and 1980s the tendency towards Americanisation seemed to be predominant; partly because there are very few US translations of foreign-language literature, which has created an audience of readers with little knowledge and a low tolerance for foreignness.

In Italy, the translations of Nöstlinger's works were published much later, only in 1989, but with greater sales success. Unlike in English-speaking countries, more than 50 of the author's books have been translated into Italian and have

4 Interview with Christine Nöstlinger (2009, July 9). Cf. Zach (106).

met with approval from Italian readers, especially for the anti-authoritarian perspective of her social criticism, which in Italy at the time was “a provocative and at the same time welcome novelty in the tradition of children’s and youth literature” (Marx 281)⁵.

Overall, Nöstlinger’s works have strong thematic and linguistic links to the cultural context of her hometown, Vienna. The texts thus reflect the linguistic and cultural characteristics of the variation of German spoken in Austria, which constitute both a problem and a challenge for the translator since specific features of Austrian German are used both as stylistic tools and as references to cultural elements that often exist only in the source culture.

I would therefore like to examine how Austrian German is rendered in the Italian and English translations and to see whether those specific elements of the source language and culture, which represent the originality of Nöstlinger’s works and at the same time act as important carriers of cultural identity, are preserved in the translation process, or whether the final product is deprived of its local colour.

2. Language and style

The special feature of Nöstlinger’s novels for children and young people is their unmistakable language and style, to which she herself attaches great importance, as she highlights in an interview (Cerny 2006):

Language is the most important thing. An Astrid Lindgren is not so good because she has written wonderful stories, but because she had a colossal linguistic wit. [...] A good children’s book should make children aware of what makes a language interesting.

The author’s deep bond with her hometown is reflected in the constant use of Austrian German in her stories. However, her “books [...] are not written in pure dialect, but interspersed with lexical, morphological and syntactical Austriacisms; [Nöstlinger] writes, so to speak, with an accent” (Fischer 103). She uses numerous and very different Austriacisms, to which she generally refers in an initial footnote in many of her texts and whose meanings are explained in glossaries at the end of her books – which are omitted in the Italian and English translations:

*Christine Nöstlinger is Viennese. And her book is set in Vienna. That is why the characters in the book talk the way people talk in Vienna. They use words that are

5 On the reception of Christine Nöstlinger’s work in Italy, cf. Marx (279–282).

common in Vienna and Austria, but not in other areas of German-speaking countries. Such dialect words are explained on pages 154f. (Nöstlinger, *Das Austauschkind* 8)⁶

Since Nöstlinger’s protagonists are children and adolescents, the author often simulates youth language to confer greater authenticity on her characters. They use impulsive, spontaneous and lively language, expressing what they think and feel with ease. In addition to Viennese dialectal words, they sometimes use strong expressions (also swearwords), Anglicisms, phraseologisms and are extremely creative, as can be seen from the many puns and the funny and innovative compound words they form. “She has a wonderful sense of humour and a gift for unusual wordplay”⁷.

3. Austriacisms in Nöstlinger’s stories and their translatability

Before analysing the numerous Austriacisms in Nöstlinger’s texts, it is necessary to briefly consider the meaning of the term *Austriacism*⁸. According to Scheuringer, Austriacisms are not only the linguistic peculiarities limited to Austria (so-called true Austriacisms), but also the large number of Austriacisms – lexical but also grammatical, syntactical or pragmatic means of expression – which are quite widespread beyond Austria’s borders (Scheuringer 1199).

Grammatical and syntactical Austriacisms – e.g. differences in the gender of nouns, the use of prepositions, syntactical differences, etc. – have not been translated into the target language due to the diversity of the language systems. Lexical and pragmatic Austriacisms, such as the use of personal names preceded by the

6 “Christine Nöstlinger ist Wienerin. Und ihr Buch spielt in Wien. Deshalb reden die handelnden Personen, wie man eben in Wien redet. Sie verwenden dabei Wörter, die in Wien und in Österreich üblich sind, aber in anderen Gebieten des deutschen Sprachraums nicht. Solche Dialektwörter werden auf Seite 154 f. erklärt.”

7 Cf. Fuchs, Sabine. *Christine Nöstlinger. Her books are bestsellers across continental Europe. Sabine Fuchs explains why Christine Nöstlinger deserved to win the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Prize and what English-language readers are missing out on*, <http://archive.new-books-in-german.com/featur39.htm#top> [accessed January 10, 2020].

8 The term *Austriacism* is often defined vaguely and there is terminological disagreement arising from problems of demarcation and delimitation. In the context of this study, I consider Austriacisms as including not only the linguistic idiosyncrasies limited to Austria (so-called genuine Austriacisms), but also “the large number of Austriacisms that are quite extensive, even if not always used throughout the national territory and often a little bit beyond it” (Scheuringer 1199), i.e. lexical but also grammatical, syntactic or pragmatic means of expression that also occur in neighbouring linguistic regions, i.e. beyond Austria’s borders.

definite article, forms of greeting and the accentuated, specifically Austrian use of titles and appellations (especially academic and honorary ones) (cf. Muhr 1995) are often a major obstacle for translators.

Translators are responsible for conveying the cultural characteristics of a text conceived and produced in another language, following Koller's definition of translation: "In the broad sense, translation is always a cultural work, in the strict sense a linguistic work [...]" (54). The translator therefore acts as a "mediator between languages and cultures" (Fischer 113). In the translation of Nöstlinger's texts, this mediation is made even more difficult by the fact that it is literature for children and young people, so that translators address an audience whose knowledge of the world, and consequently of other cultures, may be limited (cf. Oittinen, *Kinderliteratur* 251).

The way children's and young people's literature should be translated is a much debated issue, especially when dealing with local and cultural words, also known as culture-specific words or *realia*,⁹ i.e. names of specific elements of the source culture, which do not exist in the target culture in an identical form (e.g. food and drink, customs, historical events, etc.).

Some scholars, including Riitta Oittinen,¹⁰ prefer to adapt the original texts to the target culture, especially those peculiarities and aspects – *realia* indeed –, which may convey the cultural identity of the native-speaking population. Other scholars, including Göte Klingberg¹¹ and Martin B. Fischer,¹² with whom I agree, instead choose to preserve in the target texts those elements that denote the local and historical colour of a culture (such as names for everyday objects, places, food, customs, traditions, etc.).

They believe that such literature should not only promote the joy of reading and entertain young readers, but also bring young people closer to the habits and values of people from different cultures. To this end, translation should be adapted to the target culture only where necessary (Fischer 181). Christine Nöstlinger herself says in an interview about the translation of her books: "I

9 In the field of translation studies, the Latin word *realia*, used only in a plural occurrence, means "signs, words and, more precisely, those words signifying objects of the material culture, especially pertaining to a local culture". (cf. "What does 'realia' mean?", Logos. Translation course by Bruno Osimo; http://courses.logos.it/EN/3_33.html [accessed January 10, 2020]).

10 Cf. Oittinen, *Translating for Children*.

11 Cf. Klingberg, *Children's Fiction in the Hands of the Translators*.

12 Cf. Fischer, *Konrad und Gurkenkönig jenseits der Pyrenäen*.

think children should have no problem coming into contact with what they don't know.”¹³

4. Analysis

Most of the Austriacisms in Nöstlinger's stories are lexical in nature and relate to areas of everyday life such as school, food and drinks, traditions as well as cultural elements. The following examples aim to illustrate the translation strategies adopted in some Italian and English editions in order to make Austrian cultural and linguistic features tangible for the young Italian and English-speaking reader.

4.1. School

As school plays a central role in the lives of young people, there are many cultural references to the school environment. The differences between the Austrian, English and Italian school systems are manifold and, in order to facilitate understanding by young readers in Italy and in English-speaking countries, such references are almost always adapted to the target culture in the translations considered.

In the English translations, all by Anthea Bell, the various translation strategies adopted reveal the translator's commitment to preserving many of the cultural references of the source text by adding explanations or very occasionally omitting references when they may not necessarily contribute to the understanding of the text. This is illustrated by examples (1) and (2),¹⁴ which concern the school performance evaluation system:

(1)

<i>Wir pfeifen auf den Gurkenkönig</i> (44)	<i>The Cucumber King</i> (37)	<i>Che m'importa di Re Cetriolo</i> (46)
«Wenn du in den letzten zwei Mathearbeiten einen Dreier schreibst, dann bist du fein heraus!»	And if you manage to get a Three in the last two maths tests you'll be in the clear.'	«E se ti pigli otto negli ultimi due di matematica, te la cavi tranquillamente!»

13 Interview with Christine Nöstlinger (2009, July 9). Cf. Zach (106).

14 The phenomena considered in the examples are highlighted in boldface.

(2)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (7)	<i>But Jasper Came Instead</i> (7)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (9–10)
Einen Englisch-Zweier in mein Zeugnis wollte sie. [...] Lauter Einser und Zweier hatte ich zu erwarten. [...] Nur in Englisch, da stand ich zwischen » gut « und » befriedigend «, den Schularbeiten nach.	About giving me a good mark for English in my report. [...] I'd be getting almost all Ones and Twos , meaning Very Good or Good [...]. Except that in English, according to my homework marks, I was somewhere in between Two (Good) and Three (Satisfactory) .	Un bel voto in inglese sulla mia pagella, ecco cosa voleva! [...] Sapevo che avrei avuto dei " discreto " e dei " buono ", e perfino qualche " ottimo ". [...] Soltanto in inglese i miei voti oscillavano, stando ai compiti in classe, tra il " buono " e il " discreto ".

4.2. Culinary specialities and traditions

Food and consumption habits, restaurants, typical dishes, etc. provide clear indications of the cultural context in which Nöstlinger's stories are set, taking into account the fact that many of them were published before globalisation created a cultural multitude in many countries around the world.

Different approaches to the translation of the numerous gastronomic peculiarities and *realia*, can be seen in the novels under examination. In most of the Italian translations of Nöstlinger's works, adaptation to the target culture is the most frequently adopted solution, with the exception of Fiammetta Giorgi's translations, which preserve many cultural elements present in the original versions. Likewise, the English translations by Anthea Bell point to a greater effort to ensure that the target text preserves the culturally specific elements of food and drink present in the source text, although there are also cases where the translator omits *realia*.

The names for typically Austrian cafés such as *Kaffehaus* are translated into Italian, adapting them to the cultural norms of the target readership using the corresponding expression *bar*. In the English translations, however, there is a literal translation (*coffee-house*), probably because Viennese-style coffee houses in the 18th century were very popular not only in Central European cities, but also in Great Britain:

(3)

<i>Stundenplan (20)</i>	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa (22)</i>	<i>Ora di crescere (28)</i>
Anika klappt das Vokabelheft zu. [...] Nach dem Nachmittagssteno ist Kaffeehaus .	Lisa slammed her vocabulary book shut. [...] after the seventh form's afternoon classes they would be meeting in the coffee-house .	Anika chiude il quaderno dei vocaboli. [...] E dopo quest'ultima ora pomeridiana c'è il bar .

For Austriacisms (in this case *realia*) designating typical dishes, such as *Buchteln* or *Topfenkolatschen*, both loans from the Czech language for which there are no equivalents in English and Italian, different translation strategies are used in the texts analysed. Translators have frequently chosen adaptation to the target-language culture, as in example (4), where *Topfenkolatschen* (En. “sweet curd cheese dumplings”) is rendered in English with *a piece of cheesecake*. In the Italian texts, *Topfen* (En. “curd”), a typical ingredient of many Austrian dishes, is generally translated as *ricotta*, the creamy fresh cheese typical of Italy, since *Topfen* is only used in Italian dishes in certain regions (such as South Tyrol).

(4)

<i>Stundenplan (22)</i>	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa (23)</i>	<i>Ora di crescere (29)</i>
Die Mutter sitzt im Wohnzimmer. Kreuzworträtsel bei Nescafé und Topfenkolatschen* . (*Käsetaschen)	Mother was in the living room, doing the crossword puzzle over a cup of instant coffee and a piece of cheesecake . [...].	La madre siede in soggiorno. Un cruciverba accompagnato da Nescafé e saccottini alla ricotta .

Incidentally, it is interesting to observe that Nöstlinger inserted a footnote in her original text, marked with an asterisk, in which she gives her young readers from other German-speaking countries the more common term *Käsetasche* (En. “cheese dumpling”) to clarify the meaning of *Topfenkolatschen*. Perhaps it would have been even more understandable if she had chosen the Standard German expression *Quark* for *Topfen* (*Quarktaschen*).

In example (5), however, there is an omission of the Austriacism *Buchteln* in the English translation. Anthea Bell preferred to delete all the chapter subtitles contained in the original text. In the Italian version, the *realia* has been translated with generic terms such as *biscottini alla vaniglia* (En. “vanilla biscuits”) instead of *Buchteln mit Vanillesoße* or with corresponding Italian words as in example (4), where *Topfenkolatschen* becomes *saccottini alla ricotta* (En. “ricotta cheese dumplings”). In this case, a matching word was chosen by analogy (*saccottini*) which recalls the shape of the Austrian dessert.

(5)

<i>Mr. Bats Meisterstück</i> (19)	<i>Mr. Bat's great invention</i> (18)	<i>L'invenzione del Signor Bat(man)</i> (15)
Im zweiten Kapitel gibt es Buchteln mit Vanillesoße und [...].	CHAPTER 2	Capitolo secondo Biscottini alla vaniglia e [...].

4.3. Culture-specific items

Denominations inherent to specific cultural phenomena are also often omitted in translation, although there are exceptions. An example is the following excerpt from *Wir pfeifen auf den Gurkenkönig*, whose translation is particularly difficult.

