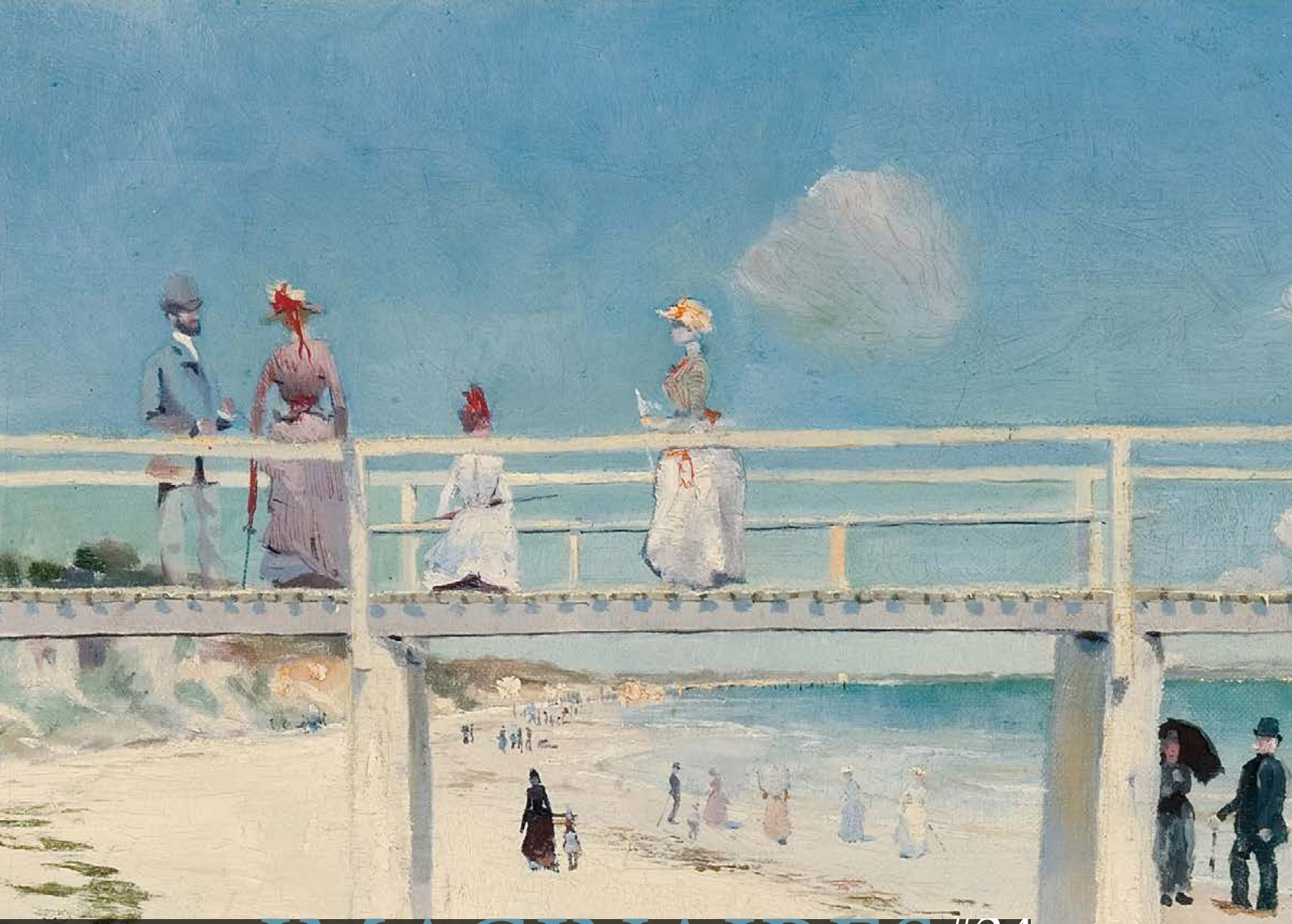

IMAGINAIRES #24

Holiday Poetics

Summer Leisure and the Narrative Arts

edited by David Pinho Barros

épure
EDITIONS ET PRESSES UNIVERSITAIRES DE REIMS

Couverture : Charles Conder (1868-1909), *A Holiday at Mentone*, huile sur toile (47 x 61 cm), 1888. Adélaïde, Art Gallery of South Australia, Domaine public (Wikimedia commons).

Revue du Centre interdisciplinaire de recherches sur les langues et la pensée (CIRLEP) éditée avec le soutien de l'université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne, de la ville de Reims (convention Université-Ville de Reims) et de la région Grand Est.

Directrice de publication : Yannick Bellenger-Morvan

Conception graphique et mise en page : Éditions et presses universitaires de Reims

ISSN : 1270-931X
DOI : 10.34929/imaginaires.vi24

Éditions et presses universitaires de Reims, 2022
Bibliothèque Robert de Sorbon, Campus Croix-Rouge
Avenue François-Mauriac, CS 40019, 51726 Reims Cedex
www.univ-reims.fr/epure

IMAGINAIRES #24

Revue du Centre interdisciplinaire de recherches
sur les langues et la pensée CIRLEP ///
Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

Directrice de publication ///
Yannick Bellenger-Morvan

Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

Centre Interdisciplinaire de Recherches sur les Langues Et la Pensée - EA 4299
Université de Reims Champagne-Ardenne

IMAGINAIRES #24

Holiday Poetics

Summer Leisure and the Narrative Arts

edited by David Pinho Barros

Dans ce numéro

Holiday Poetics: An Introduction

David Pinho Barros
University of Porto

WHEN considering modern and contemporary summer holidays as a social phenomenon, there might be a temptation to read them solely as a buoyant ramification of late capitalist habits, a garish bourgeois mass entertainment institution as futile and platitudinous as can be, leading to acritical tourism, hypertrophied infrastructural developments, dishonestly overpriced meals, and cheesy events aiming at a shallow carefree amusement. The history and cultural role of this fundamental recurring experience is, however, much more complex and significative than this clichéd portrait might reveal, and its legal birth in the modern age is the result of paramount rights arduously claimed by the European working classes in the interwar period. The idea of holidays currently adopted in capitalist societies is, in fact, surprisingly recent, dating from June 1936, when the Front Populaire in France established by law the right to an annual paid leave, which allowed 600,000 workers and their families to go on holidays that same year (a number which tripled as soon as 1937), and which lent its model to similar laws in many European and Western countries. Its importance in the social history of the twentieth century cannot be dismissed, and it must be politically respected as a major conquest in the rights of workers and families.

At the time when the first speeches demanding paid leave were made, holidays were presented as an antidote for the fatigue of a year of work, and, more broadly, for the "depressing life of our societies" (Hordern, 1990: 22), according to a 1912 statement by Charles Viennet, secretary-general of the French Christian employee unions. They thus played a major role in civic reflections on how work controls society and on how, if excessive, it can numb intellects, as well as destroy foundational freedoms and liberties. In the last twenty-five years, a number of important academic publications have questioned modern holidays from this historical and sociological perspective, looking back on a century of summer exoduses and their cultural implications. At the turn of the century, several impressive

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

publications smoothed the path for this research: Jean Viard's *Penser les vacances* (1984) and *Court traité sur les vacances, les voyages et l'hospitalité des lieux* (2000), André Rauch*'s Vacances en France de 1830 à nos jours* (1996), Orvar Löfgren's *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing* (1999), Fred Inglis's *The Delicious History of the Holiday* (2000), Pierre Périer's *Vacances populaires : Images, pratiques et mémoire* (2000), Steven Braggs's and Diane Harris's *Sun, Fun and Crowds: British Seaside Holidays Between the Wars* (2000), and Jean-Didier Urbain's *Les Vacances* (2002). And, in the meantime, other authors followed the lead, such as Bertrand Réau, author of *Les Français et les vacances* (2011), and Alessandro Martini and Maurizio Francesconi, who recently published *La moda della vacanza. Luoghi e storie 1860-1939* (2021). Besides, the matter has also been treated from an aesthetic perspective, such as in Christophe Granger's 2009 *Les Corps d'été. Naissance d'une variation saisonnière*, republished in a slightly updated version in 2017 as *La Saison des apparences: Naissance des corps d'été*, where the French historian explores the development of notions of physical beauty within the context of summer leisure practices.

Clearly understudied in contemporary scholarship are, however, the multiple forms of relationship between the phenomenon of summer holidays, both in its pre-1936 forms (from aristocratic nineteenth-century health cures to early-twentieth-century cultural stays and seaside leisure) and in its post-1936 variants (from the massive postwar seasonal working-class exoduses to bourgeois resort vacationing and contemporary eco-conscious summer sojourning in nature), and the narrative arts. This issue of *Imaginaires* proposes to address just that, and does so through a wide lens.

On the one hand, the issue casts its look on the thematisation of summer holidays by the narrative arts. Indeed, holiday contexts are a staple setting for hundreds of novels, films, and comics, developing stories where, quite often, the anticipation of the benefits of summer rest is utterly dashed, both to tragic and to comic effects. Disrupted day-tripping or summer vacationing plans are, for instance, the narrative motor of a whole genre in Italy in the 1950s, the "cinema turistico-balneare", where feature films as distinct as Aldo Fabrizi's *La famiglia Passaguai*, Alberto Lattuada's *La spiaggia* and Antonio Racioppi's *Tempo di villeggiatura* clearly illustrate the exceptionally ample narrative and expressive possibilities of the theme.

On the other hand, this number proposes an examination of what is at times blurrily designated "holiday style" in the description of certain novels, films, and comics, and which necessarily implies a study of the possible interaction between topic and form. Here, aspects of density, rhythm, tone, and composition are the basis of analysis, and help explain

the points of intersection of holiday prose as different as Cesare Pavese's *Feria d'agosto* and André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*, films as disparate as Jacques Rozier's *Du côté d'Orouët* and Julie Delpy's *Le Skylab*, or narrative photograph albums as unrelated as Marie-Françoise Plissart's *Aujourd'hui* and Martin Parr's *Life's a Beach*.

Although several articles would not seem misplaced if included under the two categories, the texts are grouped according to their predominant focus: either centring their analyses of holidays on a temporal perspective or on a spatial one. Both have, notwithstanding, a common characteristic — the recognition of the parenthetical nature of summer holidays —, which explains the parallel structure of the section titles: "Times in Brackets" and "Spaces in Brackets".

The first batch presents a comprehensive reflection on the times of summer holidays, scrutinised through the prism of ephemerality and nostalgia, both thematically and formally. And all respond, directly or indirectly, to Orvar Löfgren when he writes, as quoted by Felicity Chaplin in her article (p. 154), that "one of the main characteristics of summer vacations or summers on the whole is their hopeless brevity. Here is a utopia that we start to lose already at the beginning of our vacations. Summers are always drawing to a close".

Proposing a close reading of a major title of the European postmodernist photonovel, Jan Baetens's article "Vacances et vacance. *Aujourd'hui* de Marie-Françoise Plissart" launches the discussion on holidays from the significative proximity, in the French language, between the words "holidays" and "vacancy", or "abeyance". It stresses the links of the medium's narratological characteristics and Plissart's formal choices with the ontological definition of holidays as a temporal bubble, existing solely within an idiosyncratic notion of "today" which gives this work its title. As the Belgian scholar and poet states in his article, "[h]olidays are a pastoral *intermezzo*, a way of taking time off from the world without quite taking time off from it, and this temporary but partial cessation of daily life is brought to light at every moment in the book." (p. 24; my translation).

This idea of bracketed time is pivotal throughout this first section of the issue, and is pertinently linked to notions of nostalgia in the two following articles. Valentina Monateri's text "'Lavorare è vestire la terra'. Summer memories in Cesare Pavese's *Feria d'agosto*" thoroughly explores the Italian author's short stories from the 1940s dedicated to the topic of summer holidays, and succeeds in "shedding a light on how mystery, myth, childhood and summer memories are enucleated in Pavese's view of fictional narrative in post-war Italy, including his social and political thought." (p. 31). Besides, it prolongs Baetens's take on the idea of

"suspended time" by defining holidays as inseparable from nostalgia for what has been lost: "The feria, the holiday, the time suspended from the working days symbolize Pavese's creative attempt to combat the existential nostalgia for the modern loss of the esoteric, the mysterious and the sacred." (p. 41).

Ann Catherine Hoag's article "Summertime: Time, Narrative and Queer Futures in Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*" treats André Aciman's praised début novel with the same attention to the temporal implications of holidays, and analyses the "narrative play with time in the text [which] functions to […] 'hold in abeyance' the finite abortive ecstasies of the heady summer months" (p. 50). Hoag tests in this novel which she describes as a "veritable mosaic of overlapping tenses" (p. 61) — as well as in its sequel *Find Me* — the narrative and human implications of the circumscribed and suspended time of holidays (often lived and expressed in the past, present, and future tenses), and does so resourcefully through the prisms of desire, love, and nostalgia.

Finitude and transience are intimately linked in the following article, Christakis Christofi's "*Les Estivants*, des gens de passage", which goes back to early-twentieth-century Russia for a reflection on Maxim Gorky's 1905 play *Summerfolk*. It is the first of two articles in this issue surrounding the space of the *dacha*, the traditional seasonal second home of families in the country, and in it Christofi questions the transient nature of the holidays of the rich classes in dialogue with the transitoriness of the political regime, since Gorky's text was published in the same year of the First Russian Revolution. And the concept of holidays as "vacance", used by Baetens in the sense of "emptiness" to discuss Plissart's *roman-photo*, returns: "Bassov states at the beginning of the play: 'How empty it us at our place' […], but this emptiness should be seen as the essential characteristic of this transitional period which not only describes the decor of Bassov's datcha and the emptiness of the existence of these people passing by, but also the problems of the whole country, on the way to revolution." (p. 83; my translation).

Alix Cazalet-Boudigues closes this section with her article "Holidays on Ice: William Morris and Lavinia Greenlaw in Iceland". The text departs once again from the productive and contradictory double meaning of "vacances" in French, that of "absence" and "holidays" (which presuppose, according to philosopher André Comte-Sponville "a fullness of a life"), to discuss Lavinia Greenlaw's *Questions of Travel: William Morris in Iceland*, a book which revisits the British textile designer and poet's written accounts of his summer stays in the island in the early 1870s. Once again, void and time are the central issues, especially those which can be observed through cognition altered by displacement: "This sense of writing

in a void, on an offbeat, ultimately matches his impression of existing in a place where time seems to have run differently than in England, a place where 'it looked as if you might live a hundred years before you ever see ship sailing into the bay there; as if the old life of the Saga time had gone, and the modern life had never reached the place'" (p. 94).

The second section is dedicated to the bracketed spaces of holidays, that is, what Orvar Löfgren calls "vacationlands", and which are as identifiable during the effervescent summers as they are, by contrast, during the deserted low seasons. The encounters of real spaces with figmental ones, those that are cultivated by individual imagination, collective mythologies, and organised fiction, give origin to what he terms "vacationscapes", where "[p]ersonal memories mix with collective images" (Löfgren, 1999: 2).

The text most directly dedicated to the places of holidaymaking opens the second part of the issue: Silvia Pireddu's "*Ad Limine*: Martin Parr's Humans on the Beach. Re-empowering the English Seaside Resorts as Pop Culture". It searches for micronarratives within the British photographer's extensive work on the beach landscape, which "witnessed the empowerment and profound transformation of the English working class with its cultural and racial (white) identity" (p. 112). And these micronarratives are read as very telling illustrations of the sociological implications of the changing landscapes and habits associated to leisurely fruition of the seaside in the second half of the twentieth century in Britain.

Hugo Frey believes Jacques Rozier's films do the same for the French context in the identical period. In "Summertime France as Ethno-Sociological Experiment: Finding the Extraordinary in the Ordinary in Jacques Rozier's *Du côté d'Orouët*", Frey dissects this particular feature film by the French New Wave auteur in order to explain how it promotes a view of co-dependence between the collective phenomenon of holidays and the paradoxical space where it is staged: on the one hand, "the mundane and the everyday world of the holiday home" (p. 144); on the other, "the profound environmental (what we might call today ecological) rhythm of nature" (p. 144). Besides, as most articles in this number do, Frey stresses the importance of nostalgia in the popular mythologies associated to holidays, notably the "bittersweet nostalgia associated with finding long lost holiday photographs" (p. 132).

Both nostalgia and the French landscape are also central to Felicity Chaplin's article "The iconography of the summer vacation in Julie Delpy's *Le Skylab* (2011)". Chaplin sees in Delpy's film a bridge between the holiday temporality and the spaces which host these brief physical and affective passages — in this case, as in that of Rozier's feature, centred in the family house and the beach: "Like other films which deal with representations

of summer vacations, *Le Skylab* depicts sites of brevity and impermanence such as the summer house and the beach with its attendant and fleeting romance." (p. 161). And she convincingly demonstrates how Delpy greatly invests in the development of a powerful, accurate, and arresting iconography of the French summer beachside, which serves the purpose of commenting on "a broader socio-political and cultural context which includes the legacy of May 1968, second wave feminism, and the Algerian War" (p. 151).

After Great Britain and France, the remaining three articles of this section further expand the temporal and geographical scope of this issue by turning their attention to late-eighteenth-century and early-nineteenth-century Switzerland, the mid-twentieth-century Soviet Union, and early-twentieth-century Italy. From the perspective of a literary and cultural historian, Hélder Mendes Baião delivers in "L'apparition du tourisme dans l'espace alpin helvétique : récits de voyage francophones (1760-1850)" a broad-ranging account of when and how certain mythologies associated to Switzerland as a holiday destination entered travel writing, and how literature contributed to "the invention of a desirable space" (p. 165; my translation). Mendes Baião reminds his reader that these texts which crystalise an ideal of a covetable place were produced before the generalisation of the concepts of tourism and holidays, and that they must, therefore, be studied according to an earlier outlook on travel. However, this perspective, which the author classifies as "scholarly, anthropological, romantic" (p. 183; my translation), is equally important for the comprehension of the contemporary popular image of the Swiss Alps in particular, as well as of the widespread iconography of mountainous retreats in general, populated by inns and baths set in dramatic landscapes.

The Russian rural holiday home is the topic of Polina Pavlikova's "The phenomenon of the Russian/Soviet *dacha* and the image of the *izba* in Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *Mirror*", which explores the feature according to the socio-cultural and narrative implications of this space, both in times of peace and of war. The article questions this by observing how Tarkovsky used his father's poetry in the film, especially the poem "Eurydice", and its relationship with the shifting function of the *izba*, from "holiday space" to "shelter" (p. 198).

Finally, Cláudia Coimbra's "'Possibilities of a Pleasant Outing': Doing the Don'ts in and about Florence in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*" closes the section and the issue. In this article, the Tuscan city and adjoining countryside, as well as "the room" and "the view" of the novel's title, are read as "symbols of a higher nature" (p. 201), which serve a sophisticated narrative of female travelling, imbalanced holidays, and Englishness abroad. In it, "hopes are dashed, expectations thwarted [and]

new sensations embraced" (p. 199), and, in this sense, it certainly lives up to the intensity of the holiday phenomenon.

As I have attempted to point out in this introduction to the issue, the eleven articles of *Holiday Poetics* propose a scintillating examination of the holidays of the past through the narrative arts, as well as a wide-ranging scrutiny of the impacts of this paramount human phenomenon in European cultural creation and consumption of the last a hundred and fifty years. Of no less relevance, however, is the fact that they also inventively pave the way for the questioning of the holidays of tomorrow, those that will take place in a politically and environmentally threatened world, and whose stories will doubtlessly be shared by present and future media.

David Pinho Barros is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto and a researcher at the Margarida Losa Institute for Comparative Literature. He holds a PhD in Literature from the KU Leuven and a PhD in Literary, Cultural and Interartistic Studies from the University of Porto, with a thesis elaborated under a cotutelle agreement between both institutions. He is the author of *The Clear Line in Comics and Cinema*, published by Leuven University Press.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1186-7147

Works cited

Aciman, André, *Call Me by Your Name*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.
–––, *Find Me*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019.
Braggs, Steven, Harris, Diane, *Sun, Fun and Crowds: British Seaside Holidays Between the Wars*, Stroud, Tempus, 2000.
Delpy, Julie, *Le Skylab* [Motion picture], France, The Film, Mars films, France 2 cinéma, Tempête sous un crâne, 2011.
Fabrizi, Aldo, *La famiglia Passaguai* [Motion picture], Italy, Alfa Film XXXVII, 1951.
Granger, Christophe, *Les Corps d'été. Naissance d'une variation saisonnière*, Paris, Autrement, 2009.
–––, *La Saison des apparences : Naissance des corps d'été*, Paris, Anamosa, 2017.
Hordern, Francis, "Genèse et vote de la loi du 20 juin 1936 sur les congés payés", *Le Mouvement social*, 150, 1990, 19–34 (doi:10.2307/3778649).
Inglis, Fred, *The Delicious History of the Holiday*, Abingdon-on-Thames, Routledge, 2000.
Lattuada, Alberto, *La spiaggia* [Motion picture], Italy/France, Titanus, Gamma Film, 1954.
Löfgren, Orvar, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, Berkeley, California UP, 1999.
Martini, Alessandro, Francesconi, Maurizio, *La moda della vacanza. Luoghi e storie 1860–1939*, Turin, Einaudi, 2021.
Parr, Martin, *Life's a Beach*, New York, Aperture, 2013.
Pavese, Cesare, *Feria d'agosto*, Turin, Einaudi, 2002 [1946].
Périer, Pierre, *Vacances populaires : Images, pratiques et mémoire*, Rennes, PU Rennes, 2000.
Plissart, Marie-Françoise, *Aujourd'hui*, Zelhem, Arboris, 1993.
Racioppi, Antonio, *Tempo di villeggiatura* [Motion picture], Italy, Stella Film, 1956.
Rauch, André, *Vacances en France de 1830 à nos jours*, Paris, Hachette, 1996.
Réau, Bertrand, *Les Français et les vacances*, Paris, CNRS, 2011.
Rozier, Jacques, *Du côté d'Orouët* [Motion picture], France, V.M. Productions, Antinea, 1971.
Viard, Jean, *Penser les vacances*, Arles, Actes Sud, 1984.
–––, *Court traité sur les vacances, les voyages et l'hospitalité des lieux*, La Tour-d'Aigues, L'Aube, 2006 [2000].
Urbain, Jean-Didier, *Les Vacances*, Paris, Le Cavalier Bleu, 2002.

IMAGINAIRES #24

Part 1:
Times in Brackets

Entre vacances et vacance. *Aujourd'hui* de Marie-Françoise Plissart

Jan Baetens
KU Leuven

Résumé : *Aujourd'hui* de Marie-Françoise Plissart (1993) est une « suite photographique » sans paroles qui à première vue n'est pas sans évoquer le célèbre film de Jacques Tati, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*. La comparaison, qui est utile et pertinente à plus d'un égard, passe toutefois à côté de certaines particularités du travail de Plissart, qui interroge les éléments clé de toute forme d'énonciation : les mots « je », « ici », « maintenant », mots intrinsèquement vides dont le sens varie en fonction du contexte et dont la « vacance » permet d'être interrogée à nouveaux frais dans le contexte d'une fiction sur le thème des vacances. L'article analyse la manière dont la caméra et l'image fixe, mais agencée en série, explorent les virtualités de la notion de personnage (aussi mobile que celui de la forme « je »), de lieu (un « où » faisant le va-et-vient entre l'espace diégétique de la plage et l'espace matériel de la page) et enfin de temps (un « maintenant » pris entre les exigences du calendrier et l'absolu d'un instant qui est presque hors temps).

Mots-clés : livre, personnage, photographie, séquence, *shifter*, support.

Les *shifters* : signes pleins, signes vides

On connaît la définition des *shifters* donnée par Émile Benveniste, qui reprend le terme à Jakobson, dans un des articles fondateurs de ses *Problèmes de linguistique générale* (1966)[1] : des termes dont le sens dépend du contexte d'énonciation et qui fondent la subjectivité dans le langage. Ces *shifters*, essentiellement le bloc « je », « ici », « maintenant », sont

1. Le terme même de *shifter* fut introduit par Roman Jakobson (1956).

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

dès lors d'une ambivalence absolue. D'un côté, ils embraient le discours sur la plénitude d'une communication vécue. De l'autre, ils se dérobent à toute signification fixe ; leur référent change en fonction de la situation, c'est-à-dire de la personne qui parle, du lieu où elle se trouve, du moment où elle prend la parole. Duplicité ou clivage, c'est selon, qui peut devenir source d'angoisse ou incertitude, non seulement à cause de la crise du sujet, mais aussi en raison de la médiatisation sans cesse croissante de la parole, détachée de toute instance d'énonciation originale. L'art moderne en témoigne amplement, qui problématise l'usage traditionnel, comme « automatique », des *shifters*. L'*incipit* de *L'Innommable* de Samuel Beckett (1959) le résume avec grande force :

> Où maintenant ? Quand maintenant ? Qui maintenant ? Sans me le demander. Dire je. Sans le penser. Appeler cela des questions, des hypothèses. Aller de l'avant, appeler ça aller, appeler ça de l'avant.

Cette « vacance » de la personne, puis du lieu ou des repères temporels, si partielle et relative qu'elle demeure, caractérise également ce qui est pour nous les vacances, elles aussi « invention » proprement moderne (disons, pour parler très vite, invention du Front populaire). Voilà une activité qui se passe par définition *ailleurs*, dans une espèce de *hors-temps*, et qui promet au *sujet* une vie, sinon meilleure, du moins *autre*. En même temps, vacance et vacances sont prises dans un nombre quasi infini de discours de tous ordres – savants, informels, artistiques – qui en donnent la signification générale aussi bien que l'expérience au quotidien, tantôt de manière lourde – inutile d'insister sur la *doxa* de la carte postale –, tantôt de manière plus subtile, jusqu'à s'imposer comme de nouveaux référents culturels. *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (Jacques Tati, 1953) ou *Pauline à la plage* (Éric Rohmer, 1983) seraient de bons exemples de pareils repères, chacun à sa façon – et leurs façons sont en effet très différentes, qu'il s'agisse des formes ou des thèmes.

Aujourd'hui de Marie-Françoise Plissart (1983), qui n'est pas un roman-photo mais une « suite photographique », relève de cette même catégorie, il est vrai dans un genre moins canonique que la production cinématographique. À première vue, une comparaison avec le film de Tati paraît même inévitable. L'histoire du livre est simple : quatre personnages, trois hommes et une femme, se retrouvent dans une maison de vacances sur la côte bretonne, invités par quelqu'un qu'ils ne connaissent pas et qui restera lui-même absent jusqu'à la fin. Tout au long des quelque cent pages d'*Aujourdhui*, de la première à la dernière journée de leur séjour en Bretagne, nous suivons les activités quotidiennes des quatre hôtes –prendre les repas, se promener, se divertir, travailler (deux des hommes écrivent, le troisième compose de la musique, la femme peint et dessine : c'est la feuille de papier qui leur sert de support commun). En termes

d'intrigue, il se passe très peu de choses. Visuellement, les pages déploient nombre de scènes et de séquences d'une grande richesse photographique, pleine de virtualités narratives que rien ne vient cependant expliciter, quand bien même le lecteur devient vite sensible, à travers la succession des scènes, à une plus forte empreinte d'actes ritualisés (mais sans doute ce terme est-il un peu fort : disons que la dimension du « jeu » devient plus prononcée au fur et à mesure qu'on avance dans le texte, fig. 1).

Fig. 1 : *Aujourd'hui*, p. 81.

Autant les analogies avec *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot* sont d'abord indéniables, autant elles ne tardent guère à se révéler superficielles. S'agissant de l'espace et du temps, les écarts restent presque négligeables : un lieu balnéaire, une période estivale. S'agissant de l'organisation de l'œuvre, les correspondances demeurent elles aussi bien visibles : il n'y a ainsi pas un seul fil narratif, mais une succession de brèves séquences presque indépendantes, avec, aux deux bouts de l'œuvre, une mise en scène très appuyée de l'arrivée comme du départ. Et, s'agissant des relations entre mots et images, la correspondance n'est pas moins saisissante : tout comme chez Tati, qui fait l'économie des dialogues, à l'exception de quelques mots et fragments souvent parodiques, *Aujourd'hui* crée l'essentiel de son histoire – ou plus exactement de ses histoires – par le seul intermédiaire de ses images, souvent grandes, parfois isolées sur une page (la seule exception étant les représentations photographiques de quelques billets et extraits de notes qui ponctuent ce livre d'environ cent pages). S'agissant des personnages, toutefois, la différence devient vite complète : il n'y a chez Plissart ni figure centrale (les quatre personnages sont protagonistes au même titre), ni vie de famille (Olga, Igor, Karl et Léon, car tels sont leurs noms, se partagent les mêmes espaces, mais restent fondamentalement des monades ; nulle part on ne voit des enfants), ni scènes de foule (à l'exception des quatre estivants la plage est déserte, rien ne perturbe jamais le silence ; même le personnage du compositeur, Igor, a un rapport purement visuel avec la musique[2]). De plus en plus notables au fur et à mesure qu'on avance dans le livre, ces divergences avec le film de Jacques Tati aident à mieux saisir la nouvelle approche des vacances qu'on découvre dans *Aujourd'hui*. Pour cela, il est utile de revenir sur le titre, mais aussi le sous-titre et ses connexions avec la vacance des *shifters*, vacance formelle, proprement construite par l'œuvre d'art, qui aide à mieux penser la pratique des vacances comme fait de vie ou de société.

2. On se rappelle sans doute le tapage nocturne et le scandale provoqué par M. Hulot écoutant du jazz à plein volume au milieu de la nuit.

Nous les analyserons dans l'ordre que voici : temps, sujet (personnage), espace, pour terminer par un bref retour, titre du livre oblige, sur le temps.

Titre ou sous-titre ?

Du titre (*Aujourd'hui*) au sous-titre (« suite photographique »), il se tisse un réseau très dense de significations complexes mais toujours ouvertes. Le titre, pour commencer, constitue à lui seul un véritable manifeste. « Aujourd'hui » est certes un terme relatif au temps, mais qui éloigne ou déjoue au maximum les conceptions traditionnelles du temps en photographie. D'une part, la notion d'instantané ou de coupe temporelle, d'arrêt d'un flux – on reconnaît la définition défendue par Henri Cartier-Bresson (1952) –, que l'extension indéfinie des limites du mot « aujourd'hui », à la fois moment et durée, bat ici en brèche. D'autre part, la théorie de la photographie comme manifestation suprême du « ça a été » – thèse du « trauma » photographique devenue hégémonique après la publication de la *Chambre claire* de Roland Barthes en 1980 mais que le *hic et nunc* de l'« aujourd'hui » du livre de Plissart conteste avec vigueur.

Il y a donc dans le titre de Marie-Françoise Plissart une démarche jubilatoire, non traumatisante, et temporellement étendue, anti instantanée, qui distingue son livre aussi bien du roman-photo classique, lui entièrement tourné vers l'illustration d'un scénario préexistant, que de la photographie, elle moins accueillante à l'égard de l'image en série et de l'image mise en scène ou fictionnelle. Or, cette « libération » de la photographie, tant par rapport au texte que par rapport à l'instant (« décisif » chez Cartier-Bresson, irrémédiablement « perdu » chez Barthes), est corrigée d'emblée par le sous-titre « suite photographique ». Ce dernier introduit une nouvelle perspective : le sens de l'indication générique n'est nullement celui d'un *shifter*, il est indépendant de la situation spécifique où ces mots se trouvent produits. « Suite photographique » insiste sur l'enchaînement linéaire d'une série d'unités (une suite n'est pas une simple énumération, c'est plutôt une liste qui dégage une certaine unité à travers son propre déroulement), tout comme il récuse cette succession comme étant régie par autre chose qu'elle-même (un scénario ou une intrigue déjà formulée, par exemple). Comme l'énonce le texte de présentation de Benoît Peeters en quatrième de couverture :

> *Aujourd'hui* n'est pas un album de photos.
> Ce n'est pas non plus un roman-photo.

> Cette *suite photographique* (puisqu'il faut la nommer) tente de proposer une fiction véritablement visuelle. L'image n'illustre pas le texte. Elle le crée.

Il se crée donc un dialogue permanent, un concert pour parler musicalement, entre « aujourd'hui », forme élargie de « maintenant », terme absolu mais sans cesse déplacé, et « suite photographique », terme plus général voire passe-partout, mais libéré de tout déterminant contextuel. Dit autrement : il y a d'une part la vacance radicale du mot « aujourd'hui », cet entre-deux insaisissable entre les deux plénitudes du passé et du futur, et d'autre part les vacances concrètes, matérielles, photographiables que vont occuper, remplir, saturer les mots « suite photographique ». Tout l'art de Marie-Françoise Plissart dans ce livre va consister à repenser de fond en comble la « vacance » au cœur des « vacances » et de donner forme à des manières de temps (« maintenant »), d'espace (« ici ») et de sujet (« je) qui maintiennent un chassé-croisé de l'un à l'autre.

Eux/il.s

Aujourd'hui n'est pas une narration à la première personne : on n'y trouve ni autoportrait, ni autobiographie, ni autofiction, ni légendes en voix *off* où s'exprime un « je », ni mise en spectacle du dispositif photographique. Par cette mise entre parenthèses du sujet photographique, son mode narratif est, dans la terminologie de Benveniste, le récit, non le discours. Il est du côté de la triade « il, là-bas, jadis », plutôt que de « je, ici, maintenant ».

Ce « il » toutefois, se met immédiatement au pluriel, sans jamais devenir un sujet collectif (c'est-à-dire un pluriel qui reste au singulier : le groupe, le clan, la famille, le parti, le peuple, la société, etc.). *Aujourd'hui* prend soin d'introduire – au début – et de faire sortir – à la fin – les quatre personnages, dans les deux cas les uns après les autres. Il s'ingénie aussi à faire alterner images à personnage unique et images où l'on voit évoluer deux, trois ou quatre personnages, dans des proportions plus ou moins stables : la place de l'individu n'est pas menacée par celle du groupe, le singulier et le pluriel coexistent sans heurt. Le rythme de leurs apparitions et disparitions est récurrent et très reconnaissable. Le livre veille surtout, dans la présentation de cette chorégraphie entre solos et pas de deux, de trois ou de quatre, à chercher le parfait équilibre entre ce qui unit et ce qui distingue Olga, Igor, Karl et Léon[3]. D'un bout à l'autre du volume, *Aujourd'hui* affiche et explore un ensemble de paramètres qui

3. À commencer par leurs noms, réduits à un prénom de quatre lettres mais sans parallélisme excessif d'une unité à l'autre au-delà de cette contrainte numérique. Notons aussi que

« font » un personnage, pour montrer à chaque fois combien ces éléments regroupent les protagonistes sans jamais les confondre : vêtements, physique, démarche, activités, accessoires, mais aussi la place occupée dans les compositions de groupe, la distance par rapport aux complices, les gestes de rapprochement ou d'éloignement. Ces caractéristiques sont toujours un mélange du même et de l'autre, comme l'exhibe par exemple le dosage très calculé d'habits noirs et blancs et surtout leur mélange, comme dans l'inversion des rayures dans les pulls d'Olga et Karl : lignes blanches sur fond noir, lignes noires sur fond blanc.

Une telle composition est une variation sur le principe de la narration « chorale »[4]. Le personnage unique ou principal cède le pas à un personnage « combiné », non une masse indistincte mais un pluriel d'individus qui fonctionnent à la fois comme groupe et comme individus. Cela revient à sculpter une position intermédiaire entre « il » et « eux ». L'orthographe non encore officielle de « il-s »[5] rendrait de bons services pour mettre en exergue cette transition entre singulier et pluriel. En soi, cette oscillation entre l'un et les uns, ou si on préfère entre l'autre et les autres, n'a rien de très étonnant. Elle gagne toutefois en importance dès qu'on la met en rapport avec la vacance ouverte par le mot « aujourd'hui », qui brise et le moment de la prise de vue et le déroulement d'un mois de vacances sur la côte bretonne. Le terme « aujourd'hui » problématise la fulgurance du « maintenant » de l'enregistrement photographique – dans le livre de Marie-Françoise Plissart on sent passer le temps, le temps qu'il a fallu pour construire et photographier les épisodes, le temps de la journée, on n'est jamais dans le registre de l'instantané qui compte pour lui-même ou qui exclut le travail de la photographie. De la même façon, ce mot récuse aussi la stabilité d'une facile reconstitution du passé – *Aujourd'hui* n'a rien de l'album de vacances qu'on feuillette pour y retrouver des souvenirs : nous sommes dans un présent non pas historique mais éternel, presque en dehors du temps. Le traitement du personnage choral, c'est-à-dire de « il-s », n'est pas sans analogie avec le travail sur le temps.

Relevons d'abord que le personnage est absent du titre de l'ouvrage : c'est l'hôtel sans Hulot, la plage sans Pauline (mais l'hôtel et la plage sont également tenus à l'écart du titre). Et la manière dont se traite le personnage

le personnage absent, celui qui avait lancé les invitations, André, a – logiquement – un prénom à cinq lettres : André.

4. « Le terme "film choral" fait référence de manière figurée au chœur musical. Il s'agit en effet de films où un nombre relativement important de personnages, sans que l'un d'eux semble plus important que les autres, s'entrecroisent, d'où l'utilisation fréquente du terme "destins croisés" pour les définir. Le film est alors caractérisé par plusieurs sous-intrigues liées aux différents personnages. » (« Film choral », *Wikipedia*, https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Film_choral).

5. Sans référence à la question, légèrement différente, de l'écriture épicène, tout à fait pertinente dans *Aujourd'hui* mais qui dépasse le cadre de la présente analyse. Une lecture plus complète devrait s'interroger ainsi sur le refus de structurer le groupe de manière plus convenue en deux couples (déjà existants, à naître, en train de se rompre, etc.)