The *Cucumber King*, a strange fantasy figure of mixed cucumber and pumpkin shape, turns the Hogelmann family's life upside down. This character uses a very unusual fantasy language that is grammatically incorrect, somewhat archaic (he uses, for example, the royal *we* (*pluralis majestatis*)) and studded with Austriacisms, such as the word *Bube* (an archaism for “bad”, “scoundrel”, ÖWB¹⁵, 136) in ex. (6). The Italian translator had the excellent intuition to reproduce the language of the Cucumber King with a mixture of Italian and pseudo-Latin. The same omits, however, the reference to the *Kasperl-Theater*, a typical aspect of Austrian culture, which the Cucumber King watches on television, thus mitigating the extremely comic effect of the typically Nöstlingerian scene.

The *Kasperl*, a mask used in Austrian popular comedy, is a stumpy, naive, but also cunning character. The servant, who faces adventures he does not understand and in which he proves clumsy, here represents a sort of alter ego of the

15 Short for *Österreichisches Wörterbuch*, Austria's official German dictionary, which is a general dictionary of German incorporating a number of Austriacisms.

Cucumber King. Bell recreates the Cucumber King’s strange speech on the model of the original text, making him speak in an incorrect and ungrammatical English in the majestic plural (“*Boy, us be wanting you painting we toenail!*”). The English translator, unlike the Italian, maintains the detail of the original scene and does not, in this instance, opt for adaptation to the target culture: she does not replace the *Kasperl* with a specific figure of Anglo-Saxon culture, but replaces the cultural reference with the generic expression *watching puppets on children’s television*, thus preserving the comic effect contained in the source text.

(6)

<i>Wir pfeifen auf den Gurkenkönig</i> (37)	<i>The Cucumber King</i> (31)	<i>Che m’importa di Re Cetriolo</i> (38)
[. . .] der Kumi-Ori-König hat im Wohnzimmer auf der Couch gelegen und hat sich im Fernsehen das Kasperl-Theater angeschaut. Ich bin bei ihm vorbeigegangen. Er hat gesagt: « Bube , er mich lackier das Zehennägel!» Er hat auf seine Zehen gedeutet. Der rote Nagellack war auf einer großen Zehe abgesplittert.	[. . .] King Kumi-Ori was lying on the living-room sofa, watching puppets on children’s television. I walked past him, and he said, ‘ Boy , us be wanting you painting we toenail!’ He pointed to his feet. Sure enough, the red nail varnish on one of his big toes was chipped.	[. . .] il Re Kumi-Ori sul divano del soggiorno a guardarsi la televisione. Gli sono passato davanti. Ha detto: « Ragazzino , lei doveribus mi laccare unghibus! E mi ha indicato le sue unghie. La lacca rossa del dito grosso del piede era scheggiata.

Games are also part of the cultural phenomena. A card game that is mentioned in Nöstlinger’s texts is *Preferenzen* (cf. ex. (7)), an Austrian word of French origin (*Préférence*). This game was common in Central and Eastern Europe, but today it has lost popularity. In the ÖWB the verbal form *preferenzen* is lemmatized, used in colloquial language with the meaning of “Preference spielen” (En. “playing Préférence” (546)). Nöstlinger herself explains this Austriacism to her young readers in the glossary at the end of the book *Das Austauschkind* (155): “Preference, ein Kartenspiel” (En. “Preference, a card game”). In the English version the translator chose to refer both generically to the Austrian game, paraphrasing it with the verb *playing cards*, and to adapt the cultural reference to the target culture, replacing it with *Racing Demon*. This is a well-known card game in the United Kingdom

which is often described as a combination of the card games *Solitaire* and *Speed*. In the Italian text there is a generic translation, replacing the Austriacism with the collocation *giocare a carte* (En. “playing cards”) or with the hyperonym *il nostro gioco* (En. “our game”).

(7)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (93)	<i>But Jasper Came Instead</i> (75)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (115)
Enorm störte die Mama auch, dass wird den Montagnachmittag mit Preferenzen verbrachten. [...] Als ich ihr sagte, dass Jasper ein perfekter Blitzgneißer ist, weil er das Preferenzen in Nullkomma-Josef kapiert hatte, sagte sie sauer: »Na klar! [...]«	Mum didn't like it when we spent the afternoon playing cards , either. [...] and when I told her how good Jasper was at Racing Demon , she said sourly, 'I might have known it!'	Un'altra cosa che dovette innervosirla non poco fu il fatto di vederci passare l'intero pomeriggio a giocare a carte . [...] E quando le dissi che Jasper, con le carte, ci sapeva proprio fare, e che in un batter d'occhio aveva già imparato come funzionava il nostro gioco , che lui non conosceva, lei mi ripose acida: – Un giocatore di carte! [...]

Schwarzer Peter, the name of another card game known not only in Austria but also in other German-speaking countries, has been translated into both English and Italian by means of an adaptation to the target culture. Both translators have chosen a card game known in the target culture: *Old Maid* for the English version, *Uomo Nero* for the Italian version.

(8)

<i>Der Hund kommt!</i> (26)	<i>A Dog's Life</i> (23)	<i>Il giramondo</i> (18)
»Wie wär's mit einem Spielchen?«, fragte der Hund. [...] » Schwarzer Peter vielleicht?«, fragte der Hund.	'How about a little game?' asked the dog. [...] 'Old Maid, for instance?' said the dog.	– Che ne direbbe di una partitina a Uomo Nero ? – chiese Leo.

A similar approach can also be observed in the translation of intertextual phenomena, such as quotations of typical folk songs, where adaptation to the target culture is the prevailing strategy, as can be seen in example (9). In the English version of *Der Hund kommt!*, Anthea Bell chose to translate the popular song *Guter Mond, du gehst so stille* with a verse from the poem *The Brook* by Lord Alfred Tennyson, while in the Italian text a literal translation was preferred:

<i>Der Hund kommt!</i> (26)	<i>A Dog's Life</i> (32)	<i>Il giramondo</i> (25)
Und nach dem Mittagessen [...] fing der Hund mit dem Schwein zu lernen an. [...] Hundertmal sagte er dem Schwein vor: »Guter Mond du gehst so stille durch die Abendwolken hin	And after lunch, [...] the dog began to teach the pig poems. [...] Over and over again, he recited to the pig: 'I come from haunts of coot and hern, I make a sudden sally ...'	Il mattino seguente [...], il cane cominciò le lezioni col maiale. [...] Cento volte Leo recitava a Cirillo – Cara luna, tu vai così silenziosa tra le nubi della sera. . .
. . .«		

4.4. Lifestyle habits

The *Schrebergarten* (En. “allotment”) is part of the lifestyle habits of German-Austrian culture. It is a small plot of a larger piece of public ground rented to a person to grow vegetables etc., often fenced-in, and managed by voluntary gardening associations. Usually there is a garden hut on each plot of land, a *Schrebergartenhütte*, to store garden tools but often also used for sitting in during the summer.

It is interesting to note that in the English translation, Bell replaces the *Schrebergartenhütte* with the similar English word *summerhouse*, one of the meanings of which is “a covered structure in a garden or park designed to provide a shady resting place in summer”¹⁶, while in the Italian version the simple allotment garden hut has been upgraded: In fact, the French loan *chalet* is chosen. With this term the translation differs considerably from the source text,

16 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/summer%20house> [accessed February 20, 2020].

perhaps the Italian word *capanna* (En. “hut”) would have given a better idea of the simplicity of the construction.

(10)

<i>Stundenplan</i> (104)	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa</i> (95)	<i>Ora di crescere</i> (111)
Sie [die Mutter] wiederholte also noch einmal: »Ich frag dich, ob du es richtig findest, dass du einen ganzen Nachmittag lang allein mit einem Schnösel in einer Schrebergartenhütte bist. [...]«.	She repeated: “I asked you if you thought it was right to spend the whole afternoon alone with a boy in a summerhouse ? [...]”	E così ripete ancora una volta: «Ti sto chiedendo se trovi giusto passare un intero pomeriggio da sola con un moccioso nel suo chalet . [...]»

The translator of another text under examination, attempted to render the idea of the *Schrebergarten* better in Italian by opting for the generic expression *orto con dentro una minuscola casetta* (En. “vegetable garden with a tiny house inside”):

(11)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (30)	<i>But Jasper came instead</i> (24)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (36)
Meine Oma hat einen winzigen Schrebergarten mit einem noch winzigeren Haus darin.	Granny has a tiny allotment with an even tinier summerhouse on it.	Mia nonna (la mamma di mia mamma) ha un piccolissimo orto con dentro una minuscola casetta .

4.5. Traditions

References to typical Austrian customs and traditions can also prove challenging for translators. One example is the popular custom of creating *Perchtenmasken*, which is mentioned in *Stundenplan* and which Nöstlinger herself explains in an additional footnote with **Dämonenmasken (Brauchtum in Österreich und Oberbayern)* (En. “demon masks (custom in Austria and Upper Bavaria)”): These are masks representing the *Perchten*, figures of good or bad character, which

according to legend, are supposed to drive out winter or the evil spirits of winter. Traditionally, the masks were displayed in processions (*Perchtenlauf*) during the post-Christmas period (cf. (12)).

It is interesting to observe how in the English version the autochthonous term has been substituted with a more generic equivalent, *demon masks*, while the Italian translator has chosen to use a generic term also specifying the material of which they are made (*maschere di cartapesta* (En. “papier-mâché masks”)) and their use by means of an explanatory insert:

(12)

<i>Stundenplan</i> (17)	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa</i> (18–19)	<i>Ora di crescere</i> (24)
Die Buben kleben inzwischen Perchtenmasken.	During Girls’ Needlework the boys would be making demon masks.	I ragazzi nel frattempo incollano le maschere di cartapesta da indossare tra Natale e l’Epifania per cacciare gli spiriti maligni.

4.6. Names and toponyms

The onomastics of personal names (anthroponyms) and place names (toponyms) is also an issue for translators. Proper names appear in almost all the texts and their translation is one of the most difficult translation challenges.

As far as the translation of the names and surnames of the protagonists of Nöstlinger’s books is concerned, there is no homogeneous procedure. In many cases, not only the surnames, as is the practice, but also the names have been left unchanged in the target text (cf. Schreiber 113), sometimes maintaining the typical use of the definite article in front of personal names (cf. (13)) or even the appellation (*Frau*) in German, thus preserving the cultural references (cf. (14)):

<i>Stundenplan</i> (8)	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa</i> (10)	<i>Ora di crescere</i> (10)
»[. . .] der Strobl hat einen riesigen Fetthintern [. . .]!«	“[. . .] Strobl can’t control himself when he laughs, and there’s so much of him [. . .]!”	«[. . .] lo Strobl ha un didietro gigantesco [. . .]!»

(14)

<i>Stundenplan</i> (5)	<i>Four days in the life of Lisa</i> (7)	<i>Ora di crescere</i> (11–12)
»Was soll das, Banarik?«, hatte die Frau Professor Wurm gefragt [...].	“Banarik, what are you doing?” asked Frau Wurm, the maths teacher [...].	«E questo che senso dovrebbe avere?» gli aveva chiesto la professoressa Verme [...].

When there are Italian or English equivalents for foreign names, the tendency to prefer Italianised or Anglicised forms prevails, especially in the English editions (cf. (15)). One extreme case sees Anthea Bell replacing the name of *Stundenplan*'s protagonist Anika, a Nordic and Scandinavian diminutive of Anna whose variant Annika recalls a character of *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren, with the name *Lisa*. Another curious decision was made by the Italian translator of *Der Hund kommt!* who gave some protagonists of the story proper names that do not appear in the original text: thus the dog, the main protagonist of the story, is called *Leo*, while the pig, one of his travel companions, *Cirillo* (cf. (9)), conferring more personal and authentic traits to the characters.

(15)

<i>Der Hund kommt!</i> (68)	<i>A Dog's Life</i> (55)	<i>Il giramondo</i> (42)
»Ich bin die Anna «, sagte ein Mädchen in der ersten Pultreihe. [...]	'I'm Ann ,' said a little girl in the front row. [...]	– Io sono Anna! – disse una bambina della prima fila di banchi. [...]
»Ich bin der Peter «, rief ein Bub [...].	'I'm Peter ,' called a boy [...].	– Io sono Pietro – gridò un bambino [...].
»Gar nicht wahr«, riefen zwei Mädchen aus der dritten Pultreihe. »Er heißt Ignaz! «	'No, he isn't Peter,' said two girls in the third row. 'His name's Basil! '	– Non è vero – gridarono due ragazzi della terza fila. – Si chiama Ignazio! (p. 42)

Nöstlinger's texts often introduce telling names, i.e. names used in a satirical way to allude to certain accentuated personality traits of her characters, which can be problematic for translators. Where telling names appear (cf. (16)), such as *Sauertopf*, person without a sense of humour, acidic, with a reprimanding and lugubrious

expression, one can see the translator’s commitment to substituting them in the target language and culture with equally telling names (here respectively *Sourpuss* and *musone/brontolone*) capable of achieving the same comic effect as in the source text. (16)

<i>Der Hund kommt!</i> (65–66)	<i>A Dog’s Life</i> (53)	<i>Il giramondo</i> (41)
»[...] Ihr Vorgänger war ein Sauertopf . [...]« Der Sauertopf hat nämlich auch die unteren vier Klassen gehabt«, erklärte der Bär.	‘[...] Your predecessor was a sourpuss . [...]’. ‘ Old Sourpuss taught the bottom four classes,’ explained the bear.	– Il suo predecessore era un musone [...]! – Anche il brontolone infatti aveva le quattro classi inferiori – spiegò l’orso.

With regard to the translation of toponyms, including the names of geographical elements and the names of states, regions, cities, towns, villages and smaller towns, localities, and also streets, squares and other urban features, almost all cultural references are maintained unchanged in the Italian versions, with a 1:1 ratio in the arrival texts. In fact, the names of the places of interest in Vienna, where Nöstlinger’s stories are set, are not adapted to the target culture, but are kept unaltered and often clarified by means of metatextual procedures (cf. Schreiber 62), such as explanatory insertions after the expressions in the autochthonous language. For example, ex. (17) mentions the *Grüngürtel* (En. “green belt”), planned green areas surrounding the city of Vienna offering its inhabitants recreational spaces. While the source text provides no further explanation to the young readers, who understand the concept immediately, the English version provides, next to the term *Gürtel* borrowed from the original, a commentary clarifying the native name (*but only Vienna has so many green open spaces around it*). The Italian translator has chosen to omit the autochthonous toponym by translating it generically with *il nostro bel verde*.

(17)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (74)	<i>But Jasper Came Instead</i> (60)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (91)
»Warum fahren wir nicht baden?« [...] »Weil wir dem Jasper unseren Grüngürtel zeigen«, sagte der Papa. »Bäder gibt es auf der ganzen Welt! Aber unsere Umgebung ist einmalig! Für eine Großstadt! «	'Why don't we go swimming?' [...] 'Because we show Jasper the Gürtel , that's why not,' said dad. 'You can find swimming baths all over the world, but only Vienna has so many green open spaces around it as we have in the Gürtel .'	– Perché non andiamo a fare il bagno? – [...] – Perché voglio che Jasper veda il nostro bel verde – disse papà. – Di piscine è pieno il mondo! Ma i dintorni di Vienna sono unici!

The toponym *Goldenes Dachl*, the *Golden Roof*, the most famous symbol of the Austrian city of Innsbruck, is instead kept unchanged in both English and Italian translations, providing an explanation to the readers in both cases:

(18)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (117)	<i>But Jasper Came Instead</i> (93)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (145)
In Innsbruck gingen wir das Goldene Dachl anschauen [...].	In Innsbruck we saw the Goldenes Dachl , a gilded roof over a balcony which is a famous landmark, [...].	Nel centro di Innsbruck andammo a vedere il simbolo della città, che è una tettoietta tutta ricoperta d'oro fatta costruire da un antico imperatore in occasione delle sue nozze, e si chiama " Goldene Dachl ".

Only the name *Prater*, Vienna's famous park which also offers entertainment and attractions such as the Ferris wheel, is used in the translations without any additional commentary, probably because it is known worldwide.

(19)

<i>Das Austauschkind</i> (107)	<i>But Jasper Came Instead</i> (85)	<i>Scambio con l'inglese</i> (131)
Jasper grinste ein wenig und antwortete: »Ja! Die Untergehung von Prater mit Flipper zu wünschen!«	Jasper grinned slightly, and said, in very bad German, he'd like to go to the Prater [. . .].	Jasper fece un'espessione beffarda e rispose: – Sì! Quando noi andiamo al Prater con Flipper, per me desiderabile! –.

5. Conclusions

Translating Christine Nöstlinger's books is no easy task. My study shows first of all that the translators have chosen different translation strategies in an attempt to reproduce the Austrian linguistic and cultural specificities and the author's unmistakable literary style in the target language. Of course, the Italian and English translations of her books may be a little different, not only because of the intrinsic structures of the languages but also because each translator opts for their own individual strategies. Some translations have proved to be much more creative and interesting from a linguistic point of view than others. Fiammetta Giorgi, for example, was committed to ensuring that the Italian version preserved the features of the amusing youth language that characterizes *Stundenplan*, where the perspective assumed is that of the teenager Anika. Anthea Bell, the English translator, often manages, with her dry English humour, to make the comic effects of the original even greater in the target language (Pirker 124), as Nöstlinger herself underlined.

Other Italian translators preferred to adapt the author's style more closely to the Italian language and culture, thereby losing many cultural references as well as some of the humorous features of Nöstlinger's style, especially where the school environment was concerned. English translations, on the other hand, proved to be more faithful to the source texts. Bell, in fact, maintains the Austrian system of evaluation of school performance, providing additional explanations of the Austrian grades for young English readers.

In the culinary field the adaptation of culturally specific elements and names of food and beverages to the culture of arrival prevails both in Italian and English translations. As far as culture-specific elements are concerned, it has been noted

that some elements are translated generically, as in the case of the *Kasperl-Theater*, rendered in English with *watching puppets*, or simply omitted, thus losing part of the Nöstlingerian comedy.

References to lifestyle habits, such as the *Schrebergarten*, are also adapted to the target culture: in English very faithfully, because the allotment culture also exists in English-speaking countries, while in Italian the choice is for *orto con capanna*, closer to the concept of origin, or for *chalet*, which, however, deviates considerably from the concept expressed by *Schrebergarten*. Other elements, such as typical games or popular songs, are either adapted to the target culture (such as the card game *Schwarzer Peter/Old Maid/Uomo Nero*) or translated literally, but losing the intertextual dimension and cross references to other works typical of the Austrian context. References to traditional customs such as the *Perchtenmasken* are rendered in the target texts either with generic translations (*demon masks*) or simply by paraphrasing the customs, but omitting *realia*.

As far as onomastics are concerned, it can be noted that the translators make individual choices when translating first names, while, as is usual in translation, surnames are kept unchanged. In order to preserve some of the local colour of the source texts, the dialectal use of the article is often maintained in front of first names or even, in English texts, in front of appellations (*Frau*). Whereas for individual names, Italianised and Anglicised forms are often preferred (*Anna/Ann*; *Pietro/Peter*) or, in extreme cases, totally different names are chosen (*Anika/Lisa*). For toponyms, the translators prefer to transpose them literally into the target texts, almost always accompanied by an explanation for young readers. Only in the case of the *Prater* do both the English and Italian texts lack an explanatory insertion after the native expression, either to highlight cultural heterogeneity or because the place of interest is known worldwide.

In conclusion, it can be said that the translators could perhaps have opted more frequently, and not only for place names, for the strategy of loan translation accompanied by an explanation, thus retaining more Austriacisms. Such a choice could, in fact, offer children and young people, whose ability to acquire new knowledge is often underestimated, the opportunity, albeit only in a playful way, to promote cross-cultural understanding at an early age; this, in the age of globalisation, can only be positive.

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Vanessa Castagna

Ethical and aesthetic experience in Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's children's literature

As far as I'm concerned, there is one aspect I have always worked on with political consciousness, and that is writing children's stories. I have always been pained and deeply hurt by the thought that there were books and articles I had written that were for, and generally speaking could, with rare exception [. . .], only be understood by a very small number of privileged people who had been brought up since childhood so they could understand a highly developed culture. For a writer that is like an illness, like a wound. A writer who can only be understood by a few people can never be truly understood as a writer [. . .]. That's why I began writing for children, because a child has not yet been marked by any cultural caste. The same children's story is understood at exactly the same level by a farmer's son, a worker's son, or a university professor's son¹.

(Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen)

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- 1 A declaration given on the Emissora Nacional in 1975 and published on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5JU6e44Iw8&feature=youtu.be>, and partially reproduced in the documentary by Mozos (2019): “Por mim, há um ponto em que eu sempre trabalhei e sempre trabalhei com uma consciência política. Foi o facto de escrever para crianças. Sempre me doeu e me magoou profundamente pensar que havia livros que eu escrevia e artigos que eu escrevia e que se dirigiam e que [...], de uma forma geral, salvo raras exceções, [...] só podiam ser entendidos por um pequeno número privilegiado de homens que desde a sua infância tinham sido educados para compreender uma cultura muito evoluída. Isto é, para um escritor, como uma doença, como uma ferida. Um escritor que só pode ser compreendido por algumas pessoas não chega a ser inteiramente um escritor. [...] E é por isso que comecei a escrever para crianças, porque a criança ainda não está marcada por nenhuma casta cultural. A mesma história para crianças é entendida exatamente ao mesmo nível pelo filho do campeano, pelo filho do operário ou pelo filho do professor universitário.”

Abstract: At the end of the 1950s, the already well-known poet Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919–2004) began a highly successful production of children’s literature in the extremely conservative context of the regime under António de Oliveira Salazar.

The stories in the first stage of her interest in this genre marked a significant break with previous tradition, which had been characterised by the prevalence of the moralistic objectives that were typical of the conservative and patriarchal ideology supported by the regime. In particular in the years between 1958 and 1968 Sophia was driven by the needs of an educated woman who wanted to involve her own children in the experience of narration and by her deep dissatisfaction with the repertory available in Portugal in those years. As a result, the stories that she wrote (*A menina do mar*, *A fada Oriana*, *A noite de Natal*, *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca*, *O rapaz de bronze*, *A floresta*) all place the child at the centre of the narration, transmitting profound values that go beyond traditional rhetoric and constructing narrative universes that were characterised by fascination and beauty. Instead of constructing behavioural models, Sophia’s stories promote the magic of discovering what is different and extraneous to one’s own world, and the profound value of empathy.

Keywords: Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, children’s literature, Portuguese literature, children’s stories

1. Life and poetry in Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen’s works

Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen (1919–2004) was a protagonist in the Portuguese literary field in the second half of the twentieth century. Her surname indicates her Danish origins, which go back to her paternal great grandfather who left Denmark for the United States, but then decided to stop in the Portuguese city of Porto. Born to an aristocratic family, she spent both her childhood and adolescence in a property called Quinta do Campo Alegre, today the Botanical Gardens of Porto, and the beach of Granja in the summer: both places left a deep mark on her and transpire in her works.

From 1936 to 1939 she studied Classical Philology at Lisbon University. In 1946 she married Francisco Sousa Tavares, a journalist, lawyer and monarchist who opposed the regime and stimulated a great sense of integrity and activism in her, which very quickly led to her leaving behind her immediate family. From the 1950s on, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen began actively denouncing the Salazar regime and its supporters; she opposed the Portuguese colonial war in Africa that began in 1961 and continued until the fall of the regime on 25 April 1974 and criticised the Catholic Church’s support of Salazar. Once democracy had been restored she played an active role in the political life of the country and, in more recent years, already at the beginning of the new

millennium, she concentrated on the independence of East Timor, a former Portuguese colony in South-East Asia, which had been occupied by Indonesia since 1975.

She is particularly admired for her poetry and recognised as one of the great Portuguese voices of the twentieth century. In the years between 1944, when she was 25, and 1997 she published 14 poetry collections, which probably comprise the most significant part of her work, now available in her *Obra completa* (Andresen 2018): *Poesia* (1944), *Dia do mar* (1947), *Coral* (1950), *No tempo dividido* (1954), *Mar novo* (1958), *O Cristo cigano* (1961), *Livro sexto* (1962), *Geografia* (1967), *Dual* (1972), *O nome das coisas* (1977), *Navegações* (1983), *Ilhas* (1989), *Musa* (1994), *O búzio de Cós e outros poemas* (1997).

However, her works also include other genres, such as narratives and the theatre, at which she excelled. Although she has always been recognised for her poetry, in actual fact generations of Portuguese are familiar with her children literature, which has been an unflinching part in the recommended readings of the National Plan for Portuguese Reading for children and have become classics (Vale 2014).

Sophia began writing these books for her five children, between 1948 and 1956. The first one was *A menina do mar* (1958), followed by *A fada Oriana* (1958), *A noite de Natal* (1959), *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca* (1964), *O rapaz de bronze* (1966) and *A floresta* (1968). Many years later, in 1985, she also published *A árvore* (1985), which includes an adaptation of two Japanese tales, while in 1986 a short story called *A cebola da velha avarenta* was published in a book called *A Antologia Diferente – De que são feitos os sonhos*, edited by another children's literature author, Luísa Ducla Soares. Written in 1991 on the occasion of Christmas for the radio station Renascença, just a few days after the Santa Cruz massacre in which hundreds of Timorese suffered violent deaths, *O anjo de Timor* (2003) was not published for several years².

In addition to these works, in 1984 she published a collection of short stories for children, *Histórias da terra e do mar*, which includes an adaptation of Cinderella with an ending that is anything but happy, since the protagonist is found lifeless and with a worn out shoe on one of her feet.

2 Not yet published in the English language, the titles of the children's stories can be translated respectively as: The Little Girl from the Sea, A Fairy called Oriana, The Night of Christmas, The Knight of Denmark, The Boy of Bronze, The Forest, The Tree, The Miserly Old Lady's Onion and The Angel of Timor.

Finally, her works for children also include *O primeiro livro de poesia* (1991), an illustrated anthology for children and teenagers with works by different Portuguese authors, selected by Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen.

Her contribution to children's literature was recognised in 1992 when she was awarded the Calouste Gulbenkian Prize for this literature sector, in addition to numerous other prizes that she received throughout her life for her poetry. In 1999 she was the first woman to receive the Camões Prize, the most important literary prize in the Portuguese language.

Sophia's children's books can be divided into two distinct periods, which correspond to the two different stages of Portuguese children's literature in the twentieth century, in which the Carnation Revolution in 1974 was the great divide, as stated by Pires and Balça (2013: 71–73). This essay will focus on the first six short stories that she published, prior to the end of the New State (*Estado Novo*, 1933–1974) and the return of total democracy in Portugal. However, the two tales that drew inspiration from traditional Japanese stories in *A árvore* (1985) also deserve a particular mention; in these, once again the tree reconfirms its positive symbolic value and the fact it is a recurring element in all the author's children's works³. Anticipating an eco-poetic approach, nature generally plays a fundamental role in not only all of Sophia's children's stories, but also in her poetry, marked by the experience of the possible communion between man and nature.

2. The child as an ethical subject

Although today Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's children's stories are basically regarded as classics, at the time they represented a revolution in the history of children's literature in Portugal, at a time when it was experiencing stagnation and an emptiness of contents, owing above all to the propaganda and censorship policies of the New State.

As the brilliant Eça de Queirós so astutely observed in one of his *Cartas da Inglaterra*⁴ in an essay on Christmas literature for younger readers, compared to

3 Cfr. Guerreiro (2010: 599–600), which underlines the role of trees in the author's imagination, as a symbol of life, continuous development and subject to the cyclic nature of life itself, whilst in ascetic tension with the sky.