émerge peu à peu comme une technique d'une parfaite ambivalence : elle met en avant le personnage et l'évide en même temps, à l'image de ce qui se passe au niveau de l'organisation temporelle, très ancrée dans une durée parfaitement linéaire et résolument arrachée à ce déroulement.

Les quatre personnages sont toujours là, tantôt seuls, tantôt ensemble, simultanément individuels et collectifs, dans un entre-deux clairement lié au tremblement du temps entre instant et durée, ce point inexorablement mobile et passager entre les contours plus fixes de l'avant et de l'après. Le sujet photographié n'est jamais directement mis en question (le respect du modèle chez Marie-Françoise Plissart est absolu !), il n'est jamais vidé de sa substance pour devenir pure forme, et pourtant il est aussi en partie vacant. Le sujet en vacances exulte – *Aujourd'hui* est un livre de bonheur –, mais au même moment il s'absente : du groupe, mais aussi de lui-même, comme on le voit dans les images – elles ponctuent régulièrement cette suite photographique – où quelqu'un devient comme invisible dans le décor, à cause de la distance, à cause de l'écart entre l'immensité de la nature et la petitesse de l'être humain, à cause de l'attitude presque caméléonesque du personnage, enfin à cause de tout cela en même temps (fig. 2)

Fig. 2 : *Aujourd'hui*, p. 85.

La plage, la page

« Où » sommes-nous dans *Aujourd'hui* ? La question, une fois de plus, paraît simple et naïve : dans une maison de vacances, près de la mer, en Finistère, comme nous l'apprend l'achevé d'imprimer (qui rappelle aussi la date : « été 1990 », ce que l'œuvre même s'interdira rigoureusement de faire). Mais de tels détails ne disent pas tout, ils ne disent en tous cas pas l'essentiel qui concerne le choix des décors et la distribution des personnages, leurs poses, leurs gestes, leurs actions, dans ces espaces. Ici encore, l'absence est au premier plan : ni le titre du livre, ni son sous-titre, n'évoquent de près ou de loin la question du lieu. L'espace est omniprésent ; le paysage, somptueux, toujours identifiable, jamais gommé ou truqué. Mais l'espace du livre est tout sauf un espace neutre, choisi pour faire beau. C'est au contraire un espace qui se réduit à un type de lieu certes varié mais finalement très homogène ; il décline une catégorie d'endroits singuliers, celle des espaces liminaires : la cour entre maison et jardin, le muret qui sépare le jardin et la plage, la fenêtre mi-ouverte

mi-fermée qui s'interpose entre intérieur et extérieur, le ruisseau qu'on enjambe, la ligne de galets déposés sur la grève, enfin la plage, lieu de multiples flux et reflux.

D'un espace à l'autre des ressemblances émergent, qui brouillent les distances et annulent les échelles : le caillou qui sert à caler une feuille de papier sur la table couverte d'une toile cirée à motif de fleurs et de fruits – une des premières photos du livre – se met à résonner avec toutes les autres variations sur le végétal et le minéral (fig. 2). De pareils échos multiplient combinaisons et correspondances à chaque page du volume. L'idée de l'espace qui en résulte est une pure construction photographique, mais dans *Aujourd'hui* la prise de vues est un geste qui, justement, s'interroge sur son « ici ». Le lieu de la photographie dans *Aujourd'hui* n'est pas le cliché ou le tirage ou l'image encadrée, mais le livre, l'album, c'est-à-dire un espace déjà formaté qui génère des liens entre des unités diverses, réunies sur la page puis sur la double page, voire la succession des belles et fausses pages dans la « suite ». Chaque photo, ainsi, s'étale sur une page, où il n'est pas difficile de reconnaître l'équivalent matériel de la plage, espace liminaire par excellence dans le travail de Marie-Françoise Plissart.

Fig. 3 : *Aujourd'hui*, p. 12.

De la page à la plage, le saut n'est pas seulement métaphorique. Le motif de la feuille – de papier ou de dessin mais aussi de plante ou d'arbre – traverse l'ensemble d'*Aujourd'hui*. Les réflexions du papier du livre se retrouvent ainsi dans les propriétés des objets photographiés. Sa blancheur, la séparation entre marges et zone écrite ou imprimée, sa nature réversible entre recto et verso, sa capacité d'être combinée avec d'autres figures pour figurer de nouvelles compositions – tout est ici prétexte à analogies, sans qu'il ne soit ni utile ni souhaitable de déterminer l'orientation de ces rapports. Est-ce le décor (la plage) qui imite le support (la page) ou au contraire le premier qui active le second[6] ?

Il se produit un battement entre page et plage, entre organisation des images dans *Aujourd'hui* et chorégraphie des êtres tels qu'on les voit évoluer dans les paysages. Pulsation qui représente une nouvelle modulation sur le choc, mais aussi la complicité, des vacances (les gens, les lieux, les jours) et la vacance

6. Une question identique se pose pour la couleur : est-ce la clé chromatique des vêtements qui transpose le noir et blanc de la photographie ou vice versa ? La réponse exacte importe peu, c'est la combinaison des deux possibilités qui compte.

(qui peu à peu dissout les catégories fixes ou stables du sujet, de l'espace et du temps).

> « Aujourd'hui nous sommes… »

Au billet d'André, l'hôte invisible, que nous découvrons au début du livre correspond, vers la fin, photographiée sur la même table avec la même toile cirée, d'une distance et d'un angle tout à fait comparables, une page du journal de Karl, dont tous les mots ont été raturés, sauf les premiers : « Aujourd'hui nous sommes » (fig. 3). Geste d'autocensure, qui est aussi un geste d'autorévélation, pointant vers une conception du temps axée sur l'idée d'un pur « étant », d'un absolu vacant, si on nous autorise le recours à un tel oxymore.

Précisons quelques détails de ce travail sur le temps, dont nous avons déjà touché un mot en évoquant la place paradoxale du mot « aujourd'hui » entre le fugace « maintenant » et les repères plus objectifs de l'horloge et du calendrier (détaillés dans une page du livre qui reprend l'heure des marées et des couchers et levers de soleil au cours d'un mois d'août). Cet « absolu » du présent n'est pas uniquement le reflet de quelque chose qui s'efface – les mots raturés, les jours de la semaine –, il est aussi et surtout la conséquence de l'organisation du livre. Celui-ci donne une grande autonomie, d'abord à chaque double page, qui s'arrache ainsi à l'écoulement du temps sans pour autant bloquer toute circulation au sein des pages, ensuite à la segmentation de l'œuvre en épisodes, dont la structure n'épouse pas celle de la succession des jours (les fragments du journal de Karl éparpillés à gauche et à droite ne spécifient jamais la date des entrées). Pareille friction entre l'étalement indéfini d'aujourd'hui et la ponctuation du temps qu'on mesure à l'aide de jalons plus objectifs est évidemment typique de la fusion entre la vacance et les vacances.

Les vacances sont une période d'autarcie. On vit, mais en marge de la vie. Comme le note une autre entrée du journal de Karl, variation sur le thème ancestral *Et in Arcadia ego* :

> Ce matin, j'ai cru entendre qu'une guerre avait éclaté, quelque part, très loin d'ici. Je n'ai pas acheté le journal, je n'ai rien dit. (84)

Les vacances sont un *intermezzo* pastoral, une manière de se mettre en congé du monde sans tout à fait prendre congé de lui, et cet arrêt provisoire mais partiel du quotidien est mis en lumière à tout moment dans le livre. Les personnages sont montrés en repos, la moitié du temps, tandis que l'autre moitié on les voit très actifs, seuls ou en groupe (vraiment ne rien faire semble pratiquement exclu). De là sans doute le choix fondamental de la structure en « suite », qui atténue la concaténation chronologique

(une suite implique un ordonnancement moins complexe, du moins à certains égards, qu'un scénario ou un récit), tout en excédant le régime ou la domination du seul instant. Il faut penser la suite comme une structure en *glissando*, où le ponctuel et le successif se voient réconciliés[7].

Le morcellement de la suite est net. Comme dans *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, les passages d'un fragment à l'autre – d'un gag à l'autre dans le cas de Tati – sont clairement marqués. De la même façon, il est possible de relever, non pas un ordre très spécifique, mais du moins une logique internet, d'abord avec la création d'un minimum de tension à l'intérieur de chaque scène (les effets de telle tension sont pourtant peu durables : à chaque fois, le livre doit recommencer le travail sur la création du suspense), ensuite avec l'intensité croissante, elle aussi relativement discrète, des aspects « artificiels » des poses et des actions.

Cette mise en sourdine de la progression, avant tout par le refus de transformer l'enchaînement en accumulation, le successif ne prenant jamais vraiment le pas sur le ponctuel, fait que la série des séquences n'est jamais assez forte pour se métamorphoser en véritable intrigue. Le temps passe, mais ce temps est cyclique, comme le temps de la météo, qui leste la continuité linéaire des vacances d'une sorte de stase lumineuse, comme si le monde n'existait que pour être photographié dans les meilleures conditions atmosphériques possible, sans autre considération d'intrigue ou de calendrier. C'est là une façon d'ouvrir une fenêtre dans le cours du temps, de ramener la fuite des jours vers des moments de béances, uniques et multiples de manière indistincte.

Dans *Aujourd'hui*, les deux grands rapports au temps convergent. D'un côté, l'approche du dehors, qui aborde le temps comme quelque chose de mesurable. De l'autre, l'approche interne, qui montre le temps tel qu'on le vit au moment même. Dans le premier cas, c'est le récit des vacances qui prime. Dans le second, il s'instille une vacance où pourtant personne ne se perd. La suite photographique de Marie-Françoise Plissart tresse ces deux temporalités au point de les rendre quasiment identiques l'une à l'autre. Le mode « je, ici, maintenant » (la vacance) et « il, ailleurs, à ce moment-là » se cherchent, se chevauchent, se mélangent. La durée des vacances se mue en l'instantané de la vacance, dans un chassé-croisé qui fait du surplace tout en allant sans arrêt d'un point du livre à l'autre. Il y a là, incontestablement, une contribution essentielle à la phénoménologie de ce que notre culture appelle vacance(s).

7. Une analyse très détaillée d'une tension comparable entre *itératif* et *singulatif*, mais à partir d'une scène du livre seulement, se donne à lire dans Baetens (1991 ; à remarquer que le numéro de la revue où ce texte a paru, a été antidaté).

Jan Baetens is professor emeritus of cultural studies at the KU Leuven, where he taught semiotics, word and image studies, and popular culture. His research work focuses on the theory and practice of contemporary French poetry, cultural theory, and visual narrative in popular print genres, such as novelisation, comics, photo-novels and film photo-novels, and has published a great number of monographs and edited volumes in all these fields. He is also a published novelist and award-winning poet.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7240-8521

Bibliographie

Baetens, Jan, « La règle excédée. Sur quelques aspects de la temporalité dans *Aujourd'hui* de Marie-Françoise Plissart », *Correspondance*, 2, 1991, 133-143.
Barthes, Roland, *La Chambre claire*, Paris, Gallimard/Seuil, 1980.
Beckett, Samuel, *L'Innommable*, Paris, Minuit, 1959.
Benveniste, Émile, « De la subjectivité dans le langage », in *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Paris, Gallimard, 1966, 258-266.
Cartier-Bresson, Henri, *Images à la sauvette*, Paris, Verve, 1952.
Jakobson, Roman, « Shifters, verbal categories, and the Russian verb », in *Selected Writings II*, La Haye, Mouton, [1956], 1971, 130-147.
Plissart, Marie-Françoise, *Aujourd'hui*, Zelhem, Arboris, 1993.
Rohmer, Éric, *Pauline à la plage*, Les Films du Losange, 1983.
Tati, Jacques, *Les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot*, Discina Film, Cady Films & Specta Films, 1953.

"Lavorare è vestire la terra". Summer memories in Cesare Pavese's *Feria d'agosto*

Valentina Monateri
Università di Torino

Abstract: *Feria d'agosto* is a collection of short stories from 1946 by Italian author Cesare Pavese. This can be defined as a key publication in Pavese's work: not only since it contains an inventory of strongly evocative pavesean themes, but also for the great relevance the author gives to the summertime and the idea of *feria*, which he will re-call again in the more mature triptych of short novels enclosed under the title *La bella estate* (1949). Indeed, the August *ferie* symbolize an important topic in the post-war Italian narrative and, especially, in Pavese's portrayal of the Italian culture of the mid-40s (Alfano, De Medici, Tortora, 2020). The book is divided into three sections, whose titles are significant: "il mare", "la città", "la vigna". The sea, the city and the vineyard are all central *loci* in Pavese's writing, where narrative and mythical telling meet. In the first section, all the main characters are boys on the threshold of adolescence, which come from their status of innocence to the one of conscience. In the second section, the city is the place of the working days portrayed as the locus of cognitive experiences, where we can find recurring Pavese's elements, from the summer deserted streets to the solitary men. While, in the third section, the vineyard represents a religious, mythical element in Pavese's writings whose interpretation throughout his work is polysemic (Procaccini, 1985). The summertime, then, has a multifarious meaning in Pavese's work and especially in *Feria d'agosto*, where the author tends to associate it with childhood, with a ritual passage from ignorance to wisdom, and ultimately, with the relationship modernity maintains with classical myths, thus working on a all-personal mythical method which the Italian literature, in the 40s, was inheriting from the English, French and American literatures (Fielder, 1954).

Keywords: Summertime, Italian post-war narratives, Classical reception studies, mythical method, Cesare Pavese.

Résumé : *Feria d'agosto* est un recueil de nouvelles de 1946 de l'auteur italien Cesare Pavese. Il s'agit d'une publication clé dans l'œuvre de Pavesz : non seulement parce qu'elle contient un inventaire de thèmes pavesiens fortement évocateurs, mais aussi pour la grande importance que l'auteur accorde à l'idée de feria, thématique qu'il rappellera à nouveau dans le triptyque de romans courts réunis sous le titre *La bella estate* (1949). Les *ferie* d'août constituent un thème symbolique important dans le récit italien de l'après-guerre et, surtout, dans le portrait que dresse Pavese de la culture italienne du milieu des années 1940. Le recueil *Feria d'agosto* est divisé en trois sections, dont les titres sont révélateurs : « il mare », « la città », « la vigna ». La mer, la ville et la vigne sont autant de lieux centraux dans l'écriture de Pavese, où se rencontrent narration et récit mythique. Dans la première section, tous les personnages principaux sont des garçons au seuil de l'adolescence, qui passent de leur statut d'innocence à celui de conscience. Dans la deuxième section, la ville est le lieu des journées de travail, dépeintes comme le lieu des expériences cognitives, où l'on retrouve les motifs récurrents de Pavese, des rues désertes en été aux hommes solitaires. Dans la troisième section, le vignoble représente un élément religieux et mythique constant dans les écrits de Pavese dont l'interprétation tout au long de son œuvre est polysémique (Procaccini, 1985). L'été a donc une signification multiple dans l'œuvre de Pavese et surtout dans *Feria d'agosto*, où l'auteur tend à l'associer à l'enfance, au rapport que la modernité entretient avec les mythes classiques, élaborant ainsi une méthode mythique toute personnelle que la littérature italienne, dans les années 1940, hérite des littératures anglaise, française et américaine (Fielder, 1954).

Mots-clés : période estivale, contes italiens de l'après-guerre, études de réception classiques, méthode mythique, Cesare Pavese.

Introduction

La grande collina-mammella dovrebbe essere
il corpo della dea, cui la notte di San Giovanni
si potrebbero accendere i falò di stoppie
e tributare culto.
(*Lettere 1924-1944* n. 640, [22 giugno 1942], 1966).

Feria d'agosto is an Italian 1946 collection of short stories from the Piedmontese author Cesare Pavese. Pavese's writing started in 1941, but it was only a few weeks after the liberation of the city of Turin, Northern Italy, in 1945, that the author worked on the publication of *Feria*, which contains twenty-nine short stories and essays written during the war-years, from

1941 to 1944[1] (Van den Bossche, 2001: 247). The collection besides of presenting an inventory of strongly evocative motifs *pavesiani*, it even gives a great relevance to the image of *summertime* and the idea of *feria*, which the author had already sketched out in the novella *La spiaggia* (1942), and which he will re-call again in the later short novel *La bella estate* (1949), whose composition, however, dates back to the war years.

Feria d'agosto is a three-section collection of short narratives, whose titles are meaningful: *il mare*, *la città*, *la vigna*. The sea, the city and the vineyard are all central *loci* in Pavese's writing, where memory, desire, romantic landscapes and mythical telling meet. In the first section, all the main characters are boys on the threshold of adolescence, which pass from a status of innocence to the one of conscience. In the second section, the city is the place of the working days portrayed as the *locus* of cognitive experiences, where we can find recurring Pavese's elements, from summer deserted streets to solitary men. In the third section, the vineyard represents a religious, mythical element in Pavese's writings, whose reading throughout his work is polysemic: here Pavese presents an essayistic and a sort of lyrical interpretation of myths and symbols (See Mondo, 1961; Venturi, 1969; and Amoruso, [1960] 1968: 15–83; Procaccini, 1985: 214–229; Barberi Squarotti, 2000: 7–21; Van den Boscche, 2001: 213–260; Gioanola, 2002: v-xxxxii).

Thus, summertime holidays take on an allegorical and multifarious meaning in Pavese's work, and especially in *Feria d'agosto*, where the author tends to associate it with childhood, with a ritual passage from ignorance to wisdom, and ultimately, with the relationship modernity maintains with classical myths. Pavese was indeed elaborating an all-personal mythical method,[2] which the Italian literature of the 40s was inheriting from the English, French and American literatures (See Fielder, 1954; Venturi, 1969: 26–30; Bacchilega, 1986; for Pavese and the American literature, see Van den Bossche, 2001: 85–95; Fasano, 2008: 295–310). This article therefore aims to present, through the methods of comparative literatures, the representation of summertime in Cesare Pavese's early work, in an ultimate attempt to assess how the narration of *summertime* and *holiday poetics* influenced the author in his elaboration of the role of myths within modernity. As has been showed: "*Un esame della presenza del mito all'interno della poetica pavesiana non può non prendere le mosse da un'attenta considerazione delle attività di Pavese americanista*" (Van den Bossche, 2001: 85).[3] Indeed, Cesare Pavese, from 1930

1. With the exceptions of *Vocazione* (1940) and *Primo amore* (1937).
2. With the term "mythical method" we refer precisely to the Eliotian idea of mixing realist elements, symbols and myths within modernist poetry. See: Eliot, 1923; and among others: Praz, 1967: 107; Donogue, 1997; Frye, 2000: 100; Nohrneberg, 2012: 909.
3. "An examination of the presence of myth within Pavese's poetics must begin with a careful consideration of Pavese's Americanist activities." [My trans.].

onwards, started his long career as a translator, a critic and a reader of the English and American culture and literature. And we are thus led to assess that Pavese's writing does not constitute a solitary literary example of the amplification of classical myths and symbolical meanings, but rather that his vision of myths as a *non-place* of memories, as the oxymoronic visions of existence, is quite typical of the Euro-American literatures of the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, bringing him closer to a sort of *modernist* aesthetic about which though critics are conflicted (Van den Bossche, 2001: 229; Riccobono-Thompson, 2003).