4 English edition: *Eça's English Letters* (2000). This is a collection of texts of an essayist and opinion nature that the Portuguese author wrote when he was in England, working at the consulate, first in Newcastle upon Tyne and then in Bristol, from 1874 to 1888. Here, particular reference is made to the text entitled "A literatura de Natal para crianças" (Christmas literature for children).

other similar European countries, the history of children's literature in Portugal was lagging behind. Once again, on this occasion Eça de Queirós did not hesitate to criticise Portugal, which bore no comparison with England, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Denmark or Sweden: not only did Portugal have no national or foreign children's literature, but it did not even show the slightest interest in the fact that there should be any books for Portuguese children to read. Although the situation began to improve in the 1920s⁵, the panorama was still unsatisfactory in the decades that followed.

In numerous interviews, Sophia herself described how she had been driven to try her hand at writing for children by her dissatisfaction with the kind of children's literature that was available in those years in Portugal⁶. According to Blockeel, with its tacit acceptance of traditionalist principles and national themes, the New State's conservatism met with resistance on behalf of few writers who refused to be subjugated to the regime's ideology: amongst them, in addition to Ilse Losa, António Torrado and Luísa Ducla Soares who was mentioned earlier, there was also none other than Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen⁷.

Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's children's stories are a literary reply to the pervasive infantilism underlying the New State's ideological structure. The author herself says:

I began making up children's stories when my children had the measles. It was winter and the doctor had said they had to stay in bed, nice and warm. This meant they needed entertaining the whole day. At first, I told them the stories I knew. Then I had someone buy some books that I tried to read out loud. But I couldn't stand the mawkishness of the language or the sentimentalism of the "message": a child is a child, they're aren't stupid. I threw the books away and decided to invent instead. I sought memories of what had fascinated me in my old childhood. I remembered that, when I was five or six and was living in a white house on a dune, my mother had told me that a tiny girl lived in the

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- 5 According to Rocha (2001: 69), at the end of the 1920s this sector of the publishing market took off, trying to conquer children's literature which had, until then, been ignored, as can be seen by the number of periodicals and supplements on the subject.
 - 6 The result of the dissatisfaction of an educated, conscious mother, writing children's literature was also a source of income for the family at a financially difficult time when her husband Sousa Tavares was out of work owing to his political activism (Nery 2019: 89).
 - 7 "É consabido que o conservadorismo, uma aceitação tácita dos princípios tradicionalistas e os temas nacionais eram características gerais durante o Estado Novo, não obstante o esforço de uma mão-cheia de escritores para não se sujeitarem à ideologia do regime, como, por exemplo, Ilse Losa, Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen, António Torrado e Luísa Ducla Soares" (Blockeel, 2001: 126–127).

rocks on that beach. Since for me at that time what I loved doing the most was swimming amongst the rocks, all my attention focussed on that little sea girl. So, starting from that ancient, real and imaginary world, I began telling the story that I was to call “The little girl from the sea”⁸.

The “mawkishness of the language” and the “sentimentalism of the ‘message’” that Sophia complains about are an accurate description of the children’s literature that was circulating in Portugal in the 1950s. It was in 1950 that the Head Office of the State Censorship Services had published its instructions for children’s literature (*Instruções sobre a literatura infantil*); in great detail, also as regards the graphics and printing aspects, it laid down the characteristics that works for the younger generation (children and teenagers) were to have if they were to be allowed to circulate on the Portuguese book market. Amongst other things, the Portuguese censorship agency stated that “it is desirable that Portuguese children are educated, not as citizens of the World, in their preparation, but as Portuguese children who will no longer be children when they grow up, but will continue to be Portuguese” (Direção dos Serviços de Censura 1950: 5). In actual fact, the Salazar regime focussed on propaganda that was based on being proud of being a small, isolated Catholic nation that was still based on rural values and sound moral principles; it was described as a society without conflicts and one in which the traditional family represented the fundamental nucleus.

According to the censors’ logic, children were meant to be treated as children; their world curiosity should not be stimulated excessively, and adventure should not be encouraged. Instead, they should be helped to love their Country and family, helped not to have any ambitions other than being good, and developing through reading “positive emotions and passions”, “generous courage”, “a feeling

8 “Comecei a inventar histórias para crianças quando os meus filhos tiveram sarampo. Era no inverno e o médico tinha dito que eles deviam ficar na cama, bem cobertos, bem agasalhados. Para isso era preciso entretê-los o dia inteiro. Primeiro contei todas as histórias que sabia. Depois mandei comprar alguns livros que tentei ler em voz alta. Mas não suportei a pieguice da linguagem, nem a sentimentalidade da ‘mensagem’. Uma criança é uma criança, não é um pateta. Atirei os livros fora e resolvi inventar. Procurei a memória daquilo que tinha fascinado a minha própria infância. Lembrei-me que – quando eu tinha cerca de 5 ou 6 anos e vivia numa casa branca na duna – a minha mãe me tinha contado que nos rochedos daquela praia morava uma menina muito pequenina. Como naquele tempo para mim a felicidade máxima era tomar banho entre os rochedos essa menina tornou-se o centro das minhas imaginações. E a partir desse antigo mundo real e imaginário comecei a contar a história a que mais tarde chamei *A Menina do Mar*” (cit. in Nery 2019: 88).

of solidarity” and “moral health” (p. 3). Children’s literature was meant to be based on texts and illustrations that could project themselves “into the sphere of habits and the moral sphere as a principle of order and discipline” (p. 3).

Throughout the regime, the edifying function of children’s literature outweighed all the others and only around a fifth of the works that were published in this period focussed on any recreational aspects, above all thanks to the novelties that were arriving from abroad, despite being filtered, for example the Walt Disney characters (Patriarca 2012: 303–304). While Portuguese tradition was rich in exemplary tales, the moral-educational function of children’s literature was exasperated by the political rationale regulating it.

Although the Instructions of the Head Office of Censorship Services was published in 1950, in actual fact the principles it included and outlined in the form of detailed instructions had already been instigated since the beginning of the New State which, through the Secretariat of National Propaganda under the guidance of António Ferro, in 1935 had established the National Prize for Children’s Literature, which was potentially an excellent instrument to guide both tastes and production.

When Sophia talks about “sentimentalism of the so-called ‘message’”, she is referring to a thematic repertoire that is perfectly in line with the regime ideology, one in which the defence of nationalism goes hand in hand with the apologia of hard work, poverty and modesty, and the moralistic objective often went via the exaltation of the popular culture in its diverse expressions (Patriarca 2012: 308). In children’s books in those years, references abounded to popular traditions, agricultural life, and the world of farming that the regime praised so highly; illustrations often focussed on traditional aspects. In this pretended happy world of proud misery, children were meant to preserve their innocence as children, they weren’t meant to question the value of obedience in a pre-established, practically unchanging world, and had no choice but to be happy.

It is inevitable that this kind of content is associated with a language that reflects a paternalistic attitude towards the younger readers; the language itself becomes nauseating and, for example, the titles themselves already display a massive use of diminutives and hypocorisms (Patriarca 2012: 317).

Sophia is repelled by a repertoire that is so close to the regime’s heart and treats young readers like fools and she puts herself out there to give first and foremost her own children a different kind of narrative and aesthetic experience. In her stories it is the child that is at the centre of the tale; the child becomes the protagonist of a universe that is characterised by beauty, enchantment, and fascination; it is a universe they can explore with curiosity and discover with amazement. Sophia starts with the vivid memories of her childhood, one that

was so privileged it might appear a fantasy when transformed in narration. Furthermore, it is always her memories that define some of the originality of her poetry, in which the *topoi* of the sea, the garden, the forest, and the house in the dunes play a key role. Hence, in *A menina do mar* she offers a metamorphosed vision of the beach of Granja. While in *O rapaz de bronze* and *A floresta* what we have is a clear description of the gardens of her grandparents' house in Campo Alegre, with precise details that are repeated significantly: the flower and tree species, the metal nameplates tied with a piece of raffia with the botanical name of the plants. . . And in *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca* it is the filtered image of her Nordic origins that emerges. In fact, in this continuous transfiguration of memories, the *topoi* take on a new symbolic meaning.

The author sees no contradiction in the transfigured, charming universe she creates with the ethical principles she so firmly believes in, reflecting her profound Christian beliefs in which the sense of good and evil, honour, and sacrificing oneself for the good of another are the highest values of all. On the contrary, it is precisely this feeling of amazement that leads to an ethical stance in the world.

As Guerreiro summarises so succinctly (2010: 27, 617), all the characters are driven by precise ideological and axiological principles that the author wants to transmit, above all, solidarity, integrity and altruism. Without any intention of being moralistic, in her work there is always an attempt, at times uncertain, at understanding what the right thing to do is, making the right decision so the protagonists will find their place and harmony, in equilibrium with world. As Gomes says (1997: 40):

In the condemnation of the egocentricity and artificiality, hypocrisy and perversion that originated from material assets, friendship, love, peace and generosity are opposed, as is the exaltation of Christian humanity, the social and ethical value of an artwork and faith in ancient and universal principles⁹.

Although Sophia's work is innovative in Portuguese tradition, it is inevitably part of it, in particular regarding the genre of exemplary tales and popular fairy tales; in addition, reference points include the Anglo-Saxon and Nordic traditions, which transpire in certain settings, for example in the tale *O Cavaleiro da Dinamarca* or in her favourite setting of the forest in particular. In general, in

9 “Da condenação do egocentrismo e do artificialismo, da hipocrisia e da perversão originada pelo apego aos bens materiais, parte-se para a exaltação do humanismo cristão, do valor social e ético da obra de arte e da fidelidade a princípios antigos e universais”.

her narrations Sophia constructs parallel worlds that are linked to reality but at the same time contain magical elements and figures that are able to reconfigure the experience and interpretation of reality.

3. The power and limits of the aesthetical experience

As mentioned earlier, the spatial-temporal coordinates of Sophia's works are linked to the memories of the writer's own childhood, to the places and the passing of time that marked it.

Her favourite settings are those of nature, which is able to transcend the temporal dimension and thus offer a link to the sense of the sacred. As said earlier, the garden, forest, beach and sea are all recurring sites of real *topoi*. As already shown by others, one of whom was Ramos (2005: 15), it is in the natural setting that the protagonist always manages to fulfil her entirety and total integrity, bordering on perfection. It is a setting that almost always "succumbs to a logic of the marvellous – with the presence of fairies, gnomes, humanised animals and magical transformations"¹⁰ (Gomes 2007: 2), in which flowers can become alive and are transformed into a splendid allegory of human being.

Nature counterpoises an anthropized space, for example a city, and it is precisely as a result of the isolation or the distance from other human beings – above all adults who are very often destabilising, and the bearers of conflict and restlessness – that the protagonist is able to contact other worlds that take him or her on revealing discoveries. The protagonists in Sophia's stories are always alone: the child is an only child, for example the protagonist in *A menina do mar* or Joana in *A noite de Natal*; the adults, for example the protagonist in *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca*, make their way in the world and in relationships maintaining a marked individual destiny, which only solitude can fulfil.

However, inhabited areas are not completely missing: the house appears in various guises as a nuclear space and one of welcome, which is very often animated by dinners and parties as a place of conviviality. In *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca* the urban setting – in particular in Venice and Florence (Andresen 2013c: 14–16, 21–22) – is devoid of any negativity although there it goes back in time to the Renaissance and a universe of values and style of social relations that differs greatly from the one in today's cities. According to the fairy Oriana, the latter is where "the life of men is the most difficult" (Andresen 2012a: 85) and

10 "[S]ubjaz uma lógica do maravilhoso – com a presença de fadas, anões, animais humanizados e transformações mágicas".

in *A floresta* it is perceived as a threat: “In the last century, the city has grown considerably. Year by year it advances and now it has almost reached the walls of this property. But in ancient times, the city was small and was a long way away” (Andresen 2013a: 34)¹¹.

Nature is the setting for the revelation of the marvellous¹², in a profound communion of the experience of beauty and a tendency towards perfection. The description of natural places is clear and precise, often resorting to a list of nouns and, more sporadically, sequences of adjectives as in the following examples: “The rocks looked as if they were covered in silt, conches, anemones, limpets, seaweed and sea urchins”; “Around the house there was a garden of sand in which white lilies and a plant that had white, yellow and purple flowers was growing” in *A menina do mar*¹³, or “Once upon a time there used to be a marvellous garden, full of large lime trees, birches, oaks, magnolias and sycamores” which is the introduction to *O rapaz de bronze*¹⁴. The garden is always arranged as a *locus amoenus*, a perfect, complete space that encloses marvels; it is a place that is “full of peace and freshness”¹⁵, as it says in *A noite de Natal*.

The evocation of nature is done using the precise nomenclature, following a principle that was close to Calvino’s heart in *Lezioni americane*. The names of trees, plants, flowers and fish that live on the seabed that are often unknown to the young reader, all help create a world that is both natural and magic. This precision of classificatory nomenclature is accompanied at a visual level by a description of colours and shapes; but the reading process involves all the senses, for example touch with a reference to consistence, smell with the description of aromas and perfumes, or even taste with the description or evocation of flavours. At times, this simultaneous involvement of sensorial and cognitive experiences borders on synaesthesia, as can be seen by the words of the little girl from the sea:

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- 11 “[A] vida dos homens é mais difícil”; “Neste último século a cidade tem crescido muito. De ano para ano avança e agora já quase vem tocar os muros desta quinta. Mas naqueles tempos antigos a cidade era pequena e ficava muito distante.”
 - 12 Very often it is the “pagan marvellous”, as is the case in *A menina e o mar*, *A fada Oriana*, *O rapaz de bronze* or *A floresta*; but it can also be associated with the Christian epiphanic experience, as in *A noite de Natal* or *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca*.
 - 13 “[A]s rochas apareciam cobertas de limo, de búzios, de anémonas, de lapas, de algas e de ouriços”; “Em volta da casa havia um jardim de areia onde cresciam lírios brancos e uma planta que dava flores brancas, amarelas e roxas” (Andresen 2012b: 7).
 - 14 “Era uma vez um jardim maravilhoso, cheio de grandes tílias, bétulas, carvalhos, magnólias e plátanos” (Andresen 2013d: 9).
 - 15 “[C]heio de paz e frescura” (Andresen 2013b: 9).

Now I know what the earth is. Now I know the taste of the spring, summer and autumn. I know what fruit tastes like. I know what the freshness of the trees is. I know the heat of a mountain in the sun¹⁶.

The temporal aspect is either marked by natural cycles, the succession of the seasons in particular, for example in *A menina do mar*, or *A floresta*, or by the cyclic nature of recurring events such as Christmas, which is a key moment in both *A noite de Natal* and in *O cavaleiro da Dinamarca*.

The centrality of the child as the subject of the reading experience can also be seen in the language and actual creation since Sophia constructs the tales, embellishing them in response to her own children's urging, since upon their return from school they would ask her if she had continued the tale she was creating bit by bit. The children take part in the construction of the tale, asking for details, and additional information such as the colour of a dress, or how a fish behaved, for instance.

These are tales whose origins lie in oral storytelling, which is also a fundamental element in Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen's creative process¹⁷. In particular, there are other traits that are characteristic of her entire literary production but that take on particular importance in her children's books, precisely because they mark a clear break with the national repertory of that time. The oral dimension is skilfully preserved in her stories and great care is taken so that the actual reader is never forgotten. With her use of repeated enumerations, a clever combination of adjectives and nouns, a lexis that is prevalently related to the natural world and its elements, first and foremost the land and water, her style is seemingly simple but precise and able to produce an effect of enchantment and fascination. As already pointed out by Gomes (1997: 39–40), the prose is both rhythmical and musical, rich in alliteration, anaphors and internal rhymes, without resorting to excessively complex syntactical structures for her audience, but without resulting excessively simple. All of this gives her children's stories that magical transparency that transpires from the lines that are the result of intense poetical research. The encounter between reality and magic is (re)produced by the clarity of the words she chooses, and the magic created by their sound.

A para-textual element that affects the aesthetic value of Sophia's tales is the visual element, coming from the illustrations of the first editions of the books. As Sara Reis da Silva (2017: 69) showed so clearly, thanks to the prestigious

16 "Agora já sei o que é a terra. Agora já sei o que é o sabor da primavera, do verão e do outono. Já sei como é o calor de uma montanha ao sol." (Andresen 2012b: 25)

17 This is highlighted by the writer herself more than once, as Mozos also confirms (2019).

collaboration with illustrious Portuguese names, despite the lack of means and backwardness compared to the Anglo-Saxon world where the first picture books had already appeared, the quality of the graphical aspect of Sophia's stories was irrefutable. The author's first editions of children stories were all illustrated by famous artists: *A menina do mar* (1958) and *A noite de Natal* (1959) were illustrated respectively by Sarah Affonso (1899–1983) and by Maria Keil (1914–2012), two plastic modernist artists who were of great importance in the Portuguese art world; the pictures of the first editions of *O Cavaleiro da Dinamarca* (1964) and *A Floresta* (1968) were by Armando Alves (1935-); the third edition of *A Fada Oriana* (1972) was illustrated by Luís Noronha da Costa (1942-) while the ninth edition (1990) was illustrated by Júlio Resende (1917–2011).

However, the attention here to aesthetics raises the ethical question that Sophia herself posed in 1975, in a political climate that was completely different to the one when she had written her stories. In an interview she gave on the radio station of Emissora Nacional, the author pointed out that it was a problem that was intrinsic to the capitalist system and very difficult to resolve:

a children's book has to be an open book, one that opens up the child's horizon to a literary culture, but it has to open up the child's horizon to a plastic culture as well. Actually, children [...] want books that have beautiful illustrations. Now book illustrations are really expensive, and this terrible thing happens – happened – in the regime we were living in. The fact is that a book with nice illustrations was an expensive book, and only privileged children can afford it¹⁸.

Aesthetics cannot be separated from ethical responsibility as, amongst other, the story of the fairy Oriana suggests; when admiration of and the search for beauty become vanity, an encounter with poetry and creative enchantment becomes impossible.

18 Statements retrieved by the journalist Luís Caetano published on <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e5JU6e44Iw8&feature=youtu.be> (“o livro para crianças deve ser um livro aberto, que abre o horizonte da criança para uma cultura literária, mas também deve abrir o horizonte da criança para uma cultura plástica. Aliás, as crianças [...] querem um livro cuja ilustração seja bela. Ora, a ilustração dos livros é muito cara, e acontece esta coisa terrível – acontecia, no regime em que nós vivemos. É que um livro com ilustrações belas era um livro caro, que só podia ser comprado por crianças privilegiadas”).

4. Final remarks

In clear contrast to the infantile and conservative panorama of the New State, the children's literature that Sophia de Mello Breyner Andresen wrote from the end of the 1950s to the end of the 1960s pays close attention to the child as a subject with great integrity and the ability to make courageous and ethical decisions, and one that is involved in the first person in a grounding process of awareness of everything that is different from themselves. As Nery observed (2019: 93), it is in this very period, that both in her poetry and childhood literature poetical and political action become increasingly blurred, and the younger audience proves to be the only possible universal audience of readers in the historic moment she is living in, because she can't reach the adults since access to culture is not open to everyone in the same way.

As a result of her great dissatisfaction with the children's books available in Portugal at that time, Sophia's creative impulse created a literary universe that was characterised by the marked presence of nature as the privileged setting for encounter with the marvellous, taking the protagonists in the tales to the enchantment of discovering what is different. Sophia's narrative opens up the horizon of young Portuguese readers to new worlds, ones that are different from theirs, along a path of inevitable axiological research that, from the 1950s on, is renewed amongst her readers from generation to generation, thus confirming the validity of the ethical questioning and aesthetical quality of her stories.

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Irena Prosenč

Animals and fantastic creatures in Svetlana Makarovič's fairy tales

Abstract: This essay examines a fairy-tale anthology written by contemporary Slovene author Svetlana Makarovič and focuses on its literary characters which include animals, humans, mythological and fantastic creatures, animate objects, plants, natural phenomena, beings derived from the Christian ideology and parts of the human body. The analysis looks at the frequency of each group of characters and studies the ways in which they are structured, their anthropomorphic traits and the values that they transmit. It questions the role of the characters inspired by Slavic mythological creatures which are resemanticised and may assume ironic connotations. Largely prevailing among the protagonists are the animal characters, while humans mostly figure as secondary characters. The paper explores the ways in which the fairy tales, through their animal protagonists, build a non-anthropocentric image of the world.

Keywords: Svetlana Makarovič, animals, Slavic mythology, fairy tales

1. Introduction

Svetlana Makarovič is regarded by many as one of the foremost figures in contemporary Slovene culture¹. Born in 1939, she has been a constant public presence as a writer, singer and actress since the 1960s, when she published her earliest poetry collections. Makarovič's literary production has included prose, poetry and theatrical works for adults and children. Her prominent position in Slovene literature is largely due to her being one of Slovenia's most important and prolific authors of children's literature whose works have been read by several generations of readers.

Svetlana Makarovič's multiple talents and areas of interest are reflected in her somehow eclectic career path (Matos 2005; Haramija 2009, 13–15; Makarovič, Šurc 2019). After having trained as a nursery school teacher, she studied acting at the Academy of Performing Arts in Ljubljana. However, despite having achieved critical acclaim for her theatrical roles, she later decided to abandon acting altogether (Golob 1983, 132) and devoted herself to literature. Makarovič began

1 The author acknowledges the financial support from the Slovenian Research Agency (research core funding No. P6-0239 and project No. BI-AT/20-21-027).

writing texts for children in the 1970s and has since published more than fifty collections of fairy tales, children's poems and picture books (Jamnik, Lavrenčič 2008, 827), thus producing a "unique opus that in terms of imaginative power and originality is unequalled in contemporary Slovenian literature" (Ilc 1997, 137). The author has acquired immense popularity and critical acclaim especially for her fairy tales. Her first collection, *Little Mouse Is Sleeping (Miška spi)*, was published in 1972, while her most recent anthology, *Golden Cats' Yarns (Zlata mačja preja)* was published in 2014.

Several of Svetlana Makarovič's fairy tales have been adapted for television and for the Ljubljana Puppet Theatre, with which she has collaborated as an author, director and actress. She has interpreted some of her fairy tale characters including the legendary Sapramouse, currently the most famous puppet in Slovenia. While the fairy tale narrating the mouse's story was first published in 1976, the puppet play saw its première in 1986 and has never ceased to be performed since. Furthermore, Makarovič has recorded audio books and illustrated fourteen of her fairy-tale editions (Štrucl 2008) as well as translating works by foreign authors. In the 1980s she began a parallel career as a singer and songwriter.

The writer has been known to openly voice her opinions on political and societal issues, albeit she defines herself as an artist rather than an activist (Mihelič 2019b) and emphasises that her strength lies within the scope of the artistic creation (Sivka 2017). She finds that we live in "a violent world [...] obsessed with the cult of power and money which is not even good enough for cats"² (Hofman 1978, 269). She frequently expresses her ideas in ways charged with polemical irony, traces of which may be found in the narrative strategies present in her fairy tales. Over the recent years, Makarovič has associated herself with the symbol of the red star, which she interprets as an emblem of freedom and resistance against corruption rather than a remnant of the Yugoslav communist regime (Vistoropski 2017).

Makarovič's children's texts have been translated into various foreign languages. *Svetlana's Fairytales*, published in 2008, is a bilingual anthology containing sixty texts. The fairy tales, selected by the author herself, span across more than three decades, from 1974 (*Bakery Mishmash*) to 2008 (*The Moonlight String*, published here for the first time). Her other children's works available in English include *Cosies on the Flying Spoon* (1994), *Gal in the Gallery* (2006) and

2 "svet nasilja [...], svet, ki je obseden od kulta moči in denarja. Še za mačke ni dovolj dober". All translations by the author, unless otherwise indicated.

Sapra the Little Mouse (2017). Moreover, a selection of Makarovič's poetry for adult readership was published in English and German with the title *Aloneness* (2008).

2. "Every fairy tale contains a tiny little tear"³

In her study of a corpus of Slovene fairy tales, Marjana Kobe distinguishes between classical and modern fairy tales. The former are one-dimensional in the sense that any unrealistic elements are perceived as normal and therefore unsurprising (Kobe 1999a, 7). This definition corresponds to the notion of the fairy-tale universe as being entirely marvellous and seems in line with Todorov's theory on the marvellous as opposed to the fantastic⁴ as well as Frye's conception of romance⁵. The modern fairy tale, on the other hand, is a two-dimensional narrative characterised by the irruption of unrealistic elements into a realistic setting, which provokes feelings of surprise and distress (Kobe 1999a, 7; Kobe 1999b, 9). It is set in a contemporary environment and features characters ranging from children and animals to animated objects, plants, celestial objects, natural phenomena and characters derived from the traditional fairy tale (Kobe 1999a, 5–6). According to these definitions, Svetlana Makarovič's corpus comprises classical as well as modern fairy tales (Haramija 2009, 21).

As the author herself has emphasised on numerous occasions, she does not perceive her texts as being specifically directed towards children. She refuses definitions of her work based on labels such as "children's literature" or "young adult literature" (Hofman 1978, 269). She explains that her preference for fairy tales does not stem from their being directed to a specific readership but from their literary quality: "I do not write for children; I write fairy tales because I feel close to this literary genre"⁶ (Stojiljković 2012). Makarovič observes that just like a poem which, once it has reached its readers, is no longer hers (Lorenci 2018),

3 "V vsaki pravljici se čuti ena majčkena, majčkena solza" (Klobčar 2019).

4 According to Todorov, "[l]e merveilleux implique que nous soyons plongés dans un monde aux lois totalement différentes de ce qu'elles sont dans le nôtre; de ce fait, les événements surnaturels qui se produisent ne sont nullement inquiétants" (Todorov 1970, 180).

5 Frye observes that "[t]he hero of romance moves in a world in which the ordinary laws of nature are slightly suspended: prodigies of courage and endurance, unnatural to us, are natural to him, and enchanted weapons, talking animals, terrifying ogres and witches, and talismans of miraculous power violate no rule of probability once the postulates of romance have been established" (Frye 1973, 33).

6 "ne pišem za otroke, pravljice pišem, ker mi je blizu literarni žanr".

“once a fairy tale has been written down, it starts its journey into the world and must fend for itself. At times it wanders into a child’s hands and feels good there, other times it does not happen this way”⁷ (Košir 2015). The writer remarks that she does not know how to write exclusively for children and that she writes for children and adults alike, since it is especially these latter who “need fairy tales in order to be able to preserve their faith in beauty in a world full of anxiety”⁸ (Hofman 1978, 268–269). The interest in fairy tales on the part of adult readers may, in fact, be interpreted as “a sign of a crisis of values manifesting itself as the need for those values which are absent from society but exist in fairy tales. In a certain way, adults may nowadays need fairy tales even more than children”⁹ (Blažič, Pregl Kobe 2015, 338).

Makarovič observes that fairy tales originate deep within her (Ihan 1996, 330) and explains that “in order for a fairy tale to be born, one just needs to sit at the typewriter and wait: once the first sentence has been written down, the fairy tale can be finished in a single night”¹⁰ (Vegelj 2018). The author notes that “fairy tales are sometimes born out of humiliation, suffering, pain and injustice”¹¹ (Stojilković 2012). In her recently published biography¹² she comments that most of her fairy tales “contain at least one hidden tear” due to the fact that “we are surrounded by a terrible world in which the human being is the one we most need to fear”¹³ (Makarovič, Šurc 2019, 119). The vision recounted in her fairy tales is that of a world which is “horrible because of horrible people and at the same time incredibly beautiful because of good people”¹⁴ (Mihelič 2019a).

7 “ko je pravljica napisana, gre v svet. Tam zunaj se mora znajti sama. Včasih pride v otroške roke in se tam počuti dobro, drugič spet ne”.

8 “potrebujemo pravljice, da v tesnobi sveta [...] laže ohranimo vero v lepo”.