Cesare Pavese's life is in fact profoundly linked to his editing and translation activity, with a peculiar interest for Anglo-American cultures. He graduated from Turin University holding a dissertation on Walt Whitman's poetry in 1930 (Cf. Pavese [1930], Magrelli [ed. by], 2020). After graduation, he translated Sinclair Lewis's *Our Mr. Wrenn: The Romantic Adventures of a Gentle Man* for the publisher Bemporad. In January 1931, the Treves-Treccani-Tuminelli publishing house commissioned him to translate Melville's *Moby Dick*, which was then published in 1932 by a new editor in Turin: Carlo Frassinelli. Pavese then moved to essays on American writers, for the magazine "Cultura", with two essays on Lewis in 1930, and two on S. Anderson and E. L. Masters. In 1933 three essays on Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser and Walt Whitman came out in "Cultura". In 1934, Frassinelli made Pavese publish the translation of Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. In 1935 Pavese translated Dos Passos's *The 42nd Parallel* and *The Big Money*. In 1937 he translated Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, and, in 1938, for Einaudi, he translated Defoe's *Moll Flanders* and Gertrude Stein's *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. In 1939, again for Einaudi, he translated Dickens's *David Copperfield* and in 1940 Melville's *Benito Cereno* and Stein's *Three Existences*.

In 1946, *Feria d'agosto* was published by Einaudi in the series '*Narratori contemporanei*', at the end of Pavese's long editorial, essayistic and poetic production that included the relevant collection of poems *Lavorare stanca* from 1936 for the Florentine editor Alberto Carocci. *Feria d'agosto* was then followed by another collection of short dialogues *Dialoghi con Leucò* in 1947, the triptych of short novels enclosed under the title *La bella estate* in 1949, including *La bella estate* (1940), *Il diavolo sulle colline* (1948), *Tra donne sole* (1949), and then in 1950 followed the last novel *La luna e i falò*. In June of that year Pavese won the Italian Strega literary prize for *La bella estate* and in August, on the night of the 26th, he killed himself in the Roma hotel in Turin.

Cesare Pavese was clearly an attentive intellectual of inter-war and post-war Italy, an artist and an enquirer of modern cultures, whose particular interest in American literature made him a promoter of American

culture in post-war Italy and a key figure in the publishing activities of the famous Einaudi publishing house (See Ferretti, 2017). As Van den Bossche has shown, Cesare Pavese's positive appraisal of Melville's *Moby Dick* led him to express the view that *Moby Dick* is a peculiarly successful work because of its arousing in the reader of a sense of mystery, without rationalizing it or without allegorizing it: "Moby Dick […] *genera un senso di mistero senza razionalizzarlo del tutto o senza vivisezionarlo allegoricamente*" (Van den Boscche, 2001: 92).[4] Accordingly, in the line with those studies that give relevance to the interpretation of myths and symbols in Pavese's production,[5] the present article aims at shedding a light on how mystery, myth, childhood and summer memories are enucleated in Pavese's view of fictional narrative in post-war Italy, including his social and political thought.

The first section of this article will deal with Pavese's metaphorization of Piedmontese summertime and summer vacations into something fictional, mythical, and symbolical in *Feria d'agosto*. In the second section, by opening the discussion to the sociology of leisure time, in which the influence of cinemas and films on popular audiences in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s is evaluated of great relevance, some considerations will be made about the relationship between Pavese's work and the art of cinema and how the addition of popular elements in his work can make us critics of today think of his work as a *modernist* one.

Of Myths and of Symbols: Infancy, nostalgia, and summer holidays

The flap added by Pavese to the first edition of *Feria* read:

> *Non sempre si scrivono romanzi. Si può costruire una realtà accostando e disponendo sforzi e scoperte che piacquero ognuno per sé, eppure siccome tendevano a liberare da una stessa ossessione, fanno avventura e risposta. Qui, come in tutte le avventure, si è trattato di fondere insieme due campi d'esistenza. E la risposta potrebbe essere questa: solamente l'uomo fatto sa essere ragazzo* (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 205).[6]

4. "Moby Dick [...] generates a sense of mystery without rationalising it completely or vivisecting it allegorically" [My trans.]
5. Van den Bossche is a fundamental source for the study of myth in Pavese, as also: Guiducci, 1972; Jesi, 1968; Meynaud-Jeuland,1968; Renna, 2017.
6. "One does not always write novels. One can construct reality by juxtaposing and arranging efforts and discoveries that appeal to each for themselves, and yet because they tend to liberate from the same obsession, they make adventure and response. Here, as in all adventures, it was a matter of fusing together two fields of existence. And the answer could be this: only the grown-up man knows how to be a boy" [My trans.].

Pavese wanted to tell adventures, and these adventures are the ones the young boys live during their troubled access to adulthood (Cf. Bàrberi Squarotti, 2000). Summer is the multifarious narrative feature that runs through all his writing in *Feria* and there are three fundamental elements that return in Pavese's telling of these vacational adventures: myth, private child symbolism and the countryside (Cf. Gioanola, 2002: VII; Gioanola, 2003: 13–15). Thus, childhood is associated with the countryside, both because of an actual biographical correspondence, and because the city, the place of working life, the world of maturity, is gradually associated in *Feria d'agosto* with a departure from an innocence that has been lost and is remembered with nostalgia. The first section of the collection titled *Il mare* (The sea) features the following stories as mainly summer-holidays-related narratives: *Fine d'agosto*, *Insonnia*, *L'eremita* and *Il mare*.

Rather obviously, August is the month of *ferie*, of holidays, of festivities; it is the month that, in the peasant world, falls between the first and second harvests: "*tra i primi e i secondi raccolti, quando in campagna non si fa più niente e la giornata dura ancora metà della notte*".[7] Pavese was aware that recalling the peasant world of his childhood was an operation that required some innovative – *modern* – creative methodology. And in these terms, he gave to those summer memories a particular ecstatic significance of the passage from infancy to adulthood: a passage that he saw as hinging on myth (Bàrberi Squarotti, 2000). Mythical telling is pre-verbal and pre-logical and, in this sense, the August festival is seen by Pavese as an ancient Greek *epoché* (ἐποχή), that is, an ecstatic suspension of living, from which it results that the process of remembering is not a temporally recordable itinerary of memory, but a leap into another dimension, that of the the symbolical (Gioanola, 2002: XIX). For instances, in Husserl's phenomenology, *epoché* appears to be as a suspension of beliefs where rational biases are suspended to discover the originally consciousness of phenomena (See for a critic of Husserl's phenomenology in literary criticism: Haensler, Mendicino, Tobias, 2020). And this is the way Pavese tries to make the reader pass through this strong association between infancy, memories and life in the countryside: by making it mythical. Hence, adolescence at the threshold of maturity results in its representation as a blissful moment where time and space are all subjected to individual rationalization.

Within the section *Il mare*, *Fine d'agosto* is a very short story that immediately presents the three features *pavesiane* linked to summer nights: discovery/fear of sexuality, mysteries and quest of the self. Indeed, nighttime symbolizes a moment of rebellion for the protagonists of Pavese's stories: it is the most suitable time to start journeys into another dimension,

7. "Between the first and second harvests, when in the countryside nothing is done anymore and the day still lasts half the night" [My trans.].

a temporal sphere where oneiric and every-day memories are mixed as in a Freudian analysis (Cf. Isotti Rosowsky, 1989; Van den Bossche, 2001, 261; Gioanola, 2002: XIII). Accordingly, with some misogynist conclusions that try to mimic a still-beardless boy's mind, *Fine d'agosto* deals with the first-person narrative of a young adult who, together with his partner Clara, is surprised by a summer memory about the times he was a boy. This memory is all shrouded in a sense of nostalgia for lost innocence, for the mystery that hovers around sexuality. Since the gusts of the night wind always take the protagonist back to those moments, Clara patiently waits for him, in doing so irritating and exasperating the narrator. As Pavese wrote: "*C'è qualcosa nei miei ricordi d'infanzia che non tollera la tenerezza carnale di una donna – sia pure Clara*" (Pavese, [1946] (2017): 10; and Gioanola, 2002: 10).[8] The narrator is, in fact, lost at looking in the wind gusts the memories of a pre-war summer, of a state of innocence sought here with nostalgia, which gets the better of the coming of age:

> *Quel turbine di vento notturno mi aveva, come succede, inaspettatamente riportato sotto la pelle e le narici una gioia remota, uno di quei nudi ricordi segreti come il nostro corpo, che gli sono si direbbe connaturati fin dall'infanzia. La spiaggia dove sono nato si popolava nell'estate di bagnanti e cuoceva sotto il sole. Erano tre, quattro mesi di una vita sempre inaspettata e diversa, agitata, scabrosa, come un viaggio o un trasloco. Le casette e le viuzze formicolavano di ragazzi, di famiglie, di donne seminude al punto che non mi parevano donne e si chiamavano le bagnanti. I ragazzi invece avevano dei nomi come il mio. Facevo amicizia e li portavo in barca, o scappavo con loro nelle vigne. I ragazzi delle bagnanti volevano stare alla marina dal mattino alla sera: faticavo per condurli a giocare dietro i muriccioli, sui poggi, su per la montagna. Tra la montagna e il paese c'erano molte ville e giardini, e nei temporali di fine stagione le burrasche s'impregnavano di sentori vegetali e torridi che sapevano di fiori spiaccicati sui sassi* (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 10).[9]

8. "There is something in my childhood memories that does not tolerate the carnal tenderness of a woman – even of Clara" [My trans.].
9. "That night wind whirlwind had, as it happens, unexpectedly brought back a remote joy under my skin and nostrils, one of those naked memories as secret as our bodies, which one might say have been inherent in them since childhood. The beach where I was born was populated in the summer with bathers and baked under the sun. It was three or four months of a life that was always unexpected and different, agitated, rough, like a journey or a move. The little houses and alleyways swarmed with children, families and half-naked women, to the point that they didn't look like women to me and were called *le bagnanti*. The boys, on the other hand, had names like mine. I made friends with them and took them out on boats or ran off with them to the vineyards. The boys of *le bagnanti* wanted to stay at the marina from morning to night: I struggled to get them to play behind the walls, on the hills, up the mountain. Between the mountain and the village there were many villas and gardens, and in the storms at the end of the season the gales were impregnated with vegetable and torrid scents that smelled of flowers crushed on the stones" [My trans.].

Here the author describes the summer of his childhood: three or four months of unexpected life; women in swimming costumes seen as "half-naked"; the streets tingled with people coming from everywhere around the region. And this is the memory of the end-of-August wind that, perceived again in the years of maturity, takes the author back in time: not as much as in a Proustian epiphany, but as in a profound rationalization of the end of a mythical time, which can again be made symbolical and metaphorical, only thanks to the narrative function.

On another level, *Insonnia* tells of a young adult who returns home every night, at dawn, in mid-August after "parties, talks and adventures" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 21). The story is very short and anticipates a core narrative that will be more extensively developed in *L'eremita*, the next tale of this section. In fact, the protagonist, aware that his father did the same before him, renounces his work in the stable, he refuses his duties, and even if he is still scolded as a boy, he keeps coming home at dawn, certain that he wants to break the link with the family unit. He cannot sleep, since a sort of August insomnia seizes him: "*a smania di finirla, di prendere un treno, di andare in città e fare una vita più da uomo, non mi lasciava dormire*" (Pavese, [1946] (2017): 23).[10] The boy suffers from insomnia since, through his knowing of life, of the world through summer festivals, he understands that before bending to working time, to the September time of days dedicated to the harvests, there is a season of life and freedom which is the summer season of August.

L'eremita thus deals with a first-person narration told in the narrative voice of a family man. More elaborated than *Insonnia*, *L'eremita* has Nino as a protagonist. Nino is a young boy with no mother, who always goes with his father to bathe in the river and is always on the hunt for adventures. His father and his aunt try to keep him at home for the working and the studying, but Nino always goes up the hill to look for the hermit, Pietro, a young man who lives from day to day and who masters carpentry, seafaring and vineyards. He knows some exotic words that make Nino dream and has retreated to a hut on the hill. He doesn't want visitors, he doesn't want a wife. Pietro, living as a hermit, is thus the transitional figure helping Nino – who gets into trouble, with a dangerous swim in the river, with a feverish walk in the night-time – to become a man and Nino's father, indirectly, to become a boy again: "*Quella notte del ritorno l'ho nel cuore come l'ultima infanzia di Nino. I canti, la stanchezza, l'eccitazione sotto la luna me ne hanno fatto qualcosa di irreale e di triste. Voglio quasi bene a quel Pietro; si direbbe che il bambino fui io*" (Pavese, [1946]

10. "Something like a eager to get it over with, to take a train, to go to the city and live more like a man, did not let me sleep" [Mt trans.].

2017: 33).[11] The time of the *feria*, of non-working time, summer festivals and bonfires reminds the adult man of that state of strange ecstatic happiness preceding maturity and that bring the boy to get to know the world, to get to access adulthood.

Finally, *il mare* is the last short story of this section – which even gives the name to the section – and is particularly relevant to show how Pavese's writing focuses on a fictional representation of the ritual passage from adolescence to conscience, thanks to his seek for myths. As Pavese wrote in his journal on April 1945 the 5th: "*Vivere in un ambiente è bello quando l'anima è altrove. In città quando si sogna la campagna, in campagna quando si sogna la città. Dappertutto quando si sogna il mare*" (Pavese, [1945] 1990: 299).[12] Here, the author presents the three polarities of *Feria d'agosto*: sea, city, countryside. In this tale, all that matters is the *elsewhere*, that elsewhere to which summer memories constantly return. As Pavese is known to have written in his journal, we always seek for some other place to go, for a *nowhere* that even many of his literary models from the Western literary tradition wrote on (e.g. Baudelaire, Melville, Leopardi) (Cf. Gioanola, 2002: x). In the story *Il mare* the protagonists are two boys, one of whom is called Gosto, in a reference to the month of August. During the scorching summer days, the two of them venture into the hills in search of the sea, which Gosto's grandfather said is "behind the hills". And thus the sea is properly mythicized by Pavese's writing, since no sea really appears behind the Piedmont hills. As Gioanola has written, the two boys are not looking for real road information, they are looking for legends: *mythos*; for the journey they intend to undertake, they do not need maps, they need imagination. (Gioanola, 2002: xii).

Eventually, in the night, Gosto will give up finding the sea and take the road back to the hills. The other boy, alone, will be attracted by the lights and sounds of a party in the distance; he will meet the village musician, Candido, and after dancing with him will return home. The sea is then the place of nowhere, it is mythicized and allegorized as Pavese had declared to have learnt from Melville's pages, where the sea is represented through a constant cognitive tension towards the unknown, but which will never find a solution: for the mystery remains a mystery in Melville. And thus it happens in Pavese's short story *Il mare*, where the sea will never be reached and it will never be known, just as Melville's White Whale disappears without being caught (Van den Bossche, 2001: 92).

11. "That night of the return journey is in my heart like Nino's last childhood. The singing, the tiredness, the excitement under the moon made it something unreal and sad. I almost love that Pietro; you could say that the child was me" [My trans.].
12. "Living in an environment is good when the soul is elsewhere. In the city when you dream of the countryside, in the country when you dream of the city. Everywhere when one dreams of the sea" [My trans.].

La *città*, then, the next section of *Feria*, presents at its center a series of slightly more adult figures than those presented in *La campagna*. These are students and young workers who have moved from their families in the Piedmont countryside to the city of Turin to grow up as men, make a career and to enter an independent adulthood. The story, *La città*, for instances, presents a group of friends, led by "Gallo", to whom the protagonist is attracted, with whom he experiences a series of nocturnal raids in the Turin city *entre-deux-guerres*, and from whom he learns how to drink, how to rent rooms and how to find women to spend the night with. Though he fails, in the end, to keep the only good-family girl that he likes.

The deserted streets, trodden at a great pace by the various protagonists of the following stories: *Vocazione*, *Le case*, *Risveglio* and *L'estate*, are the real protagonists of the second section of *Feria*. The streets of Turin are often represented as deserted, seen late at night, as when the protagonists return home from their nocturnal adventures, and seen during the summertime or during Sundays. Thus, the holiday time, disruptive at the eyes of the protagonists, domains the plots. As we can read in *Le case*:

> *Anche adesso la gente alla domenica va fuori città. Le vie si vuotano come un'officina. Io passo il pomeriggio camminandoci, e ce ne sono di quelle dove in mezz'ora non si vede un'anima. Sembra che tetti, marciapiedi e muri, e qualche volta i giardini, siano stati fatti soltanto per un uomo come me, che ci passa e ripassa e se li guarda venire incontro e allontanarsi, come succede delle colline e degli alberi in campagna.*
> *C'è sempre qualche via più vuota di un'altra. Alle volte mi fermo a guardarla bene, perché in quell'ora, in quel deserto, non mi pare di conoscerla. Basta che il sole, un po' di vento, il colore dell'aria siano cambiati, e non so più dove mi trovo. Non finiscono mai, queste vie. Non par vero che tute abbiano i loro inquilini e passanti, e che tutte se ne stiano così zitte e vuote. Più che quelle lunghe e alberate della periferia dove potrei respirare un po' d'aria buona, mi piace girare le piazze e le viuzze del centro, dove ci sono i palazzi, e che mi sembrano ancora più mie, perché proprio non si capisce come tutti se ne siano andati* (Pavese, 2001: 130).[13]

13. "Even now people go out of town on Sundays. The streets empty out like a garage. I spend my afternoons walking along them, and there are some where you can't see a soul in half an hour. It seems as if the roofs, pavements and walls, and sometimes the gardens, were made just for a man like me, who walks past them and watches them come and go, like hills and trees in the countryside.
There is always some street that is emptier than another. Sometimes I stop to take a good look at it, because at that hour, in that desert, I don't seem to know it. All it takes is the sun, a bit of wind, the colour of the air to change, and I no longer know where I am. These paths never end. It doesn't seem true that they all have their tenants and passers-by, and that they all remain so quiet and empty. Rather than the long, tree-lined streets of the suburbs, where I can breathe in some fresh air, I like to wander around the squares and alleys of the centre, where there are the buildings, and which seem to me even more my own, because it's hard to understand how everyone's gone" [My trans.].