9 “pokazatelj krize vrednot, ki se kaže v potrebi po tistih vrednotah, ki jih v družbi ni, so pa v pravljicah. Odrasli na neki način danes pravljice potrebujejo še bolj kot otroci”.

10 “pravljica nastane tako, da sedeš za pisalni stroj in čakaš, in ko je prvi stavek napisan, lahko v eni noči nastane pravljica”.

11 “Pravljice se včasih rodijo iz ponižanja, iz gorja, iz bolečine, iz krivic”.

12 The title of the biography is *Luciferka*, meaning a female Lucifer; while alluding to the author’s somewhat controversial public figure, the title plays on the etymology of her name, derived from the Slavic word for light. The book’s release in November 2019 was accompanied by a much-publicised editorial dispute between the authors and the publisher. Incidentally, the authors credited a number of satirical comments included in the book and directed at the publisher to Kotik, Makarovič’s cat, whose name also figures on the book’s cover along with theirs.

13 “večina njih ima v sebi skrito vsaj eno solzo. Obdaja nas strašni svet, v katerem se je treba najbolj bati človeka”.

14 “Svet je strašen zaradi strašnih ljudi in hkrati čudovito lep zaradi dobrih ljudi”.

Her fairy tales are therefore a “counterpoint of light and darkness, of seriousness and cheerfulness”¹⁵ (Forstnerič Hajnšek 2010, 6). They are characterised by subtle humour which, according to the author, often originates in “pain, sadness, feelings of being marginalised and the awareness that one is always alone in difficult times”¹⁶ (Mihelič 2019a).

Svetlana Makarovič's fairy tales focus on values such as non-violence, justice, equality, friendship, sharing, tolerance, dignity, personal autonomy and independence. Some focus on the need to accept the requirements of growing up, such as *Puss Gives Himself a Lickdown*, in which a naughty kitten needs to learn how to clean himself, or *The Spoilt Little Sparrow*, in which a fledgling needs to stop clinging to his mother, win his fears and learn to fly. One of the fundamental values is the “respect for the others, their freedom and their being different”¹⁷ (Saksida 2001, 433). Makarovič's fairy tales are “instructive, yet never overtly educational” (Jamnik, Lavrenčič 2008, 829) and frequently contain criticism of the contemporary world (Pezdirč-Bartol 2011, 100). They transmit the message that “coexistence between humans, animals and fairy-tale creatures is easier if we respect each other's differences and that a patient dialogue is wiser than cheating, being stubborn or proving one's strength”¹⁸ (Novak 2008, 12). Although several fairy tales recount hardships and suffering generated by the need to surmount obstacles, they mostly have happy endings, albeit the final restoration of equilibrium does not necessarily imply the traditional “they all lived happily ever after” closure but rather minor events. Thus, “[s]ome characters are blessed with a full stomach, others with beautiful dreams and still others are returned to their starting point, a safe and warm home. Sometimes, the presence of a single understanding soul suffices, or the return of self-confidence or the successful passage of an important trial which is worth much more than material wealth” (Ilc 1997, 134). Svetlana Makarovič has introduced an impressive number of innovations into Slovene children's literature, such as new narrative spaces, a non-anthropocentric vision of the world, linguistic originality, societal criticism adapted to children as well as narrative strategies intended for a double

15 “kontrapunkt svetlega in temnega, resnobnega in sproščenega”.

16 “Humor se rodi iz bolečine, žalosti, odrinjenosti, spoznanja, da si v hudih časih vedno sam”.

17 “spoštovanje (svobode) drugega in drugačnega”.

18 “je življenje tako med ljudmi kot med živalmi in pravičnimi bitji lepše, če spoštujemo drug drugega v vseh naših različnostih, ter da se je pametneje strpno pogovarjati kot slepariti, trmoglaviti in dokazovati, kdo je glavni”.

addressee with the text being directed towards children and the context towards adults (Blažič 2011, 76–78).

3. From mythological creatures to parts of the human body

The characters featured in *Svetlana's Fairytales* include animals, humans, mythological and fantastic creatures, animate objects, plants, natural phenomena, beings derived from the Christian ideology and even parts of the human body. The most numerous are animals, who are protagonists of as many as forty out of the sixty fairy tales and feature as secondary characters in all but ten. Due to its size and complexity, this group shall be analysed in the following chapter. By comparison, human protagonists are much rarer and are to be found in as few as six fairy tales featuring three adult men¹⁹ and three boys²⁰. They are, however, frequent as secondary characters, appearing in twenty-seven fairy tales.

Mythological creatures are protagonists of eight fairy tales and secondary characters in six. They include dwarves, gremlins, imps, sprites, gremlinettes, goblinettes²¹, fairies²², witches and a dragon. *The Rabbit's Year* features several beings inspired by Slavic mythology and popular traditions. It recounts Floppy the bunny's journey across the four seasons in search of his lost tail. The seasons are inhabited by mythological creatures associated with the yearly cycle. Thus, when Floppy enters the door leading into spring, he meets the Morningman, an old man unrolling the morning mists which had been spun overnight by pussy willows but had been tangled up by dancing fairies. He is reminiscent of Jutrman ("jutro" meaning "morning" in Slovene), a Slavic mythological being who announces the arrival of the morning and scatters dew on meadows (Kropej 2012, 227). Floppy is then approached by three green-haired girls inspired by Vesne, beings similar to fairies who are believed to roam about at night, awake nature and bring fertility (Kropej 2012, 244) and can be interpreted as a personification of agrarian rituals (Ovsec 1991, 470). The girls insist on petting the rabbit until he gets so irritated that he almost bites them. They are interrupted by the arrival of the Green Man. In Slavic mythology, Zeleni Jurij or Green George chases away the winter and personifies the power of the sun that awakens the soil and vegetation (Kropej 2012, 248). As Floppy crosses the door into summer,

19 *Bakery Mishmash*, *A Fox's Advice* and *The Moonlight String*.

20 *Shooshko's Forest Day*, *Something Really Special* and *Better Something Than Nothing*.

21 *Carrot Dwarf*, *Kuzma the Gremlin Wins a Prize*, *Kuzma the Gremlin and the Ants*, *The Little Fire Imp*, *Kathleen of the Spring* and *The Water Sprite and the Frogs*.

22 *The Raspberry Fairy* and *The Sweets of Fairy Pussandra*.

he sees that animals have gathered at dusk to greet the Midsummer Man, who is described as “a young man [...] with flaming golden hair, striking fiery eyes and holding a huge torch in his right hand” with which he lights a bonfire (Makarovič 2008, 692–693). A firefly then promises the rabbit that his wish to find his tail will be granted when the year turns through the half. The Midsummer Man or Kresnik is one of the most important old Slavic deities and is regarded as a benevolent being (Ovsec 1991, 469). He is associated with the summer solstice (in Slovene, “kresni dan”) and his attributes are the sun and fire (Kropej 2012, 35, 228); nevertheless, his identity as a solar deity may be a later transformation of an originally lunar demon (Ovsec 1991, 470). After summer, Floppy enters an autumn forest where he meets gremlins and fairies as well as father Blaze and his fiery little young who sprinkle tree leaves with autumn colours. In Slavic mythology, Blazes or Škopniki are celestial beings who fly through the air at night in the form of burning sheaves of straw (Kropej 2012, 176, 240). In winter, which is the last stop on his journey, Floppy meets the Witch of the North or Pehtra Baba whom he helps to make snow in a large cauldron. Pehtra Baba is a mythological being who looks like an old woman and whose nature is ambivalent: on the one hand, she is the bearer of light, on the other, she is a terrifying creature who produces snow and thunderstorms (Kropej 2012, 234). In the end, the rabbit’s wish is finally granted by the beautiful Winterman who reminds him of the midsummer promise and gives him a soft, snow-white tail which instantly warms his frozen body and makes him happy once again.

Some of Makarovič’s texts tend to ironise on the presence of mythological creatures and question their traditional roles in classical fairy tales. The green-haired girls mentioned above fret over the rabbit to the point of exasperating him instead of dedicating themselves to their traditional task of awakening the nature. Pehtra Baba, who carries out the important task of making snow which is indispensable to cover the fields in winter, uses comic interjections such as “three hundred hopping hornets”, “pink pumpledumpkins” or “three hundred green gooseberries”. When she rises into the air to overturn the cauldron so that it may begin to snow, her skirts lift and she shows long lacy underwear, which greatly amuses the rabbit rather than inspiring terror and awe (Makarovič 2008, 697–699). Another fairy tale, *Something Really Special*, is about a boy who wanted to become something special and turned for help to a witch who “hardly knew how to make magic at all, because mice had recently eaten her book of magic and she had to make spells from memory”. In fact, her spells made his nose change into “an orange, and then rusty tongs, then a washing up pad” until it finally disappeared altogether; only then did she luckily remember another magic word so the boy could get his old nose back (Makarovič 2008, 789–790).

In *Better Something Than Nothing*, a beautiful girl whom the protagonist mistook for a fairy only pretended to be one, so her magic did not work at all, but “she did have golden hair. Better something than nothing!” (Makarovič 2008, 799). Even though Makarovič’s fairy tales feature mythological creatures typical of traditional fairy tales, such creatures are often inserted into new contexts and given fresh connotations which may include irony. The author reconnects with age-old traditions while at the same time recontextualising them and thus marking her distance from traditional narrative patterns.

Three fairy tales feature original fantastic creatures: Fluffy-Huffy, the Mba and the Mouse Scarer²³. The latter is a tiny ghost specialised in scaring mice who turns out to be quite kind-hearted: he helps Sapramouse, who is despairing over the hazelnuts she has lost, by showing her a magical hazel bush with delicious nuts which ripen at midnight. The other two creatures are essentially fantastic animals and shall therefore be analysed in the following chapter, which focuses on animals.

In two of the fairy tales the main characters are animate objects, namely a jug and a night lamp²⁴, while firebrands, logs and ashes feature as secondary characters in *The Little Fire Imp*, centred around the motif of the fire. Plants, especially flowers, appear as secondary characters in four texts, while a pumpkin, the protagonist of *An Educated Pumpkin*, goes to school to learn the letter “O”, which is “just as beautifully round and succulent as a pumpkin” (Makarovič 2008, 746). In three texts the characters include natural phenomena²⁵, while *Malice the Little Devil* features an array of beings derived from the Christian ideology. These are divided into inhabitants of Hell including devils, imps, fiends, ghouls, incubi and Lucifer, and celestial beings such as the archangel Gabriel, other angels and St. Nicholas. Finally, even parts of the human body such as the right and the left hand can become protagonists in their own right²⁶.

The characters, particularly animals but even objects, plants and natural phenomena, regularly display anthropomorphic traits and assume childlike behaviours (Kobe 2000a, 8; Kobe 2000b, 7). The ones that are alone, homeless, hungry or have special needs present elements typical of the archetype of the wounded child (Blažič 2014, 261). The prevalent pattern is that of a “fragile, frightened little child who faces problems and dangers on his or her journey

23 *Fluffy-Huffy and the Mba, Carrot Dwarf and Sapramouse.*

24 *Jug Is Broken and The Tramp and the Night Lamp.*

25 For example, *The Crazy Wind.*

26 *Right and Left Hand.*

towards adulthood²⁷ (Novak 2014, 367). The characters mature through experience, which often implies leaving home in an effort to recover the original equilibrium. On their quest for missing objects or qualities they learn how to “overcome selfishness, conceit and vanity”²⁸ (Blažič 2014, 261), thus creating a message of social harmony which encourages young readers towards assuming social responsibility (Blažič 2011, 85).

The writer observes that some of her fairy tales contain autobiographical elements, especially as to their underlying worldview. She identifies herself with characters who suffer injustice and points out that *Bakery Mishmash* and *Sapramouse* tell the story of her life comprised of an unending string of disappointments (Štrucl 2008). Her favourite character is the baker Mishmash who makes excellent bread with the help of magical mice but who is forced to leave when his secret is given away by an envious, narrow-minded neighbour.

4. Cats, squirrels, cosies and more

Makarovič's favourite characters are animals, to whom she feels close also in her private life, observing that she likes “[c]ats, rabbits, dogs, squirrels, hedgehogs, lizards, mice, snakes, foxes – too many to mention them all”²⁹ (Hofman 1978, 268). She is particularly fond of cats and is known to keep them as pets in what she calls a “feline caliphate”, explaining that, despite their independent ways, they make her house feel like home (Sivka 2017). The writer describes herself as being similar to a cat in her independence and strong-mindedness (Suhadolnik 2016). She comments that the protagonists of her fairy tales are always individual animals, human beings or objects; this is why they are often cats, who like to do exactly as they please (Ihan 1996, 330).

The most frequent among the animal characters in *Svetlana's Fairytales* are forest animals, who are protagonists of as many as nineteen fairy tales. These are followed by pets (protagonists of nine fairy tales), field animals (seven), farm animals (three) and exotic animals (two fairy tales). Forest animals appearing as main characters include mice³⁰, foxes³¹, squirrels³², bears³³,

27 “vzorec šibkega, prestrašenega malčka, ki se sooča s težavami in nevarnostmi na poti v odrasli svet”.

28 “premagati sebičnost, domišljavost, napuh”.

29 “Mačke, zajci, psi, veverice, ježi, kuščarji, miši, kače, lisice – preveč, da bi naštevala vse”.

30 *Sapramouse*, *Sapra's Good Luck*, *Little Mouse Goes to a Mill* and *Aren't you Afraid of me?*

31 *About a Fearsome Fox*, *Little Fox in the Moon Forest* and *Slyboots Falls in Love*.

32 *A Special Kind of Squirrel* and *Tilly*.

33 *The Peach Stone* and *A Tale of Honey*.

wolves³⁴, an owl³⁵, a bat³⁶, a marten³⁷, a badger³⁸, a dormouse³⁹ and a rabbit⁴⁰. Apart from these, secondary characters also include frogs, hedgehogs, skunks, weasels, snakes, ants and birds such as sparrows, blackbirds, jays, magpies, woodpeckers, storks, cuckoos, rock pigeons, wild ducks and vultures. The group of pets comprises cats and dogs appearing as main⁴¹ as well as secondary characters. Field animals are represented by hamsters, birds and insects such as bees, drones, centipedes, wasps, fleas and grasshoppers⁴². Farm animals include hens, cockerels and a pig as protagonists⁴³, while geese and goats figure as secondary characters. Exotic animals are rare and are limited to a monkey, a parrot and a marabou⁴⁴.

Regarding fantastic animals, the author explains that her love of animals is so powerful that it stimulates her imagination and inspires her to create new, fantastic ones (Hofman 1978, 268). As we have mentioned, the anthology features two fantastic animals: Fluffy-Huffy and the Mba⁴⁵. The former is described as a tiny creature who loved sleeping and kept a big bag full of dreams. After having been repeatedly driven out of his dwellings by other animals, he would fluff up his furry coat in an effort to appear bigger and more threatening. The Mba, on the other side, was “a bit like a worm, a bit like a leech, a bit like a small snake” and walked “just like all other Mbas in the world: she drew herself up into an arch, then straightened out, arched up again and straightened out again, all the time gurgling, ‘Mba, Mba’” (Makarovič 2008, 485). Despite initial distrust on Fluffy-Huffy’s part, the two creatures finally bonded and became friends. As an

34 *The Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing* and *A Terrible Wolf*.

35 *Big-Eyes the Little Owl*.

36 *Chatterbat*.

37 *Miss Marten Tidies Up*.

38 *Badger Digs a Pit*.

39 *Dormouse Borrows a Pear*.

40 *The Rabbit’s Year*.

41 *Pussypaws*, *Alleycat*, *Don’t Get Angry*, *Madame Badger* and *Puss Gives Himself a Lickdown* feature cat protagonists, while dogs are the main characters in *Where the Little Dog Was Hurrying To*, *Puppy Spot Goes Goldhunting*, *A Puppy is Looking for a Home* and *Dogshead and the Fleas*. Both are protagonists of *Cats and Dogs*.

42 The fairy tales featuring field animals as protagonists include *The Hamster’s Pear*, *The Hamster’s Wheatcake*, *The Spoilt Little Sparrow*, *Well-fed Crow and Hungry Crow*, *A Drunken Drone* and *One about a Centipede*.

43 *Emily Hen*, *The Cocky Little Chief* and *The Pig Concert*.

44 *The Parrot and the Cheese* and *How Mrs Monkey Changed her Image*.

45 *Fluffy-Huffy and the Mba*.

example of the author's inventiveness, it seems useful to mention another fantastic animal, albeit not included in the anthology: the cosies, who are protagonists of three fantasy novels: *Cosies on the Flying Spoon* (published in 1974 and translated into English in 1994), *Where to, Cosies? (Kam pa kam, kosovirja?, 1975)* and *We the Cosies (Mi, kosovirji, 2009)*. They are "fluffy, gaily wicked and sweet" but also "vain and extremely proud of their cossoviry" as well as "furry, warm, and usually ruffled with excitement [...]. They have big eyes, similar to those of an owl, long noses, sharp little claws and a fluffy tuft on the tip of their long bushy tails" (Makarovič 1994, 3). The cosies have gained widespread popularity in Slovenia and have seen television as well as theatrical adaptations.

The animal characters in *Svetlana's Fairytales* live in environments ranging from natural habitats to dwellings similar to those inhabited by humans (Haramija 2015, 123). They are presented as autonomous beings who are important in their own right rather than being seen from a utilitarian point of view; they thus arouse empathy in the readers (Blažič 2014, 292). However, animal characters are not idealised but may display negative traits such as insolence, selfishness, grumpiness, slyness or unwillingness to help (Pezdirc-Bartol 2011, 99). They are similar to the other types of characters in that they often display childlike characteristics (Haramija 2008, 28).

The preference for animal protagonists in *Svetlana's Fairytales* implies a non-anthropocentric vision of the world (Blažič 2011, 76), which is best illustrated in *How Mrs Monkey Changed her Image*. The fairy tale is about a monkey who was unsatisfied with her smooth fur coat and went to the hairdresser's to have it curled. The hairdresser – a marabou – curled her fur with nine thousand short sticks and left her to sit in the hottest sun until she was almost delirious, but it was well worth it as she finally had wonderful curls all over her body and was admired wherever she went. Since she was very hot, the monkey wanted to go for a swim in a lake, so she took off her coat. But while she was swimming, a wind came by, noticed the curly coat and took it away. The monkey thus had to carry on living completely naked and looked very odd indeed. However, the narrator comments that "the same thing, you know, also happened to some other monkeys. And so originated man. Because he was cold he was settling in caves, and then he started to wear clothes which he made of other animals' hides. . . ." (Makarovič 2008, 739). In this non-anthropocentric account of the appearance of the first human beings, the latter are seen as a pure anomaly of what is supposed to be normal – namely, being a monkey with a furry coat. The fact that man wears clothes made of *other* animals' hides means that he is an animal just like any other, just weirder.

5. Conclusive remarks

During her long career spanning over forty-eight years, Svetlana Makarovič has published a remarkable amount of works which have been read by young and adult readers alike. Her fairy tales have provided a source of aesthetic pleasure, amusement, reflection and inspiration. With outstanding sensibility and stylistic ability, the author has created a vast array of literary characters who have become part of the collective imagination of various generations of Slovene children and adults. Apart from real and fantastic animals, who are largely prevalent among the characters of *Svetlana's Fairytales*, the texts collected in the anthology feature humans, creatures inspired by Slavic mythology, animate objects, plants, natural phenomena, beings derived from the Christian ideology and even parts of the human body. The animal characters display anthropomorphic traits and often assume childlike behaviours. Through winning difficulties, however small or unimportant they may appear, they learn about key values such as non-violence, respect, justice, equality, friendship, sharing, tolerance, dignity, personal autonomy, independence and social responsibility. Although the fairy tales contained in the anthology do not usually imply grandiose closures, most of them do have a happy ending. Even if it may only be that a little sparrow has won his fears of flying, it is therefore possible to conclude that, in the end, "all was well and right" (Makarovič 2008, 589).

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Chiara Lepri

Crossing Scylla and Charybdis Nadia Terranova child writer between autobiography, gender consciousness and fairy tale

Abstract: Nadia Terranova, a young writer from Messina, one of the five finalists for the Strega Prize 2019 with her novel *Addio fantasmi* (2018), wrote for children and young adults *Bruno il bambino che imparò a volare* (2012), *Le nuvole per terra* (2015), *Casca il mondo* (2016) and the very recent *Omero è stato qui* (2019), a collection of fairy tales born from the memory of the author, whose writing is rooted in a land of light and transit – that of the Strait of Messina – capable of giving rise to a fruitful and composite imaginary. The paper intends to deepen the poetry of the writer, who alternates a narrative production for adults with a writing aimed at children, well aware of the need to deliver to readers, to all readers, a literature that promotes culture, art but also of “political” reflection. Particular attention will be paid to the “dangerous girls” who inhabit the author’s stories: from the myth of Scylla and Charybdis, which is told through childhood reminiscences in *Omero è stato qui* to the most intimate thoughts of Beatrix Potter, Emily Dickinson and Jane Austen contained in the imaginary diaries of *Caro Diario ti scrivo. . .* (2011), until the translations of the comic adaptations of the Austen novels published by Marvel-Panini Comics (2013, 2014), we look at the image of a writer who returns to childhood and who turns to it (a love affair, in fact) interweaving masterfully, in the personal creative process, memories, myths, women literary models.

Keywords: Nadia Terranova, children’s literature, fairy tale, autobiography, women’s writing

1. Previous history

I came in touch with Nadia Terranova’s writing on the free trade shelf of a hotel where I was staying in Seville in 2018, during an international conference on female voices and the *Querelle des femmes* in Europe. I took possession of a book left there by another traveller, whose cover image – a snapshot of the Dutch photographer Mirjan Van der Meer – undoubtedly struck me: it was *Addio fantasmi* (*Farewell, Ghosts* in English) recently edited by Einaudi, Turin, which I began to read while remaining at the same time upset and irresistibly attracted by an intimate writing capable of exposing inner processes without embarrassment and with particular clarity, the same processes that belong to a personal sphere and

that move from the memories rooted in the native land: a land, in this case Sicily, which seems to mix in an ancestral way with experiences, words and identity traits.

It is difficult to summarize the plot of this novel and it is probably not useful for the purposes of the following reflection, but it is worth mentioning it to introduce some features characterizing the literary production of Nadia Terranova: in *Addio fantasmi* no striking facts are narrated, rather one lives, in the reflection of reading, an involving experience in the continuous dialectic between *presences* and *absences* that runs through the entire narrative: presence, for example, is the home between two seas, the Ionian and the Tyrrhenian, in Messina, a place of return where the protagonist, Ida, faces an intense and painful introspective journey starting from the passing of her father; presences are the objects of childhood enclosed in a red box to be disposed of; presences are the words of a *family lexicon* that substantiates and vitalizes things and objects by binding them to one's personal history; presence – and *leitmotiv*/symbolic place in the literary imagination of Nadia Terranova – is the Strait of Messina, with its tumultuous sea from which flows one of the most powerful, iridescent and lasting mythological traditions of the western tradition; absent, *ça va sans dire*, are the men: a father who one day left the house and never returned, a husband whom Ida periodically hears on the phone but who remains distant, in fact, when Ida confronts the ghosts of the past.

Reading this dense book led me to read up on the author and so I discovered that she had debuted on the Italian literary scene as a writer for children and young people and that she returned to this activity as soon as possible and with great conviction (“I will always continue to alternate”, she declared with conviction more than once in the interviews), thus showing an attitude completely foreign to certain foreclosures or snobberies that the world of culture and criticism still reserves for children's literature, considering it minor literature or a B genre.

The expression *a love affair*, therefore, seems particularly fitting to frame a natural correspondence, a completely spontaneous love relationship that Nadia Terranova has always had with children's literature, so much as to consider it a necessary landing place to return to cyclically, even in the time of fame and visibility as it happened recently, when the writer entered the five finalists of the 2019 Strega Prize (unfortunately without winning it) with the book *Addio fantasmi*.

Nadia Terranova was born in Messina in 1978, where she graduated in Philosophy and then obtained a PhD in Modern History at the University of Catania. In 2003 she left the island and moved to Rome: she started writing and teaching as well as working at a radio station: and, as for today, she does not only

write, but she also continues her journalistic activity with an interest in literature and culture for various newspapers and conducts creative writing courses aimed at adults and children.

Her notoriety comes with the novel *Gli anni al contrario*, published by Einaudi in 2015, enthusiastically received by the public and critics and winner of numerous awards, including international ones, but, to her credit, she already had interesting publications aimed at children. Nadia Terranova, in fact, had already told the painful story of Bruno Schulz, polish writer and painter, killed in 1941 by Gestapo, *Bruno il bambino che imparò a volare*, a picture book finely illustrated by Ofra Amit and published in 2012 by the excellent Roman publishing house specializing in children's books Orecchio Acerbo. The book earned her the prestigious Laura Orvieto Prize and the Naples Prize, this extraordinary "cameo" represented an incursion into the special textuality of the *picture book* (a book, it is worth remembering, in which the reading derives from a synergistic encounter between images and words), but beyond that, her later writings were mostly aimed at a teenage audience, as was the case of *Storia d'agosto di Agata e d'inchiostro* (2012) that addressed the difficult topics of animal mafias; *Le nuvole per terra* (2015), a story of sentimental education of four teenagers framed by fragile and disoriented adults, and *Casca il mondo* (2016) the tale of Oscar and Golan's friendship, the first had survived an earthquake, the latter had survived the war. But in order to outline the identity of the writer, we must also remember the imaginary diaries of Beatrix Potter, Emily Dickinson and Jane Austen (published in *Caro diario ti scrivo. . .*, co-written with Patrizia Rinaldi, 2011). The latter is an ambitious project: it intends to enter the young girl's mind of four female writers who have left an indelible mark on literature and on the personal training of generations of readers. Translation is a commitment that is re-emerging recently and it takes the form of the publication of the famous and *Letter to my son's teacher* by Abraham Lincoln (2019) on the occasion of the thirty years of the UN convention on the rights of the child.

Starting from this information and impressions, the reflection around a non-random triangulation such as that between *Narration, Women, Children's Literature* seems to find testimony and representation in the contribution of Nadia Terranova. And it is precisely along the trajectories that unite this "triad", rather than on the narrative styles that distinguish Nadia Terranova's children's literature, that I would like to run, in an attempt to focus on some interpretative categories that will allow me to trace the identity of this writer who is inclined to establish a *sentimental relationship* with children's literature, and who thus argues with respect to the double track of her writing – assuming that we want to talk about duality: "As legitimate as it is, I can't stand the question "What is the

difference between writing for kids and writing for adults?” they always ask me, just like all the writers who have also written for children, but I never know what to say and every time I have to invent a different thing. The truth is that I don't know, sometimes I feel like writing for kids, sometimes I don't, it depends on the character I have in mind. Each time I have to invent some very sophisticated answers but they are all reflections that I do *ex post*” (Terranova in Armelli).

2. Between Scylla and Charybdis: identity of the children's literature writers

The topographical reference alluded to in the title of this essay, on the one hand, as already mentioned, allows us to deeply root Nadia Terranova's writing in a place that is not only geographical, but which is also a sign of belonging, a place of soul for the writer and a literary place par excellence in the collective imagination; on the other hand it allows us to identify, in the same identity as the writer, a dual aspect, of opposing forces: Scylla and Charybdis in the Homeric tradition (and not only that) are the two monsters that face each other in the waters of the Strait of Messina: Scilla, with six dog heads and long snake tails, is on the Calabrian coast; Charybdis, located along the Sicilian coast of the Strait, is a voracious monster that rejects water creating fearful eddies that threaten the lives of sailors.