And *L'estate*, too, presents one of the best representations of the empty city in the holiday time, the image of the whole population fleeing away when working days do not keep them in the city. The author depicts this brief falling in love by allegorizing it completely in the story of a single summer coming to an end, with the arrival of the first rains. He tells the love of one season: "*Stemmo insieme ancora molti giorni, fin che durò la stagione, ma entrambi sapevamo che tutto sarebbe finito entro l'autunno. Così fu infatti*" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 108).[14] The suspended time of the holiday is thus an opportunity to suspend life, just as the memories from childhood in the countryside offered to the adult the same opportunity to escape. The empty city and the lone man passing through it are the two main objects of the story: space and time overlap and lose their connotations of reality, existing only in narrative time: "*Tutto questo mi fu familiare, direi quotidiano se il succedersi di quei giorni non mi paresse tuttora illusorio, tanto che a volte l'intera stagione mi riesce a ripensarci una sola giornata che vissi in commune*" (Pavese, [1946], 2001: 106).[15] Thus, the individual, who signifies the external world that surrounds him, becomes the only reason for the world's meaning: "*Ogni cosa, accadendo, si faceva ricordo, perché accadeva dentro di me prima che fuori. Era come se la lunga giornata l'andassi facendo io, e perciò niente, della stanza e della sera, mi era estraneo; nemmeno il corpo che accoglieva il mio, e la voce sommessa*" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 107).[16]

The last section is entitled *La vigna* and is also the most chronologically homogeneous section (Cf. Muñiz Muñiz, 1992: 80–81; Ven den Bossche, 2001: 274). As Van den Bossche has indicated, with the third section we seem to be approaching an increasingly clear theoreticalization of the discourse: after the first and second sections, dominated respectively by an evenemential narrative and a narrative divided between the *pathos* and the cognitive, the non-fictional writing of *La vigna* looms as the third and final stage in this progressive expansion of the cognitive dimension in the discursive texture of *Feria d'agosto* (Van den Bossche, 2001: 274). In this last section, Pavese enucleated some of his main considerations about myth. In *Del mito del simbolo e d'altro*, the first text of *La vigna*, Pavese's coordinates of the interpretation of myth and symbol are outlined. As he writes: "*Ora, da bambini il mondo s'impara a conoscerlo non – come parrebbe – con immediato e originario contatto alle cose, ma attraverso i segni*

14. "We stayed together many more days, as long as the season lasted, but we both knew that it would all be over by the autumn. And so it was" [My trans.].
15. "All this was familiar to me, I would say intimate, if the succession of those days did not still seem illusory to me, so much so that sometimes the whole season reminds me of a single day I lived in common" [My trans.].
16. "Everything, as it happened, became a memory, because it happened inside me before it happened outside. It was as if the long day was being done by me, and therefore nothing in the room or in the evening was foreign to me; not even the body that held mine, and that soft voice" [My trans.].

di queste: parole, vignette, racconti" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 152).[17] Words, cartoons, stories are the symbols of the experiences and adventures, physical and mental, properly of childhood, and it is thus that the mythical childish time is associated – as we have shown – with the time of the feast, of the life's *feria*: "*Così ognuno di noi possiede una mitologia personale* […]. *A questo 'temps retrouvé' non manca del mito genuino nemmeno la ripetibilità, la facoltà cioè di reincarnarsi in ripetizioni, che appaiono e sono creazioni ex novo, così come la festa ricelebra il mito e insieme lo instaura come se ogni volta fosse la prima*" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 152–153).[18] Pavese interprets myth as something that is created and recreated, each time as if for the first time, in the ritual context of the festival, because only through ritualization can myth be established. And the vineyard itself is a symbol of the feast time, coincident with the grape harvest, the country life, and the peasant times. It is a symbol part of the personal mythology *pavesiana*: from something proper of the peasant landscape, it becomes something more. Thus, in Pavese's writing, material things are metamorphized in mythical views (Gioanola, 2002: XVII).

Accordingly, *Nudismo* is the story which results to be more relevant for Pavese's interpretation of the clash between nature and culture, between libertarian life and societal life, between working time and idleness or free time. In *Nudismo*, in fact, the protagonist seeks nudity as a natural human condition, a condition opposed to being dressed to go to work or to get into the world. The narrator always goes to the river to hide in the grass to bathe and then to dry himself naked in the sun. Here, the connection with nature is everything. The search for this moment of ecstasy is constant. He hears and sees the peasants working in the distance and finds himself thinking that country people, as long as they are boys, bathe naked at the river but, in adulthood, they don't do it anymore. One day a young woman – called *the bride* – passes through the fields, she sees him and is not surprised. The narrator wonders why, but then understands that the peasant woman is also aware that what she saw was an idleness: a suspended time, far from the work of the land. Bathing for pleasure is an action which belongs to another temporal sphere from that of the peasant world. What the narrator eventually realizes is that both humanity and the countryside are never exposed to the world as totally natural, or, to say it better: totally "naked". Indeed, culture necessarily clashes with nature, for the narrator discovers that there is not a piece of land that has not been built on: "*Lavorare è vestire la terra*" (Pavese, [1946] 2017: 178).[19]

17. "Now, as children, we learn about the world not - as it seems - through immediate and original contact with things, but through the signs of things: words, cartoons, stories, etc." [My trans.].
18. "Thus, each of us possesses a personal mythology [...]. This 'temps retrouvé' does not lack even the repeatability of genuine myth, that is, the faculty to reincarnate in repetitions, which are creations ex novo, just as the festival recalls the myth and at the same time establishes it as if each time were the first." [My trans.].
19. "To work is to dress the land." [My trans.].

The land is dressed just as a man dresses himself by renouncing his own natural nakedness, as the narrator concludes: "*La campagna appare nuda ma non è. Dappertutto il sudore la copre di caligine riarsa. Mi chiedo se c'è un fosso, una costa, un pezzo solo di terra che mani non abbiano scavato e rifatto. Dappertutto è segnato di sguardi e parole umane*" (Pavese [1946] 2001: 178).[20] Again, here we see the myth of nudity, of the *uncontaminated* nature, which turns out to be impossible, except in transfigurations and in the arts.

Therefore, Pavese's war years spent in the countryside led the author to an accumulation of creative methodologies that subsequently exploded in different poetic forms: thus were born the lyrics of *La terra e la morte* and the mythical dialogism of *Dialoghi con Leucò*. Though, the period he spent in Serralunga D'Alba and Casale Monferrato (in the *Langhe*, a hilly area in South-Piedmont) is recognized by Pavese himself as fundamental to the birth of the essays in *Feria*, from which the other two works will flourish. The theoretical elaboration we read in *La Feria* appears to be the first moment of a path that is not merely theoretical-aesthetic, but profoundly poetic: those reflections on childhood, memory and myth were not born as mere reflection nor as pure critical-aesthetic theory, but with them Pavese began to clarify for himself the foundations of a theory that would later allow for a more conscious and profound poetic creation, of which *La terra e la morte* and *I Dialoghi* represent two different elaborations (Renna, 2016: 17–18).

Given that, the stories of *Feria*, and the contemporary notes on Pavese's journal, show how Pavese understood that the recovery of the irrational was by no means a retrograde operation and, certainly encouraged by his reading of Thomas Mann, Freud, and Béguin, he tried to shake off the rationalist and historicist qualms of his training, immersing himself in the most creative strand of contemporary poetry. A fact that was noted even at his contemporary time, giving a negative judgement on his *decadent* style, while today critics – such as Gioanola – see in those precise achievements Pavese's originality (Cf. Moravia, 1963; Moravia, 1970; for a study on this debate: Gualtieri, 1980; and Gioanola, 2002: XXII; for Pavese's writing on the journal and composing *Feria*, see Mondo, 1961: 68–70).

La feria is therefore a complex, articulated collection, which focuses on the making of a new poetic methodology, on the experimenting of a *modern* style and on the association between idleness and freedom, summer memories and self-making, myth and childhood. As Stefania Bernini

20. "The countryside appears naked but is not. Everywhere the sweat covers it with a parched caligin. I wonder if there is a ditch, a ridge, a single piece of land that hands have not dug and redone. Everywhere is marked by human looks and words." [My trans.].

has pointed out, at the end of the Second World War, young people were brought to the forefront of the political agenda. (Bernini, 2007: 78–79; Bernini, 2020). Children became a subject in the societal and political world in the years of the European recovery after the War. Thus Pavese, while composing *Feria* during the war years, already anticipates a growing attention to the infancy, the adolescence, to the private becoming public, which will be typical of much post-war Western culture, both literary and political. Bernini pointed out that children "themselves became a crucial part of these transformations. While children looked at how their domestic and social landscape changed under their eyes, adults looked at wartime children as something new and largely unknown. This new way of seeing each other left a crucial mark in the postwar imagination" (Bernini, 2020: 64). And this crucial mark was indeed made evident – as Bernini showed – by the fact that all Western democracies from the post-war period onwards focused on protecting the rule of law for children. Pavese, already in the early 40s, during the war, associated childhood and mythology with a *modernist* artistic sensibility that focused on (sort of Freudian) self-excavation and on self-making, on the growth of the individual within the poetic horizon.

Again, as Gionola has indicated

> *Gli anni 1943 e 1944, nei quali si collocano gli ultimi racconti di* Feria d'agosto*, sono tanto ricchi di fatti esteriori e di avvenimenti drammatici quanto poveri di produzione narrativa: è il tempo del primo soggiorno romano di Pavese, e del romitaggio sui colli del Monferrato dopo l'8 settembre.* […]*; l'infanzia personale diventa l'infanzia del mondo, il tempo-luogo di quell'età di meravigliosa scoperta delle cose diventa lo scenario rappresentativo delle manifestazioni pre-razionali, in cui si nasconde lo stupore della 'prima volta'. Pavese pare intento a scoprire il segreto della formazione delle «immagini trascendentali»* (Mestiere di vivere*, 17-9-1943), sulle quali edificare la sua nuova poetica* (Gioanola, 2003: 23).[21]

Accordingly, up to this point, an attempt has been made in the analysis of some of Pavese's stories to illuminate the importance of the coincidence between childhood time and leisure time: as an ecstatic, spiritual growth, and as a symbolic and mythical moment. The suspension

21. "The years 1943 and 1944, in which the last stories of *Feria d'agosto* are set, are as rich in external facts and dramatic events as they are poor in narrative production: it is the time of Pavese's first stay in Rome, and of his hermitage around the hills of Monferrato after the 8th of September. [...]; the personal childhood becomes the childhood of the world, the time-place of that age of marvelous discovery of things becomes the representative scenario of sort of pre-rational manifestations, in which the wonder of understanding something for the 'first time' is hidden. Pavese seems intent on discovering the secret of the formation of some 'transcendental images' (*Mestiere di vivere*, 17-9-1943), on which he will build his new poetics" [My trans.].

from working time and the embrace of a more ingenuous life are the two thematical cores that move Pavese to write *Feria*, in an attempt to give a contemporary – *modern* – answer to an ancient mythical mechanism. During feasts, work does not exist. During feasts, in Pavese's interpretation, ancient Greeks revived the *mythos*: they ritualized the story, institutionalizing it. And this is the *Feria*: an attempt – perhaps a failure in late modernity – to institutionalize the ritual and, in this way, to make the non-working days sacred and mythical.

On the one hand, the process of celebrating the myth always involves an institutionalization of that same celebration; and the epithets and the formulaic language, typical of classical poems, inasmuch as they are necessary to the ritual repetition of the celebration, they will result to be fundamental even in Pavese's creative methodology (Cf. Van den Bossche, 2001: 158). Pavese's poetical seek is always for '*la storia segreta*', for the mystery, for what is hidden, and in *Feria d'agosto* this excavation into the mysterious coincides with the nostalgic memories of some childhood summer. Although for the mature city man, the countryside is inaccessible – like a deconsecrated city – the myth continues to speak in the poetic language (Jesi, 1968: 169). The feria, the holiday, the time suspended from the working days symbolize Pavese's creative attempt to combat the existential nostalgia for the modern loss of the esoteric, the mysterious and the sacred (See Pavese [1946] 2001, 154–155).

Conclusion: Pavese between sociology of the arts, cinema, and modernist technique

Classical poems, Melville's novels and Baudelaire's poetry certainly play an important role in Pavese's search for the mysterious (Van den Bossche, 2001: 112–113; Pertile, 197: 338–339; Isotti Rosowsky, 1989: 67–68). However, in the years of the composition of *Feria d'agosto* – the war years – Pavese's anthropological and ethnological studies of myth had not yet been explored in depth. It was in the post-war years, at the end of the 40s, that his attention shifted to a reconnaissance of the analogies between contemporary manifestations of the sacred and those ancient collective manifestations (Van den Bossche, 2001: 295). In a comparatist perspective, then, it can be of some interest to analyze, beyond his admiration for other Western authors, which narrative mechanisms and narratological functions influenced, in those war years and immediately post-war years, as a reaction to the present's trauma, Pavese's *modern* idea of writing. And then some concluding remarks can be made about the relationship between Pavese's writing and the art of cinema, since both this is an art form of great interest in twentieth century artistic experimentation,

and since this is a communicative medium that has attracted many studies in the sociology of leisure time (Cf. for studies on Pavese's works and cinema: Ferme, 2001: 14–40; Brogi, 2011: 295–314, Mannelli, 2021: 1–32. And for cinematic sociology studies: Jones, 1986; Jarvie, 2013).

Pavese was in fact seen by Italian critics of the 50s and 60s as a decadent, as an author dedicated to a formal sophistication and far from political and collective commitment. Alberto Moravia's criticism on this point is well known (Moravia, 1963; –, 1970; cf. also Gualtieri, 1980: 195–223). And yet, it is precisely *Feria d'agosto*, as the editorial recollection of Pavese's writings from the war years, published in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, with its combination of mythology, popular elements and metaphorization of reality, that makes us see Pavese today, to all intents and purposes, as a *modernist* (Cf. Comparini, 2018; Van den Bossche, 2018: 199–214). Indeed, Moravia – a great intellectual figure in the Roman and Italian cultural life of the Post-war – insisted in denigrating Pavese compared to his beloved Melville, who instead "*il mito l'aveva saputo creare nella pagina ed era morto nel suo letto*" (Moravia, 1970: 14).[22] In this way, Moravia caustically suggested that the only myth Pavese had managed to create was the myth of his own suicide: "*Il mito di Pavese è invece quello dello scrittore che si uccide*" (Moravia, 1970: 14).[23] However, Pavese himself had another vision for Melville, and that was the idea that the American epic author had been able to create some 'Greek' writings (Pavese, 1968: 74–75). Melville had been able within modernity, for Pavese, to reconstruct the epic and the tragic of the antiquity. Thus, Pavese's *classical thought* and learning is associated to a modern *American thought*: an admiration for the American epic which had carried the ancient mystery in the modern fiction. And Pavese aspired to do the same. Far from being decadent, Cesare Pavese looked at the contemporary times, the war years and the post-war period, with the transfiguring eye of a *modernist*, who sees the tragical irony of making the myth happen in the modernity, though who also always tries to pursue and revive it.

The final address of this research is, then, what is there in Pavese's representation of *ferie* and of 'holiday poetics' that corresponds to the modernist slogan: *Make it New*? (Cf. Pound, 1934).[24] And one possible response is an inter-medium response. In a recent introduction to a monographic issue on Pavese, in fact, Tirinanzi de Medici, Alfano and Tortora pointed out that the perspective of myth in Pavese can be approached mainly from three main perspectives: the critical-analytical one, the philological-linguistic one and the comparative-trans-medial

22. "had been capable of create something mythical and had died in his bed" [My trans.].
23. "Pavese's myth, instead, is that one of the writer who kills himself". [My trans.].
24. The slogan 'Make it New' is a notorious slogan by modernist author and thinker Ezra Pound who published a well-known collection of essays under this title in 1934. Cf. Pound, 1934; Bledsoe, 2016.

one (Tirinanzi De Medici, Alfano, Tortora, 2021: 3). The final answer of the present article is then precisely one that tries to assess how an innovative, modern, contemporary language, probably drawn by Pavese from his great interest in literature, in the arts and in Hollywood cinema, can help us see an even more obvious side of Pavese's writing closeness to a *modernist* technique. The 'holiday poetics' pursued in *Feria* symbolize Pavese's metaphorical – or Freudian – medium to find a new way for art in contemporary society during the war years: a new way of realism and of reading the tragic that has some aesthetical contact with the Italian neorealist cinema. Suffice it to think of what he says in one Radio Interview from the 1950s, edited by Leone Piccioni, when asked who he considered the best contemporary narrator, he mentioned Thomas Mann and added "*tra gli italiani Vittorio de Sica*" (Mannelli, 2021: 11).[25]

As Furio Jesi has pointed out, Thomas Mann is indeed one of the best reading choices in Pavese's works on myth, along with Vico, Nietzsche, Rilke, and then Jung and Heidegger. As a scholar of the reception of the German mythopoetics in the twentieth-century Italian (as well as European) culture, Furio Jesi has identified Pavese's reading of Thomas Mann as foundational to the construction of his "mythical method", just as Gianni Venturi found interesting 'Mannian suggestions' in *La vigna* (Jesi, 1964: 109; see even Cazzola, 2015: 209; Venturi, 1969: 80–86). Jesi wrote that "*Da Thomas Mann e da Kerényi, Pavese ebbe una conferma perentoria, munita della duplice garanzia dell'arte e della ricerca scientifica, di quella devozione alla morte che egli doveva possedere in germe*"[26], thus indicating how much Pavese was intrested in digging into Mann's main thematical cores. That "devotion to death" is indeed something that from *Buddenbrooks* (1901) – through an extensive novelistic construction – to *Der Tod in Venedig* (1912) – through a short *novella* composition – testifies Mann's masterly ability to unite *death* and *aesthetics*. And precisely *Der Tod in Venedig* is a work that deeply connects the melancholic sense of summer, the "devotion to death" and the search for a lost childish sense of fulfillment. Nevertheless, Thomas Mann's aesthetics – which is so modernist that in a well-known article by Peter Egri it has been associated with Joyce's aesthetics – retains a deep connection with a *fin de siècle* taste that instead comes to be mediated in Pavese's fiction. Indeed, Pavese cultivated a taste for the medial and the cinematic that cannot be overlooked, especially in parallel with his research on myth (Cf. Egri, 1968, 100–101).

25. "Among the Italians Vittorio de Sica" [My trans.].
26. "From Thomas Mann and Kerényi Pavese had a peremptory confirmation, armed with the dual guarantee of art and scientific research, of that devotion to death that he must have possessed in premature form" [My trans.].

Pavese's positions on cinema will be contrasting throughout his whole intellectual career, but in the post-war years, just as he was an admirer of American literature, he even admired the major Hollywoodian productions (Mannelli, 2021: 12). As Massimo Mila demonstrated by publishing, immediately after Pavese's death, two of his unpublished writings on cinema from 1929: *I problemi critici del cinematografo* and *Di un nuovo tipo d'esteta (Il mio film d'eccezione)*, Pavese was first interested in critically analyzing the cinema, as a new *media* – as a new aesthetic – and then he arrived at take a stand "contro l'incipiente estetismo cinematografico" and at defending "*il cinema commerciale, senza pretese, inteso come fatto narrativo di epica popolare*" (Mila, 1958: 14).[27]

The stories and memories recovered in *Feria* indeed date back to a time when the author was used to going to see "*i filmetti d'America*" (Pavese, 2002: 371).[28] The 1928 King Vidor's movie *The Crowd* is the reason which moves Pavese to the reading of Dos Passos, while American movies in general make him reason on the new relationship between art and contemporary society (Mannelli, 2021: 10). In his writing published posthumously, but composed in the first 30s, Pavese very often associated the viewing of those American movies – those uncommitted movies – with an admiration for the audiences that populated the blue-collar cinemas.