I thought that this metaphor well represented the inner conflict of a Sicilian girl who moved to the “mainland”, as many young people of her generation did, to give way to the need to write by distancing herself from a land that is both mother and stepmother, which welcomes and sends away and which nevertheless remains as a constant scenario in the imaginary and literary work of the author. And I thought that the two disruptive forces corresponded to an urgency of writing that finds its synthesis in the choice to turn to children and adult readers indiscriminately, without foreclosures, as a *writer* and not a *writer-for*.

This attitude, completely spontaneous and free of “scaffolding” and prejudices, is the same that the currently most important Italian author for children, Bianca Pitzorno, assumes and which she explicitly deals with in what can be called her intellectual autobiography, *Storia delle mie storie*, when she declares that for children's books to have literary dignity it is necessary that the writer is a writer like all the others, that is, first of all he must achieve a high degree of literary quality (Lepri 2017: 133).

Pitzorno herself points out that it is difficult to explain the reasons for an instinctive movement, so that if “often the authors of youth literature are asked to intervene [...] to theorize about their work, [...] as for all craftsmen, and more so

for artists, or in any case for people who carry out an activity considered ‘creative, doing is much easier than explaining how to do it’ (2002: 15). Moreover, that of a writer is “a profession, exactly. Which is lived daily and also gives the necessary to live. This requires perseverance, effort, modesty, continuous updating, reflections and changes of course. And also a demanding boss who gives no respite” (Caso 2014: 137).

Surely, those who write for children must be able to settle on a discourse that interests children themselves not only with respect to themes or topics, but also with regard to tones, responses, identifications, projections (2002: 23). And if Bianca Pitzorno claims to “suffer from an (often painful) atrophy of the protective mechanism of removal” since none of her childhood memories ended “in the darkness of a cellar” (2020: 40), Nadia Terranova confesses that she has a lively contact with her childhood experience and that she kept many objects from those years such as books and diaries: these are memories that are reworked and re-emerge in her writing, letting out an unpeaceful, restless relationship with the past. In this regard, the statement of the Argentine poet Silvina Ocampo that Nadia cites appears revealing: “going through childhood is a hard test for the mind”, followed by the statement: “leaving the mythological dimension, in which we give fairy-tale answers at universal dilemmas, is painful but necessary. Growing back up is just as necessary” (Terranova in Presezzi 2015).

But why all this interest towards the creative processes of the authors? Studying children’s literature presupposes not neglecting the intentionality of the writer since, as Franco Cambi writes, “literary works for children always have a double identity: they narrate and form” (2013: 3). In other words, while dealing with children’s literature, an element of complexity concerns the double track along which it unfolds, giving on one hand a literary product in all respects, the result of creative processes and artistic and aesthetic potential, and on the other hand, a *medium* that is capable of nourishing the imagination and of influencing the reader’s consciousness and his educational path. The binary axis of textuality for children is, therefore, by its very nature, both literary and pedagogical and it is from this distinctive feature that the specificity and complexity of children’s literature emerges. It must be said that one of the reasons that made this literature historically minor derives from this peculiarity, since we are talking about a literature full of formative resonances, while the aesthetic objective seems to be secondary. Therefore, in order to make literature for the little ones, there must be an author who takes into account the special reader he is addressing, but who at the same time, in doing so, maintains a high aesthetic and artistic depth.

I have always been interested in investigating the reasons of those affirmed authors who dedicate a space of their creative activity to children without

establishing hierarchies between the quality of a writing addressed to adults and that addressed to children and young people, that is, treating all the subject literary as such, regardless of the recipient: I note in this attitude, in this interest which is not instrumental but inherent in the identity of the writer – and not of all writers – an authentic consideration of children's literature and the dignity of reading for younger children who for once need not be claimed or established, but simply give itself as a creative product without the need for justifications or labels.

3. A woman's voice

In this arrangement it is possible to see a very feminine trait, as if there is a natural correlation between woman and narration. Moreover, women have always cultivated the art of storytelling: think of Shahrazād, who manages to save her life by enchanting the king of Persia with a story per night, or Agatuzza Messia and other narrators from whom the fairy tale writer Giuseppe Pitrè, to remain in Sicily, collected the stories of tradition, as if women were natural holders of narrative knowledge.

The fairy tale, as the narrative paradigm par excellence, is another comparison term for Nadia Terranova. Still for children (but not only), in 2013 the author rewrote *The Thousand and One Nights* for the publisher La Nuova Frontiera with a fresh and current language, without blurring the contents. And on the need for fairy tales today, on its ability to stage, through symbolic language, the destinies of life of everyone, the author gives very clear words erecting an article by Natalia Ginzburg of 1972 as her personal *manifesto* for literature for children. In this article, *Senza fate e senza maghi*, Ginzburg expressed her dissent towards a narrative for the little ones that demystifies the fearful and what embodies it, and she wrote:

The reasons why writing for children is so difficult today are endless, but one thing is certain that we have in us the idea that everything can hurt children. Fantasy terrifies us because it is adventurous, unpredictable and strong. [...] In Calvino's *Italian Folktales* [...] there are severed heads, corpses, robbers, thieves, orcs, cruelty and horrors. This is because true and beautiful fairy tales are actually harmless. They are located in the only place in the universe where there is no offence, that is, in the realms of fantastic life. When they are scary, it is the healthy and liberating fear of fantasy, a fear which the spirit has desire and to which it reaches out like a flame that warms it. [...] Suppressing fear and anguish also means suppressing happiness (Ginzburg 1972: 164–165).

And in continuity with this idea, the fairy tale as the original nucleus of the narrative imaginary seems to be an essential point of Nadia Terranova's identity and

literature. This is also demonstrated by the recent collection of myths of her land that the writer published in March 2019 creating a project aimed at an audience of crossover readers in which the Sicilian fairy tales handed down from generation to generation are reworked through the personal paths of memory: *Omero è stato qui*, published by Bompiani with the elegant illustrations of Vanna Vinci, is yet another tribute to the same land of light and transit that we had hailed in *Addio fantasmì: a continuum* in literary production, whose *incipit* is worth reading which is also an attempt at self-definition and inner search:

There are things I've always known.

I know my name is Nadia and I was born in a specific year, I know my parents' and my grandparents' names, I know my favourite ice cream flavour and I know which books I like to read over again. I can distinguish my mother's scent, the laundry's and the way my cats used to smell, back when I had two of them.

I mostly know what is the place I've always felt home. That place is a large block formed both by an island and a mainland, by two cities and only one sea, which is, however, two seas. The two seas come together in the midst of two lands that in reality never come together, even if from certain perspectives it may seem so because they are very close, in one point they are only three and a half kilometres away from each other. [...].

Some of the things I've always known are stories. I don't know when I first listened to them, but I already knew them, and even after I never forgot them: I have precise memories of the moment they emerged.

I remember my grandmother's voice telling me about a boy named Cola, who never wanted to get out of the sea, whenever he went swimming and he finally grew a fish tail. [...] I remember my mother's voice explaining to me Morgan Le Fay's magic [...]. I remember these and other stories, but I'm not sure that they were new to me when I first heard them. Most likely: they were tuning to a pre-existent music, right inside of me (Terranova 2019a: 7–9).

Thus the story of two dangerous girls takes shape: Scylla and Charybdis, in fact; and Cola Pesce, Morgan Le Fay, Sirens of Ulysses, Dina and Clarenza, two brave women, Mata and Grifone, handed down by woman's voice. And once again the Strait becomes a defined physical/geographic space but also a conceptual space from which stories originate between myth – as a common heritage – and autobiographical memories. Moreover, Nadia Terranova declares that all she can tell is in her childhood and in her family.

4. Between autobiography and fairy tale

Gender studies represent a particularly fertile ground for the narrative approach in its different forms, autobiographical but also more exquisitely literary, therefore on the two levels of the private and public. Nadia Terranova masterfully

combines the two levels, showing alternative visions that become place and process of production, deconstruction and change *including* gender difference. “Here is the passage that female writers make from their own world, from the private world, to what it universally contains, to bring out something true, to create new words, for a hermeneutics that knows how to grasp in the texts an opening of multiple senses and hybridized, crossing the thresholds of literary genres, but also those of semantic, style, theme” as stated by Francesca Marone (2003: 240), capturing a typically feminine sensitivity that can be seen in Nadia Terranova.

Moreover, the identity that emerges from the narrations is always an open, multiple, complex identity, “balanced between instinctual interiorizations, representations, knowledge and social practices” able to “create emotions and storytelling that produce another culture, open to differences” (Marone 2003: 240) and that leaves room for contradictions.

Nadia Terranova is, in this sense, a paradigmatic author, who together with a growing number of Sicilian writers who break with a tradition of voiceless women (think of the recent success of Stefania Auci, Cristina Cassar Scalia, Alessia Gazzola, Giovanna Cristina Vivinetto among others): “female figures in Sicilian literature risked to remain flattened on a model dictated by men above all. Something has changed and there is a very interesting plurality of women who tell women through different genders and languages [...]. There is a new world and it is right for it to be told” she writes (Terranova in Trevale 2019).

Nor is it surprising that it is another woman who establishes a *love relationship* with children’s literature by giving it a reflective, plural trait derived from memory and a retrospective exercise, which does not fix meanings and events, but makes them prospective, changeable, relative, and therefore makes them open to new visions and reinterpretations.

On memory, in particular, our author has clear ideas that seem to apparently contradict the theories on autobiographical writing as a process of identity processing and as self-care: Nadia Terranova believes that memory is an attempt to create paths on something that we cannot change, that it is “an illusion from which we cannot free ourselves which constitutes and simultaneously digs and destroys. On the other hand, writing does not have a therapeutic value, in lets out conflicts, making them clear, it gives *the words to say it*”. These are personal thoughts that don’t allow us to take a peek at the writer’s creative laboratory but rather to take note of a different perspective, subjective and also very valid as it is expressed in a radical and thoughtful way. This adherence, this authenticity, this writing that is the result of an internal excavation, of a foray into the most

intimate recesses, even of torments, creates a narrative capable of essentiality and precision, as some critics have pointed out.

And essentiality and precision in literature refer to Italo Calvino's lesson on accuracy, which provides us with a key to defining what childhood literature should be. Accuracy for Italo Calvino, in fact, corresponds to (1). a well-defined and well-calculated drawing of the work; (2). the evocation of clear, incisive, memorable visual images; (3). a language as precise as possible with regard to the lexicon and the rendering of the nuances of thought and imagination (Calvino 1993: 65–67). Children's literature claims these characters against a "rough, casual, careless" language, which has lost cognitive strength and immediacy, which is automatic and levelled in the expression of the most generic, anonymous, abstract formulas, a blunt language, that turns off every spark (Calvino 1993: 66). Nadia Terranova herself says that "writing means to lend an ear to a story, and children's writing allows a clear listening, without unnecessary stylistic display. This choice does not mean poverty of language, but refers to that essentiality and precision that are proper to the poetic language" (Terranova in Sciandivasci 2019).

5. An idea of childhood

A further interpretative contribution to Nadia Terranova's children's writings is provided by a collection of writings that the author herself published in 2019 for the Roman publisher Italo Svevo with an evocative title *Un'idea di infanzia. Libri, bambini e altra letteratura* (*An idea of childhood. Books, children and other literature*, in English) in which we can find interesting reflections that help us to clarify the boundaries of a love relationship that still maintains a careful critical perspective. Nadia Terranova here says that adults who have not stopped reading children's literature are freer than other human beings, "because they have no barriers, they are not afraid of being labelled or of labelling themselves" (2019b: 10), and that there is no such thing as literature "for" children, but "a literature that hold children and young adults within" (2019b: 11). The secret is, of course, in intercepting the *animus* of children, in arranging along a feeling that is that of the little ones without the presumption of wanting to teach something: "there are writers who have this naturalness inside and others, instead, who at some point have to move towards writing for children with a paternalism and a sense of superiority that makes them write old books" (2019b: 11), notes the author. On the contrary, however, there are those writers who keep their childhood within and are capable of relating to it with frankness and a certain amount of boldness: "there is something wild in putting a child of a book's page.

Something that makes us level with the child we have inside and with its impulses that can't be tamed, on the contrary: they are looking for a place to be bombastic, powerful, even offensive [. . .]. The possibility of a very explicit symbolic struggle against monsters emerges in children's literature, and therefore often more prismatic, more structured and mysterious on the hermeneutic level. Usually those who write adopting the point of view of a minor have a more heated availability to parody, tragedy, catastrophe and vicissitudes" (2019b: 12), Nadia Terranova cleverly writes, dispelling any idea aimed at framing the writing for children as a simple and linear operation.

In fact, "the balance between the non-adultisation of childhood and the understanding of its complexity is not simple: sensitivity, attention, culture are needed in equal parts and a gaze capable of wonder is needed without banality and without presumption" (2019b: 14). But there is also an element of added value that the writer identifies in the *cross-eyed gaze* of those who look at childhood, grasping its permanent structures like the fairy tale "brand", between universality and aspatiality, and at the same time privileging the exclusivity of the meeting and dialogue with a real interlocutor-child: "an eye to isomorphisms, or to what is constant over time, in all the childhoods of the world [...]. And an eye to differences, to uniqueness. There is no idea of a childhood that is not changeable, and therefore universal: to hunt for the right one and pretend that there is only one and that sooner or later it will show itself in its fullness is definitely the right way to welcome as many as possible" (2019b: 16), as demonstrated by the success of all those who in addressing a child in the flesh – think of Lewis Carroll, Beatrix Potter, Gianni Rodari... – have been able to shape a timeless imagination.

This and other suggestive considerations certainly allow to expand the observatory on children's literature by restoring the dignity that belongs to it; at the same time, they reveal the reflective dimension of an author to look carefully at if we are interested in a literature that promotes culture, art but also an ethical commitment to childhood and its stories.

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