In 1923, the 15th of March, the 629 Royal Decree in Italy had extended the maximum working time of 8 hours per day or 48 hours per week to all categories; in the English world "there was little change in the 1920s and 1930s, and it was only after the Second World War that a general reduction from 48 to 44 hours took place", while "annual holiday entitlement for manual workers was rare until 1919, but started to grow in the 1920s and 1930s" (Parker, [1976] 2022: 119–120). And this caused the well-known sociological phenomenon of the enormous growth of popular audiences in cinemas, looking for environments of nocturnal leisure time, as Parker pointed out "in 1946 there were 1,635m cinema attendances, compared with 163m in 1972" (Parker, [1976] 2002: 127; different in its intents and results, though always showing a sociological interest in the construction of national socialisms is the study of Götz, 2005). In the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, cinemas were the place dedicated to performative arts of leisure time and of vacation venue par excellence. With a sociological interest, Pavese realized that those who frequented those environments were workers in their free time: purely popular audiences whose interests were inevitably captured by American cinemas (See Pavese, 2002). As we can read in *Arcadia*:

27. "Against incipient cinematic aestheticism" [My trans.]; commercial, unpretentious cinema, understood as a narrative feature of popular epic" [My trans.].
28. "those American movies" [My trans.].

> *E allora [Paolo] entrava in qualche piccolo cinema e, abbandonandosi sul sedile, lasciava fissarsi gli occhi senza più pensare ed era quasi felice. Le pellicole d'incubo erano finite da tempo. Ora dominavano i film d'America. Giungevano nei cinematografi di barriera dopo lunghe proiezioni nei saloni di lusso. Ma Paolo preferiva vederle ora e non solo per economia. Gli piaceva mescolarsi a quel pubblico – ragazze senza cappello, operai – e di là levare il capo e sognare* (Pavese, 2002: 289).[29]

Those nightmarish movies were the French and Italian *engagé* movies which didn't call for popular audiences, which instead deeply fascinated Pavese and had a deep influence on his own idea of art and writing (Cf. Fabris, 2010: 215). Even in the tale *Ciau Masino* (1932), Masino is told to be getting his soul saved at the cinema, in those movie theaters of working-class neighborhoods: "*Masino si salvava al cinema. Questo è stato per la nostra giovinezza una gran manna*" (Pavese, 2002: 371). The cinematic story of *Ciau Masino* is a true exaltation of leisure, of vacation, and of the escape from the prosaic nature of the working life, since the time spent away from work can be time spent in art and in the culture of the self (See Jones, 1986). Thus, this is a narrative theme that Pavese had started in the 1930s and that then was more fully developed for the writing of *Feria d'agosto* in the war years.

Dos Passos's famous meeting with Eisenstein, as well as his *modernist* technique and creed, took him to develop what is known as his 'Art of Montage' in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and *U.S.A Trilogy* (1930–1936) (Cf. Spindler 1981; Foster 1986; Seed, 2009: 128–132; Pizer 2012). And if Pavese was indeed an aficionado of the American culture, analyzing those proses from the 30s – not published during his lifetime and collected under the title *Ciau Masino* – that presented a great deal of formal experimentation: multilingualism, overlapping of dialect, of prose and of poetry, it is easy to believe that he kept an eye in the 30s on the great set of modernist experimentations, *à-la* Dos Passos (Cf Mutterle, 1970, 562–580). However, in the war years, Pavese's linguistic and discursive editing gives way to a creative methodology of overlapping realistic narrative and mythical transfiguration, reality and metaphorization, which is typical, as has been shown, of *Feria d'agosto* short stories. A dialogue between literature and other arts and cinema, an interest for the expressive research, confirm Pavese's *modernist* vision. Attentive to the popular and the mythical and

29. "And then Paolo would have let himself to get into some small cinema and, laying on the seat, would have let his eyes gaze without thinking and so he was almost happy. The nightmarish movies were long gone. Now the films of America dominated. They arrived in those cinemas of *barriera* after their long screening in luxury lounges. But Paolo preferred to watch them now and not just for economical reason. He liked to mingle with that kind of audience – girls with no hats, workers – and from there he liked to raise his head and dream…" [My trans.].

to their encounter in contemporary art; a vision that in the war years made of *Feria d'agosto* Pavese's own artistic response to the political trauma. The modernists (e.g. Eliot, Pound, Joyce) were on the hunt for a salvation from the dissolution of the contemporary age, for an escape into a time away from the prosaic modern life, into the celebration, ritualization and transfiguration of the real. Pavese's conclusion is that his creative return to the summer memories, to the nostalgia for the country's life, to the adolescent figures, to the adventures and the vacations, in the exaltation of that time when one does not "*veste la terra*", there is room for art and for myth.

Valentina Monateri is a PhD candidate in Comparative Literatures at the University of Turin and currently a visiting researcher at University College London. She has recently presented her research in several international conferences, such as the congress of the European Society of Comparative Literature, at the University of Turin, and the Joint Conference of the International Graphic Novel & Comics and the International Bande Dessinée Society, at the University of Cambridge, both in 2021.
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7145-7313

Bibliography

Amoruso, Vito, "Cecchi, Vittorini e Pavese e la letteratura americana", *Studi americani*, 6, [1960], 1968, 15–83.
Bacchilega, Cristina, "Cesare Pavese and America: The Myth of Translation and the Translation of Myth", *Dispositio*, 7 (19-21), 1982, 77–83.
Bàrberi squarotti, Giorgio, "Il ragazzo e l'avventura: 'Feria d'agosto'", *Esperienze letterarie*, 3-4, 2000.
Bernini, Stefania, *Family Life and Individual Welfare in Post-war Europe: Britain and Italy Compared*, London, Palgrave, 2007.
–––, "War Children", *Revue des sciences sociales*, 64, 2020, 62–73 (doi:10.4000/revss.5812).
Bledsoe, Eric Matthew, "'Make It New'", *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Modernism*, London, Taylor & Francis, 2016.
Brogi, Daniela, "Tra letteratura e cinema. Pavese, Visconti e la 'funzione Cain'", *Allegoria*, no. 2, 2011, 295–314.
Cazzola, Claudio, "Pavese classico nostro contemporaneo (Cinquant'anni dopo)", *Italianistica: Rivista di letteratura italiana*, 44(3), 2015, 209–215.
Comparini, Alberto (ed.), *Ovid's Metamorphoses in Twentieth-Century Italian Literature*, Heidelberg, Universitätsverlag Winter, 2018.
Donoghue, Denis, "Yeats, Eliot, and the Mythical Method", *The Sewanee Review*, 105(2), 1997, 206–226.
Eliot, Thomas Stearns, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", *The Dial*, 1923, in *Selected Essays*, London, Faber & Faber, 1999.
Egri, Peter, "The Function of Dreams and Visions in *A Portrait* and *Death in Venice*", *James Joyce Quarterly*, 5(2), 1968, 86–102.
Fabris, Mariarosa, "Cesare Pavese: Dialoghi con il cinematografo", *Revista de Italanística*, xix-xx, 2010, 211–220.
Fasano, Pino, "Il Mito Americano Di Cesare Pavese", *Italica*, 85(2-3), 2008, 295–310.
Ferretti, Gian Carlo, *L'editore Cesare Pavese*, Torino, Einaudi, 2017.
Ferme, Valerio, "Il giovane Pavese e il cinema americano", in Valerio C. Ferme, Claudine Bonnetin, Thomas Stauder, *et al*, «Sotto il gelo dell'acqua c'è l'erba». Omaggio a Cesare Pavese, Alessandria, Edizioni dell'Orso, 2001, 15–40.
Fielder, Leslie A, "Introducing Cesare Pavese", *The Kenyon Review*, 16(4), 1954, 536–553.
Foster, Gretchen M., "John Dos Passos' Use of Film Technique in Manhattan Transfer & the 42nd Parallel", *Literature-film Quarterly*, 14, 1986.
Frye, Northop, *Anatomy of Criticism* [1957], Princeton, Princeton UP, 2000.
Gioanola, Elio, *Cesare Pavese, la realtà, l'altrove, il silenzio*, Milano, Jaca, 2003.
–––, "Introduzione" [2002], in Cesare Pavese, *Feria d'agosto*, Torino, Einaudi, 2017.
Götz, Aly (English translation), *Hitler's Beneficiaries. Plunder, Racial War, And The Nazi Welfare State*, Frankfurt am Main, S. Fischer, 2005.
Guiducci, Armanda, *La distruzione dei miti. Saggio sulla poetica di Cesare Pavese*, Firenze, Valecchi, 1972.

Gualtieri, Angelo, "Cesare Pavese e la questione del decadentismo", *Revue des études italiennes*, 26(2-4), 1980, 195–223.
Haenslet, Philippe, P., Mendicino, Kristina, Tobias, Rochelle, *Phenomenology to the Letter: Husserl and Literature*, Berlin, De Gruyter, 2020.
Isotti Rososwsky, Giuditta (Italian translation), *Pavese lettore di Freud. Interpretazione di un tragitto*, Palermo, Sellerio, 1989.
Jarvie, I.C., *Towards a sociology of the cinema: a comparative essay on the structure and functioning of a major entertainment industry*, London, Routledge, 2013.
Jesi, Furio, *Cesare Pavese, il mito e la scienza del mito*, in F. Jesi (ed.), *Letteratura e mito*, Torino, Einaudi, [1964] ,1968.
Jones, Stephen G, *Workers at Play: A Social and Economic History of Leisure 1918–1939*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986.
Mannelli, Lavini, "Pavese e Pasolini. Due mitologie a confronto", *Ti- contre. Teoria Testo Traduzione*, 15, 2021.
Meynaud-Jeuland, Maryse, « Réflexions sur la notion de "mythe" dans l'œuvre de Cesare Pavese », *Revue des études italiennes*, xiv, 1968, 324–364.
Mila, Massimo, "Due inediti di Pavese", *Cinema Nuovo*, 7(134), 1958.
Mondo, Lorenzo, *Cesare Pavese*, Milano, Mursia, 1961.
Moravia, Alberto, "Pavese decadente", in *L'uomo come fine e altri saggi*, Milano, Bompiani, 1963.
–––, *"Fu solo un decadente"*, *L'Espresso*, 1970.
Muñiz Muñiz, Maria de las Nieves, *Introduzione a Pavese*, Bari, Laterza 1992
Mutterle, Anco Marzio, "'Ciau Masino': dal plurilinguismo al monologo interiore", *Belfagor*, 15(5), 1970, 559–591.
Nohrnberg, James, "The Mythical Method in High Modernism", in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th ed., Princeton, Princeton UP, 2012.
Parker, Stanley, *The Sociology of Leisure* [1976], London, Routledge, 2022.
Pavese, Cesare, *Lettere 1924-1944*, in Lorenzo Mondo and Italo Calvino (ed.), Torino, Einaudi, 1966.
–––, *Il mestiere di vivere, nuova edizione condotta sull'autografo*, ed. Marziano Guglielminetti and Laura Nay, Torino, Einaudi, 1990, v–xxvi.
–––, *Tutti i racconti*, Torino, Einaudi, 2002.
–––, *Feria d'agosto* [1946], Torino, Einaudi, 2017.
–––, *Interpretazione della poesia di Walt Whitman* [1936], ed. Valerio Magrelli, Milano, Mimesis, 2020.
Pertille, Lino, "Pavese lettore di Baudelaire", *Revue de littérature comparée*, 44(3), 1970, 333–355.
Pizer, Donald, "John Dos Passos in the 1920s: The Development of a Modernist Style", *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Critical Journal*, 45(4), 2012, 51–67.
Pound, Ezra, *Make It New*, New Heaven (CT), Yale UP, 1935.
Praz, Mario, *James Joyce Thomas Stearns Eliot. Due maestri dei moderni*, Torino, ERI, 1967.
Procaccini, Alfonso, "On the failure of Understanding", *Italica*, 62(3), 1985, 214–229.
Renna, Salvatore, *Tra mito e Dio: Cesare Pavese lettore a Casale Monferrato*, Torino, Premio Centro Gianni Oberto, 2016.
–––, "Cesare Pavese e la polemica classico-romantica sulla mitologia", *Critica letteraria*, 45(3), 2017, 527–555.
Riccobono, Rossella, Thompson, Doug (eds.), *'Onde di questo mare'. Reconsidering Cesare Pavese*, London, Troubador, 2003.
Seed, David, *Cinematic Functions: The Impact of the Cinema on the American Novel up to World War II*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011.
Spindler, Michael, "John Dos Passos and the Visual Arts", *Journal of American Studies*, 15(3), 1981, 391–405.
Tirinanzi de Medici, Carlo, Alfano, Giancarlo, Tortora, Massimiliano, "Introduzione a 'Cesare Pavese tra razionale e irrazionale. II'", *Ticontre. Teoria Testo Traduzione*, 15, 2021, 1–5.
Van Den Bossche, Bart, *"Nulla è veramente accaduto". Strategie discorsive del mito nell'opera di Cesare Pavese*, Leuven, Leuven UP, 2001.
Venturi, Gianni, *Pavese*, Firenze, La nuova Italia, 1969.

Summertime: Time, Narrative and Queer Futures in Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*

Ann Catherine Hoag
University of Groningen

Abstract: André Aciman's acclaimed first novel, *Call Me by Your Name*, retrospectively depicts the love affair between Elio and Oliver in an edenic Italian 1980s summer. Setting a story saturated with longing and nostalgia in the summertime seems to play with the chronotope of the summer as a period ripe for romantic experimentation. What sets Aciman's text apart, though, is its deep concern with the phenomenology of time. Applying Paul Ricœur's observations expounded in his *Time and Narrative* to the novel helps illuminate how Aciman employs emplotment, where the present is punctuated with references to the past and to the future, to destabilize the stubborn boundaries of time. The result is that Elio's recounting of a distant past becomes a relevant present, never fully passed. The comingling of the past and present relates to Elizabeth Grosz's explanations of Bergson's reconsideration of chronology where the past and present 'function in simultaneity.' Grosz argues that Bergson's sense of duration has consequences for the virtual possibilities not fully predicted by the past. As can be seen in *Call Me by Your Name*, the representation of time where the past is reworked in the present offers untimely ruptures of new potentials 'later' beyond the boundaries of the narrative. Thus, Aciman's text is not simply a nostalgic work for a time of innocent yearning, but it is a reformulation of the past to create a virtual future where the queer pleasures of the summer are not limited by time.

Keywords: Aciman, emplotment, futures, summer, temporality, queer narratives.

Résumé : *Call Me by Your Name*, premier roman, acclamé par la critique, d'André Aciman, dépeint rétrospectivement l'histoire d'amour d'Elio et Oliver dans l'Italie paradisiaque des années 1980. Le choix de situer ce récit éminemment nostalgique pendant les vacances estivales semble exploiter le chronotope de l'été comme période propice à l'expérimentation romantique. Ce qui distingue le texte d'Aciman, cependant, c'est sa profonde préoccupation pour la phénoménologie du temps. En s'appuyant sur

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

les observations de Paul Ricœur dans *Temps et Récit*, il est possible de comprendre comment Aciman utilise une « mise-en-intrigue » dans laquelle le présent est ponctué de références au passé et à l'avenir, afin de déstabiliser les frontières obstinées du temps. Il en résulte que le récit fait par Elio d'un passé lointain devient un présent pertinent, jamais complètement dépassé. Cette intrication du passé et du présent peut être interprétée à l'aune du travail d'Elizabeth Grosz sur la reconsidération de la chronologie par Bergson, pour qui passé et présent « fonctionnent en simultané ». Grosz soutient que le sens de la durée chez Bergson a des conséquences sur les possibilités virtuelles qui ne sont pas entièrement prévues par le passé. Comme on peut le voir dans *Call Me by Your Name*, cette représentation du temps qui montre un passé retravaillé dans/par le présent permet le surgissement intempestif de nouveaux potentiels, situés « plus tard », au-delà des marges du récit. Ainsi, le texte d'Aciman n'est pas simplement une œuvre nostalgique recréant une époque innocente, il s'agit aussi d'une reformulation du passé qui permet de créer un avenir virtuel où les plaisirs homosexuels de l'été ne sont pas limités par le temps.

Mots-clés : Aciman, mise-en-intrigue, futurs, été, temporalité, récits *queer.*

ANDRÉ ACIMAN'S sensuous debut novel, *Call Me by Your Name*, captures the rapturous longing of first love in the depiction of the affair between Elio and Oliver during a summer in the 1980s. Elio's opening description of Oliver's arrival in Italy, which he recalls in some distant future, exudes a romantic wistfulness for the transient heat of summer; the first page is replete with references to frayed espadrilles, straw hats, hot gravel, and beaches, setting the scene for a golden period of pleasurable pursuits. Indeed, the sexual tension between Elio and Oliver is heightened by the temperature of the languorous summer months and the portended doom of autumn's approach when Oliver must return to America. Aciman's text thus seems to engage tropes of summertime as an 'other' temporal mode where Elio and Oliver can yield to their amorous pursuits outside the social pressures of their expected heteronormative futures. In this way, Aciman borrows the chronotopic space of the summer Italian villa as a site for nostalgia and desire from novels like Giorgio Bassani's 1962 *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. In the classic work, Bassani depicts an unnamed narrator reminiscing about the halcyon days of his young Jewish community's formation of a tennis club on the enchanting grounds of the Finzi-Continis' estate, when their lives are irrevocably changed by Mussolini's Italian racial laws of 1938 and the imminent Holocaust. Bassani's narrator purportedly pines with an unrequited passion for Micòl, the daughter of the esteemed family, although John Champagne proffers a queer reading of the work where the narrator's love for Micòl is a transferred desire for her brother, Alberto, who is coded as queer (Champagne, 2010: 6). Juxtaposing the thematic parallels between the two novels helps illuminate the play in both works with the memory and longing of lost, idyllic summers. In reference to *The Garden*

of the Finzi-Continis, Champagne examines how the narrator's post-war visit to Etruscan tombs and subsequent reminiscence about the destruction of the Jewish community and nostalgia for his own innocence solidifies Bassani's work as a contemplation of time: 'the desire to freeze time, via memory, and to hold in abeyance loss, to ward off an inevitable sorrow that is not only inevitable psychically, […] but also a sorrow that is historically inevitable, given the reality of the Italian Shoah' (Champagne, 2010: 4). Like this reading of Bassani, I argue that *Call Me by Your Name* underscores the utmost importance of the experience and perception of time. The first word of the book is Oliver's articulated 'later' that Elio describes as 'the first thing I remember about him, and I can hear it still today,' indicating how not only the word but the events of the hallowed period of the summer will reverberate throughout both characters' lives (Aciman, 2007: 3). The narrative play with time in the text functions to, in Champagne's words, 'hold in abeyance' the finite abortive ecstasies of the heady summer months.

Call Me by Your Name certainly employs the associations of the summer as a period breaking from the ritual and strictures of the prosaic; the text uses the chronotope to both heighten the intensity of the feverish passion between Elio and Oliver and to underscore the sense of Elio's innocence in this moment of youthful exploration before the winds of autumn return. As Colm Tóibín notes in his review of the novel, the sensory experience of the heat of summer radiates off the pages of the romance: 'Elio's sensual antennae are not merely directed toward the possibilities of sex, however, but toward the credences of summer, toward the heat and the food, toward the sounds in the garden, the richness of the night air, the abundance of the orchard' (Tóibín, 2007: 3). The Edenic qualities of the summer, cast in a golden hue, accentuate the unprecedented effulgence of the period while foreshadowing the melancholy and loss of the impending fall. Setting the novel in the summer heightens the nostalgic tone as the story borrows from classic representations of summer as the final chance for an expression of love seen in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* and *Death in Venice*. Unlike these texts, however, *Call Me by Your Name* does not end in death or even hint at the end of life. The absence of any shadow of death is striking in a novel that takes place in the 1980s at the height of the AIDS epidemic and when works like Paul Monette's *Borrowed Time* were published. Although Elio contemplates how 'time is always borrowed,' the only looming loss is that of the relationship (Aciman, 2007: 162). In this respect, the summer depicted in the text seems to exist within its own temporality, outside of any broader cultural chronologies. In a manner, *Call Me by Your Name* evokes Alan Hollinghurt's *The Swimming-Pool Library* where any shadow of AIDS is absent in Beckwith's celebration of the summer of 1983 as the 'last summer of its kind there was ever to be' (Hollinghurst, 1988: 4). Arguably, Aciman's novel offers a typical narrative

of pre-AIDS literature, the terms of which scholar Monica B. Pearl has outlined. She describes how the genre produced a *bildungsroman* where the first-person confessional narrator depicts the experience of gay acceptance, and that the works are characterised by a loss and mourning that later AIDS literature would reference: 'the grief of the coming out novels is tied to a longing that even before it can be defined is best articulated as a kind of nostalgia' (Pearl, 2019: 9). *Call Me by Your Name* is a text unquestionably saturated with nostalgia, in part because Elio's retrospective narrative indicates that the halcyon days of the summer are irrevocably past. In this regard, the work can be understood as engaging with prescribed generic expectations, casting the relationship between Elio and Oliver as a consummate summer of innocence.

Yet I argue that examining the complex interplay of time within the text and in the narrative structure illuminates how *Call Me by Your Name* offers a re-evaluation of temporal strictures and reformulates the distinctions between the past and the present, ultimately offering a hopeful rendering of queer futures. Applying Paul Ricœur's observations expounded in *Time and Narrative* to an examination of tenses within Aciman's text exposes his intricate imbrication of temporal modes. The result of the play with time is a blurring of temporal differences where the past and the present coexist and where the sense of linear chronology is dismantled. Using Elizabeth Grosz's considerations of the political potentials of reconstituted time reveals how Aciman's untimely textual ruptures render new possibilities for futures beyond the borders of the narrative and the summer period. Aciman's text, thus, is not simply a nostalgic work for a halcyon time before the darkening storm of the HIV epidemic or before Elio's awareness of the corrupting realities of heteronormative pressures. Rather, the text offers a reformulation of the past to extend the sense of the present and to reconfigure a virtual future where the queer pleasures of the summer are not bounded by time. By virtue of the narrative structure of Aciman's work, the spectacular summer becomes eternal—never fully passed—suspended in the possibility of an unwritten future.

Aciman frequently meditates on the experience of time in his writing. In his most recent collection of essays, *Homo Irrealis*, he explicitly considers temporal modes, adding another dimension to his thoughts on space and identity seen in works like 'Shadow Cities' and *Out of Egypt*. Traces of Aciman's interest in plays with time are already detectable in his earlier writing and in his interest in Proust and in memory as his concern with a particular location is often determined by a longing for a particular time spent there (Aciman, 2013: 39). In 'The Last Time I Saw Paris,' Aciman explains how his sustained sorrow at the prospect of leaving the French capital engendered a strategy to minimize the loss; he would examine his present in Paris with a future eye of nostalgia in the hopes that anticipating

the forthcoming sorrow could mollify the pain of loss. As he recounts, he would pre-empt 'tomorrow's worries by making tomorrow seem yesterday' (Aciman, 1999: 51). Aciman's recalling his past self's manipulation of his contemporary outlook to minimise that self's future memories demonstrates the complex infaces of temporal modes, and the inextricable entanglement of the past, present and future. Similarly, in the 'Afterword' to his essay collection *Alibis: Essays on Elsewhere*, Aciman expands upon the contemplation of elsewheres and introduces the notion of the *irrealis mood* which provides the motif for his subsequent book of essays. The 'Afterword' considers the experience of doubleness when the self is divided between two locations, but also between two periods of a life: 'It is not just about displacement or a feeling adrift *both* in time and space, it is a fundamental misalignment between who we are, might have been, could still be, can't accept we've become, or may never be' (Aciman, 2011: 189). The sense of internal displacement is doubly arduous as the location fomenting nostalgia may no longer exist. The enmeshment of nostalgia for places visited and yearning for those not yet seen exposes the porosity of the boundary separating supposedly rigid temporal distinctions.

Homo Irrealis, expanding upon and affirming the sentiments expressed in *Alibis*, considers how the longing for other locations is intertwined with the experience of temporal displacement, and how art can function to unify the seeming paradoxes of discordant timelines. In the introduction, Aciman looks back upon his former self eagerly awaiting departure from Alexandria to go to Paris, a self who is already nostalgically collecting memories about Egypt and his youth in anticipation of his future life. Aciman even returns to some of his sentences from the 'Afterword' of *Alibis* revisiting the significance of his words in retrospect in much the same way that he revisits his former self, suggesting that his publications are an evolving meditation, each work echoing the previous. He explains in *Alibis* that the particular present of his adolescent self cannot be understood without context of his yearning for future lives elsewhere. In those moments, the past Aciman was experiencing was an irrealis identity, caught in the disruptive linguistics of the irrealis mood which does not correspond to linear conceptions of time. Aciman's inspection of modalities of the irrealis moods is the prevailing endeavour of each essay as the collection offers variations on the theme of 'a might-have been that hadn't happened yet but wasn't unreal for not happening and might still happen, though I feared it never would and sometimes wish it wouldn't happen just yet' (Aciman, 2021: 10). The irrealis moods, as defined in the epigraph to *Homo Irrealis*, are counterfactual linguistic moods of alternative realities, including the subjunctive and the conditional. They exist outside the realm of the clear temporal delineations of the past, present and future tenses, and they complicate the certainty of what was, what might have been, and what might still come to be. Aciman's scrutiny of the

irrealis moods in the compilation of essays published fourteen years after *Call Me by Your Name* offers a useful metric for examining the approach to time in the fictive work.

In *Call Me by Your Name,* Elio's language occasionally echoes Aciman's descriptions in his essays, exposing the irrealis moods of the text and underscoring the reconfiguration of temporal modes that permeate the fiction. For a fleeting moment, Elio awakens to the atmosphere of autumn and is reminded that the ecstasies of the summer romance cannot outlive the change of scene and season. The passing 'dark clouds' that quickly sweep across the sky are a warning of an impending autumn and the heartache that will accompany Oliver's departure at the end of summer. Elio suddenly:

> realized that we were on borrowed time, that time is always borrowed, and that the lending agency exacts its premium precisely when we are least prepared to pay and need to borrow more. Suddenly, I began to take mental snapshots of him […] I squirreled away small things so that in the lean days ahead glimmers from the past might bring back the warmth. I began, reluctantly, to steal from the present to pay off debts I knew I'd incur in the future.' (Aciman, 2007: 162-163)

At the height of the pleasures of his love affair, Elio contemplates his future nostalgia for the present moments, and he works to crystallise memories of the current summer days for consumption in the gloom of winter. Just as Aciman expressed his attempts to control the tide of pain that leaving Paris induced by 'making tomorrow seem yesterday,' Elio reflects an irrealis mood and invokes temporal distortions that intermingle past, present, and future (Aciman, 1999: 51). Playing with the consideration of the term 'borrowed time,' Elio casts time as a currency that can be exchanged, saved, and transferred. The possibility of stealing time from the present to spend in the future indicates a sense of time more intricate than a simple, plodding chronology. Reading Aciman's own personal experience highlights the representation of Elio's strategies to manipulate time, and both texts articulate an interest in how the past and the future can be bartered or traded. Just as Oliver reminds Elio in the early morning hours of their visit to Rome that 'tomorrow is today,' blurring the lines between present and future, *Call Me by Your Name* experiments with the collapse of temporal distinctions and the irreality of the remembrance of the things past and the yearning for what might still be (Aciman, 2007: 207).

In fact, various conversations within the novel make explicit the characters' cyclical experience of time, underscoring the importance of the temporal within this text and the general theme of time's plasticity. When Elio

and Oliver are in Rome for a poet's book launch, Elio says that his favourite poem from the collection is about San Clemente. The poet corrects Elio and claims that the work compares love to the palimpsest of architectural styles that contributed to the construction of the Roman basilica. The poet expounds upon what he terms the 'San Clemente Syndrome,' reflective of the subconscious or 'like time itself' (Aciman, 2007: 192). Since the church is 'built on the ruins of subsequent restorations, there is no rock bottom, there is no first anything, no last anything, just layers and secret passageways and interlocking chambers' (Aciman, 2007: 192). The definition of San Clemente Syndrome suggests that the phenomenological experience of time is bereft of chronological order, and that the layers of the past are forever implicated in the experience of the present. From this exchange Elio extracts a new consideration of temporality specifically applying the perception of a more cyclical sense of a present time infused with concerns of the past and future to his wandering around Rome with Oliver:

I began to wonder what all this talk of San Clemente had to do with us—how we move through time, how time moves through us, how we change and keep changing and come back to the same. One could grow old and not learn a thing but this…He came. He left. Nothing else had changed. I had not changed. The world hadn't changed. Yet nothing would be the same. All that remains is dreammaking and strange remembrance.' (Aciman, 2007: 199)

Elio's preoccupation with Oliver's future departure and his anticipation of reflecting on his past self not only makes explicit the temporal concerns that pervade the text, but it presents a version of perceived time as cyclical, changing and yet returning to an undefined moment of origin and departure. Even though the narrative unfolds during the specific period of the summer, and Elio is contemplating temporality in his current time, his reduction of life to nothing more than 'dreammaking' and 'remembrance' reformulates the sense of the present to moments infused with the past and projections of the future. That the story is about the past told from a future perspective only highlights the slipperiness between what is past and what continues to be present. *Call Me by Your Name*, like many of Aciman's work, is clearly infused with considerations of temporal experiences, and Elio indicates how his present time with Oliver in the exalted summer months decades ago continues to return cyclically.

In other instances, the past punctures the present of Elio's and Oliver's summer together, further emphasising the porous barrier between the past and the present. Frederick S. Roden crafts a convincing argument that the text integrates themes of Jewish memory alongside a play with signifiers of queer desire with its pervading references to classical love. Roden sees in Aciman's writing an echo of Foucault's view that

a nineteenth-century homosexual identity originated from the translation of perceived ancient ideals (Roden, 2019: 198). The memory of previous generations is alive within the summer's present, minimising temporal distances. While contemplating approaching Oliver on the night of their first sexual encounter, Elio hears his grandfather's voice warning him against the pursuit: '*The years are watching you now, every star you see tonight already knows your torment, your ancestors are gathered here and have nothing to give or say*' (Aciman, 2007: 127). The use of italics suggests an 'other' voice that Elio carries within him. The concurrent existence of Elio's ancestors in the present moment of the summer underscore how the past latently exists within the present. Similarly, Oliver describes the long history of generations that led to Elio's corporeal self in his exultation of Elio's sperm that he ejaculated into the summer peach:

> Just think of the number of people who've come before you—you, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and all the skipped generations of Elios before you, and those from places far away, all squeezed into this trickle that makes you who you are. Now may I taste it? (Aciman, 2007: 148)

Oliver's worship of Elio's bodily fluids is intertwined with his appreciation for Elio's past stretching back beyond his own life. As Oliver points out, Elio's body is the culmination of a long history, and the traces of his ancestors are present in Elio's DNA, which has the potential to generate future life. The present experience is inextricable from 'remembrance' and intricately bound up with the long chain of familial history as well as referencing the virtual potential of life to come. Time and again, the text plays with the presumed distinctions between past, present and future, collapsing the stubborn temporal boundaries.

The complex coexistence between the past and the present integrated in *Call Me by Your Name* resonates with some of the considerations of Bergson's views of temporality that Elizabeth Grosz's describes in *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution and the Untimely*. Later, I will ultimately use Grosz to suggest that there are political implications to the temporal play in Aciman's novel. In her study, Grosz examines how reconfigurations in the perception of time that Darwin, Nietzsche, and Bergson initiated, and what Nietzsche described as the 'untimely,' had a meaningful impact on the relationship between the sense of the past and the present, as well as significance for future potentials. Grosz considers Bergson's contributions to changes in the perception of the present experience that his examination of memory and duration influences, and she explains how Bergson reconceives the past as a series of planes, a 'cone of the past,' converging towards the point of relevance to the present, represented by sensory functions (Grosz, 2004: 182). In Bergson's vision, Grosz details, duration is not

strictly linear or a spatialised 'arrow of time,' but can render the past and the present simultaneous:

> The past and the present are not two modalities of the present, the past a receded or former present, a present that has moved out of the limelight. Rather, the past and the present fundamentally coexist; they function in simultaneity. Bergson suggests that the whole of the past is contained, in contracted form, in each moment of the present. (Grosz, 2004: 183)

The traditional distinction between the past and the present is reconceived in Bergson's concept of memory; the past is never wholly passed as it is always implicated in the experience of the present, and the present is riven by memory as well as by the anticipation of the future. Bergson undercuts the usual sense of temporal difference and offers a perception of the past and the present as inextricably linked and contemporaneous. Deleuze's reading of Bergson reiterates this sentiment as he explains that 'the past and the present do not denote two successive moments, but two elements which coexist' (Deleuze, 1991: 59). The formulation resonates, of course, with the intermingling of past and present that emerges in Elio's recounting of experience of the summer in *Call Me by Your Name*.

Grosz's work highlights Bergson's view of a lengthened present, a perception of which can be traced in the novel's reference to the coexistence of the past and the present; this sense of an extended present can be recognised in Aciman's novel, which arguably reflects Elio's own expressed desire to halt the passage of time and exist in a perpetual state of suspension. Elio articulates his project to extend the present of his summertime in order to stave off the future of Oliver's departure: while sitting companionably with Oliver in the villa garden on the summer mornings, he perceives that 'on those mornings […] all I prayed for was for time to stop. Let summer never end, let him never go away' (Aciman, 2007: 30). On the next page, Elio reinforces this sentiment by contemplating how 'perhaps this was what I had wanted all along. To wait forever' (Aciman, 2007: 31). Elio's reference to waiting for his lover calls to mind some of Roland Barthes's explorations of love expressed in the scattered fragments of *A Lover's Discourse*; Barthes also describes the lover's strategy of negotiating the pain of the present when faced with the absence of the object of desire. The echoes of Barthes that reverberate through *Call Me by Your Name* are unsurprising considering that Aciman himself uncovers Barthes's deep analysis of subjects such as love (Aciman, 1984: 115). At some moments, Aciman seems to reference postulations from *A Lover's Discourse* when he reconfigures Barthes insistence on the gendered dynamics of women who are forced to wait as rooted, passive recipients of wandering men's affections (Barthes, 2002: 13-14). Unlike Barthes's imagined feminine

lover who feels a restless desperation of longing for the absent or distant beloved, Elio finds pleasure in the thought of endlessly extending the present moment of unconsummated desire if it would ensure that autumn would never arrive, and that Oliver would never depart. Elio's yearning to suspend time resonates with Barthes's suggestion of a lover's manipulation of the anxiety-laden present in order to endure the agony of a beloved's absence. Barthes writes how the object of love is always absent, even when they are near, creating a paradox of longing that complicates the experience of the present moment as the lover is:

> wedged between two tenses…you have gone (which I lament), you are here (since I am addressing you). Whereupon I know what the present, that difficult tense, is: a pure portion of anxiety.
>
> Absence persists—I must endure it. Hence I will *manipulate* it: transform the distortion of time into oscillation, produce rhythm, make an entrance onto the stage of language. (Barthes, 2002: 15–16)

The pervasive threat of the beloved's absence, as Barthes describes, initiates lovers' temporal manipulations which help them endure the overwhelming anxiety of potential loss. To negotiate the painful straits of the present, 'that difficult tense,' the lover works to distort the experience of time. Elio, like Barthes's rendering of a pained lover, desires to manipulate the sense of temporality. While Barthes's description of the excruciating task of waiting resonates with other moments when Elio deliberates his response to Oliver's note, waiting offers Elio a haven for extant potentialities. Elio's reflection on the nature of time leads to an irrealis mood where time itself can be reconfigured and reconstructed, as Bergson theorised, and where the present of that summer in the 1980s can be lengthened and can continue in a state of perpetual potentiality.

Elio's endeavour to redefine and reconstitute the present is also evident in the play with narrative tenses in the text itself. Although told in the past tense, the work is dedicated to the experiences of the extraordinary summer, tracing the unfolding relationship. The result is a sense that the events in the 1980s as still in existence and constituting the present. Rather than employing a narrative framework seen in *The Garden of The Finzi-Continis* and *Brideshead Revisited* which begins with an aged narrator of the present casting his mind back into memory, *Call Me by Your Name* quickly launches into the dominating storyline of the summer, but includes temporal punctuations as reminders that the text is retrospective. Throughout the novel, the storyteller Elio intimates his presence recounting the events of the landmark summer. In this way, the narrative structure of the novel echoes Aciman's description of Proust's play with time where 'he looks back to a time when what he looked forward to

was perhaps nothing more than sitting down and writing…and therefore looking back' (Aciman, 2001: 35). Elio describes how '[w]hen I think back to that summer, I can never sort the sequence of events. There are a few key scenes. Otherwise, all I remember are the "repeat" moments' (Aciman, 2007: 57). The uncertainty about events hints at a narrative unreliability and reaffirms the retrospective nature of the storytelling. One consequence of the interweaving of narrative tenses is arguably a weighted tone of nostalgia for an era already ended, yet the effect also destabilises any sense of ordered time and undercuts the perception of uniform chronology, casting the present of the summer as enduring. In this regard, the emphasis on the developing affair functions as the present preoccupation; apart from the coda in Part Four where Elio and Oliver continue to weave through each other's lives, the novel takes place in the time of their romance together in Italy during that fateful summer which is made eternal through the textual rendering.

Analysis of the ubiquitous play with narrative time in the novel helps highlight the text's deconstruction of temporal difference and illuminates how Aciman reconstitutes the present. *Call Me by Your Name* begins with a tense-less observation of Oliver's arrival: '"*Later*!' The word, the voice, the attitude" (Aciman, 2007: 3). The text quickly launches into the past tense as Elio recounts the sensations of that summer day when he promises that 'it was the first thing I remember about him' (Aciman, 2007: 3). Elio claims that merely saying the word 'later' will transport him back in Italy at the moment of his initial encounter with Oliver and he will be 'walking down the tree-lined driveway, watching him step out of the cab, billowy blue shirt, wide-open collar, sunglasses, straw hat, skin everywhere' (Aciman, 2007: 3). The opening page signals the play with time, as the present, which is the past in narrative time, is at once completed and yet also easily recoverable as a sensory experience. Naturally, Elio is describing his memory of the summer in Italy when he indicates how he is transported back, yet the clarity of his vision bleeds into the narrative movement back into the present tense of Oliver's entrance when Elio observes how 'he waves the back of his free hand and utters a careless Later! to another passenger in the car' (Aciman, 2019: 3). The text travels across tenses, moving from the present to the past, and then projects into the future. When Elio is in the present, attracted to the spectacle of Oliver but disappointed in the reality, he considers how he 'could grow to like him, though. From rounded chin to rounded heel. Then, within days, I would learn to hate him' (Aciman, 2007: 4). The use of 'could' suggests that the certainty is yet unseen, but he expresses immediately his conviction that he 'would' hate Oliver. Between the dizzying transition between temporal modes, it is not fully clear if Elio's described hatred of Oliver is anticipated and promised, or if he is relaying his attitude with the knowledge of hindsight. Aciman's use of narrative time demonstrates a seamless passage

between the temporal modes and subtly indicates a permeable boundary between the past, present and the future.

Another example of Aciman's braiding of tenses can be observed when Vimini explains her leukemia diagnosis to Oliver. Shocked by the sullen detachment of such a tragic pronouncement coming from a young, seemingly healthy girl, Oliver is deeply moved:

> Oliver, who was now kneeling on the grass, had literally dropped his book on the ground […] We spoke about her all afternoon [...] Soon they became friends […] I shall never forget how she would give him her hand once they'd opened the gate to the stairway leading to the rocks. (Aciman, 2007: 56–57)

The extracts from the short passage demonstrate the chain of temporal links in the recounting of the exchange and the influence of the news on Oliver. In a quick transition, the recollection of the past—which functions as the novel's present—springs into the present tense of 'now kneeling,' before moving back into the reporting of the past. Finally, Elio expresses a promise for a future beyond even his current voice as storyteller. The complex interplay between temporal modes in the narrative reveals Aciman's fascination for the elements of time which he expands upon in *Homo Irrealis*. The declaration of 'I shall never forget' could be seen as a statement, or a pledge, or a hope and gestures towards the irrealis mood. The nature of time, as Aciman explores in his novel is malleable, mercurial, and subject to transformation.

Of course, much of Aciman's play with time is a function of narrative construction, an idea thoroughly examined by Paul Ricœur. Examining the interplay of temporalities in *Call Me by Your Name* through the lens of Ricœur's postulations helps illuminate how the text subverts the sense of a strict order of time and dismantles temporal expectations. Paul Ricœur's three-volume *Time and Narrative* offers a simultaneously broad and detailed study of the nature of time, arguing that the temporal paradoxes considered by philosophers such as Aristotle and Augustine can find resolution in the construction of narrative form. Since the recounting of experience, be it fictional or historical, is told with a memory informed by the present knowledge and need not maintain chronological integrity, narratives can amalgamate the seemingly contradictory phenomenological and cosmological perceptions of time. Echoing Aristotle's description of 'mimesis,' Ricœur proposes three stages of representation in narrative's construction, each differently engaging with various temporal modes. As Ricœur explains in the first volume of *Time and Narrative*, mimesis$_2$ is the creation of a narrative through *emplotment* and the configuration of the form; the story is produced and crafted through the choices of narrative

structure. The plot is mediated, Ricœur argues, through the formulation of a 'meaningful story from a diversity of events or incidents' (Ricœur I, 1983: 65). Ricœur describes how the emplotment of the story need not follow the chronological order to reach the chosen ending: 'To follow a story is to move forward in the midst of contingencies and peripeteia under the guidance of an expectation that finds its fulfilment in the "conclusion" of the story' (Ricœur I, 1983: 66). Ricœur references Frank Kermode's 'sense of an ending' that emerges from retelling the affairs that might start at the end and disrupts the linearity of a chronological 'arrow of time.' Narrative plays such as repetition and recollection invert 'the so-called "natural" order of time. In reading the ending in the beginning and the beginning in the ending, we also learn to read time itself backwards, as the recapitulation of the initial conditions of a course of action in its terminal consequences' (Ricœur I, 1983: 67-68). Ricœur's work is valuable in relation to Aciman as the philosopher argues that the constructions of narrative forms and relay of stories offers evidence of how seemingly paradoxical perceptions of chronological and phenomenological temporal modes can coexist. Aciman's play with time in his novel and his intermingling of tenses contributes to the sense of time in the story as contemporaneous: the past is still in existence and the present extends beyond an instantaneous moment.

The emplotment of *Call Me by Your Name,* with its interplay of time seen in the use of retrospective present and its future intimations from the past, invites the reader to experience an incongruent perception of uniform time and helps to concretise the significance of the depicted summer. The complex narrative time of Elio's recounting is testament to his own bewildering experience of his time in the summer holiday. That summer becomes crystalized for Elio as tremedously important, and the consequences of the encounter with Oliver radiate out into his future life. With the intricate interweaving of time in the narrative, Elio's present experience of that summer, waiting uncertainly for Oliver, becomes central, and it seems to exist in an almost timeless experience. As he quotes Paul Celan, he exists in that summer '[b]etween always and never' (Aciman, 2007: 70). The Elio narrating *Call Me by Your Name* becomes what Aciman describes in another essay as a 'temporizer,' or someone who 'moves from the past to the present, from the present to the past, or, as I've already suggested in my essay "Arbitrage" in *False Papers,* he "firms up the present by experiencing it from the future as a moment in the past"' (Aciman, 2011: 62). In an earlier version of the essay, given as a speech, Aciman emphasises that the temporizer '*forfeits the present* and *he moves elsewhere in time*' (Aciman, 2001: 32, italics his own). The movement of time, the existence of numerous temporal modes, the blurring of boundaries between past, present, and future in the narrative 'firms up the present' of Elio's rarefied

summer experience, and casts it as timeless and ongoing rather than a transitory period.

Without question, *Call Me by Your Name* is a veritable mosaic of overlapping tenses, including Elio's predictions of future sensations without the certainty of foresight. For example, moving towards Oliver while sitting on his own bed that Oliver was occupying for the summer, Elio notices that '[n]ow here I was. In a few weeks, I'd be back here on this very same bed' (Aciman, 2007: 130). The past tense of the events told in retrospect become the present tense of 'now,' and the Elio of that time imagines his future in Oliver's absence with a vision untainted by the older Elio's knowledge. Similarly, the younger Elio considers that any connection with Oliver is impossible and that the most intimacy he can hope for is a candid declaration of his attraction and a perfunctory liaison. He imagines a dispassionate scene, declaring that 'I knew there was no future in this' (Aciman, 2007: 86). At that moment in time, Elio is convinced that nothing will ever happen between him and Oliver, and that their love affair is doomed before it even began. The succeeding events prove him wrong, of course, but his present perspective of the future remains uninfluenced by the older Elio's retrospective knowledge. Elio's error in his future forecasting underscores how the future may have already passed, but it can still be unpredictable. There are still yet unknown virtual futures available.

In this way, the textual play with time in *Call Me by Your Name* has more potential implications than an inquiry into the nature of the temporal. Returning to Grosz's theories on time in *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*, she extrapolates from Bergson's consideration of the coexistence of the past and the present to offer claims about the virtual possibilities of the future. As Grosz explains, '[t]he future is that over which the past and the present have no control: the future is that openness of becoming that enables divergence from what exists' (Grosz, 2004: 184). Although informed by the past, the future offers a multiplicity of profound potentialities, not yet determined, with the potential to reorganise and reanimate new avenues of becoming. Grosz argues that the temporal reframing ushered in by Darwin, Nietzsche and Bergson not only restructured the sense of time, but they consequently reformulated the significance of the future. In other words, the deconstruction of linear, chronological, and cosmological time reorientates the emphasis of the temporal on virtual possibilities: The future is open, ripe for change, transformation, and new potentials.

Grosz's articulation of future significance can be traced in *Call Me by Your Name* where the potential of future possibilities radiate out from the present. Returning to opening lines describing Oliver's arrival to the Italian villa in that fateful summer, the text begins with his insouciant

pronouncement of '"Later"! The word, the voice, the attitude (Aciman, 2007: 3). The incipient sentence gives no indication of a tense, and the expression becomes timeless, even while accentuating the sense of a future juncture; the present moment of Elio's first impression of Oliver as he bursts onto the scene is consecrated and immortalised with the tenseless catalogue of Oliver's immediate attractions. Elio consistently comes back to an analysis of Oliver's term 'later,' interpreting it as a promise of return in addition to offering a curt, unsentimental dismissal. The recurring references to Elio's concern with 'later' form almost temporal fugue in the first section entitled 'If Not Later, When?' As pointed out in text, the section refers to Oliver's adaptation of Rabbi Hillel's reminder of 'If not now, when?' meant to incite immediate action. Oliver's transformation of the maxim moves the emphasis from the present to the future, offering not only a deferral of deeds but a shift towards the significance of future potential. From the very beginning of the novel, the present moment of the eventful summer is imbued with the ripe possibilities of a future. The play with future time that permeates the first section reinforces the prospect of a potential 'later' for the two lovers even after summer's passing.

As previously mentioned, applying Grosz's articulation of the future's significance to *Call Me by Your Name*, a text that deeply engages with the experience of time and employs punctuations of narrative tenses which complicate any distinction between temporal modes, suggests a radical reading of the work. Even while the presumed future of the story is one of melancholy and loss as the golden summer draws to a close and Oliver is set to leave in the autumn, the narrative telling which intermingles the past, present and future both reconstitutes the sense of the present summer and intimates the possibility for the yet-unrealised future connection between Oliver and Elio. Certainly, the narrative ruptures of Elio's older voice recollecting the past signal that the future is known and established, and that the relationship between Elio and Oliver is cemented as a moment of history. Yet the narrative storytelling and the mixture of narrative tenses recasts the importance of that summer as still fundamental to Elio's present life, diminishing the difference between the past and the present in Bergson's terms. The experiences of the summer are still vibrant and pulsing, not yet passed, which, engaging Grosz's theory, indicates that there are still ripe potentialities for positive futures. Indeed, *Call Me by Your Name*, a queer romance that takes place during the AIDS epidemic, remains unburdened by the health concerns of the gay community. Taking place in a period when queer futures were unpromised, Aciman's work thus offers a defiant revisiting of the past, reconstituting the present to offer new avenues for the future. In contrast to the perception of futureless queer identities that Lee Edelman describes in *No Futures: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*, Aciman offers a story where the experiences of a gay romance in the past reverberate through the present and

into the unformulated future. Edelman describes how queer subjectivities, demonised as narcissistically concerned with the pleasures of the present, are frequently marginalised by the cultural discourse that emphasises reproduction and the image of The Child as the only factors determining the political future. Although Edelman provocatively questions the necessity of emphasising futurity, Aciman's novel offers an alternative timeline through its narrative revisiting of the past to revise the present to reformulate new potentialities in the future.

And in fact, Aciman's sequel to *Call Me by Your Name*, *Find Me,* published in 2019, offers the satisfaction of reunion as Elio and Oliver find their way back to each other after decades of separation; the promise of 'later' that initiates the romance between the two men in *Call Me by Your Name* finally materialises when Oliver reconciles himself to act upon his abeyant desire for Elio. *Find Me* explores the three romantic encounters that Elio, his father, and Oliver each experience in the aftermath of the fateful summer. The three stories are set as a musical movement, and the symphonic novel produces a crescendo of yearning that culminates in Oliver and Elio's return to the villa in Italy. Each section depicts a different protagonist's perspective on their own romantic lives unfolding in three different cultural centres. Elio's movement, entitled 'Cadenza,' is replete with autumnal scenes. One November, he and his lover Michel return to the Frenchman's childhood chateau, where Elio plays music that 'suited autumn,' and the two take brisk walks through the lugubrious countryside (Aciman, 2019: 172). The atmosphere of mellow mistiness and snug interiors is a sharp contrast to the heat of the Edenic Italian summer. The sequel, thus, seems to resume Elio's and Oliver's story at the very moment that it left off despite the passing years. The season dominating the mood of Elio's section of *Find Me* is precisely the autumn that Elio dreaded in *Call Me by Your Name* as it is the period following Oliver's departure and the marked end to their romance. Aciman's sequel, thus, provides the glimpse into a potentiality to which the first novel alludes. Any sense of Elio's and Oliver's melancholic future spent in regretful loneliness in the autumns of their lives is dismissed as they come back to their romantic origins at the height of another summer. Even the title of the final section, 'Da Capo,' is the musical term signalling a cyclical return to the start of the piece, a repetition, or a revisiting of the beginning. Having decided to seek out Elio, Oliver imagines his re-entrance into the garden in Italy:

> It will be hot and there'll be no shade. But the scent of rosemary will be everywhere […] and behind the house there'll be a field of wild lavender and sunflowers raising their befuddled big heads at the sun. The swimming pool, the belfry nick-named To-Die-For, the monument to the dead soldiers of the Piave, the tennis court, the rickety gate that leads down to the rocky beach. (Aciman, 2019: 246)

Oliver's vision of the Italian villa in summer is both 'remembrance' and 'dreammaking,' informed by a memory of the past, and prophesising the future of his return. The passage is written in the future tense, promising a resumption of the summer months. The villa in his imagination is untouched and waiting, primed for re-entry; the swimming pool and tennis courts are unaffected by any ravage of time, the 'rickety gate' yet unrepaired. The image of blazing heat and unforgiving sun, of the heavy scent of lavender and vivid sunflowers suggests a perpetual summertime, a dormant, world where autumn never comes. The prospect of a future where the everlasting present that the narrative structure of *Call Me by Your Name* suggests is made manifest in the sequel where Oliver and Elio reunite and recreate the exultant time of their summer experience.

Aciman's positive vision of a future for queer relationships reconstitutes and restructures the pessimistic forecasts of 1980s queer romances and the hopeless 'death drive' of Lee Edelman's theories. The romance between Samuel and Miranda described in the first section of *Find Me* produces a son named Oliver who is depicted as belonging to the original Oliver and Elio after Samuel's death. Elio's realisation of the completion of his family sounds out like 'a final chord resolving an unfinished melodic air' (Aciman, 2019: 254). He recognises how '[t]he child was like our child' (Aciman, 2019: 254). Instead of the resignation to a heteronormative life, Oliver finally chooses an alternative possibility where he and Elio are bound together in love and will contribute to the care of the next generation. Returning to the space of the Italian villa, recapturing the time of their first summer together, Elio and Oliver rescript the possibilities for jubilant queer futures. Elio and Oliver seem to exist in that 'Happier Year' to which Forster dedicated *Maurice* (Forster, 2005: 2). In a similar vein, Aciman's romantic ending in *Find Me,* which sees the revisitation and progression of Elio and Oliver's love, reworks Bassani's doomed tale in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*. Oliver's wife, for whom he left Elio at the end of that 1980's summer is revealed as Micol, a nod, perhaps, to the heroine of the Italian novel. The undercurrent of homosexual desire that finds no outlet in Bassani's work alternatively achieves resolution in Aciman's writing. The loss, death and destruction that underpin the nostalgic representation of an irrecoverable world of Jewish lives before World War II in *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* is reconstituted in *Find Me*, where the characters are not only able to revisit and recapture the halcyon period of their formative years, but they are able to craft a life for themselves together that extends the contentment of their shared summer out into an illimitable future.

Although the arcadian summer of the 1980s presented in *Call Me by Your Name* is a memory, the feverish intensity still exists for both Elio and Oliver. The romantic holiday encounter, seemingly bounded by the

limits of the season, reverberates with other narratives that cast past summer periods as an ephemeral paradise lost, fixed in golden tones. Aciman's text, in contrast, recalibrates the sense of melancholic doom as the rapid movement through temporal modes creates an irrealis mood where the past exists in the present and can be reconstituted to create alternative futures. The narrative play in the novel yields what Aciman notices in a poem by Patrick Phillips printed on the New York Subway:

> What the poet is describing is a time in the future when the past will have become an everlasting present. […] There is no name for this melding of past, present and future tenses. Which should not be surprising, since what the poet wishes here is to transcend, to undo, to overcome time altogether. (Aciman, 2021: 23)

Using Paul Ricœur's and Elizabeth Grosz's theories that consider time and narration and how chronological destabilization offers new potential futures helps illuminate Aciman's own attempts to 'overcome time altogether' in his fiction. *Call Me by Your Name* blurs the distinctions of time to offer a narration where the past and present are intertwined, which has the effect of elongating the present and of opening out virtual potentials. Revisiting the past to create an 'everlasting' present offers a radical alternative to other narratives where the passions of the summer succumb to the chill of autumn and can never be recaptured. In Aciman's writing, the summer's heat never dissipates.

Ann Catherine Hoag is a lecturer in the Department of English Language and Culture at the University of Groningen, teaching classes on travel writing and migrant fiction. Her publications include studies on travel, and she is currently working on a book entitled *Women, Travel and Writing: Changing Times, Changing Spaces*, to be published by Routledge, which examines time, space and women's narrative identities in travel from the interwar era.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4032-7668

Bibliography

Aciman, André, "Deliberating Barthes", *Social Text*, 11, 1984–1985, 110–117 (doi:10.2307/466596).
–––, "The Last Time I Saw Paris", *Commentary*, 107(1), 1999, 48–53.
–––, *Call Me by Your Name*, New York, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007.
–––, *Alibis: Essays on Elsewhere*, New York, Picador, 2011.
–––, *Find Me*, London, Faber & Faber, 2019.
–––, *Homo Irrealis: Essays*, London, Faber & Faber, 2021.
Aciman, André, LeDoux, Joseph, Paulson, Steve, Schacter, Daniel, Winter, Alison, "The Mystery of Memory: In Search of the Past", *Annals of The New York Academy of Sciences*, 1303, 2013, 36–55.
Aciman, André, Govrin, Michal, Kurzweil, Edith, Meyers, Jeffrey, "Autobiography, Biography & Memoir: How True to Life is Biography?", *Partisan Review*, 68(1), 2001, 11–57.
Barthes, Roland, *A Lover's Discourse: Fragments*, tr. Richard Howard, London, Virago, 2002.
Bassani, Giorgio. *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, London, Penguin, 2007.
Champagne, John, "Bassani's *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* and The Italian 'Queers'", *Comparative Literature and Culture*, 12(1), 2010, Article 4.
Deleuzu, Gilles, *Bergsonism*, tr. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam, New York, Zone, 1991.
Edelman, Lee, *No Future: Queer Theory and The Death Drive*, Durham & London, Duke UP, 2004.

Forster, E.M., *Maurice*, London, Penguin, 2005.
Grosz, Elizabeth, *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely*, Durham & London, Duke UP, 2004.
Hollinghurst, Alan, *The Swimming-Pool Library*, London, Vintage, 2015.
Pearl, Monica B., *AIDS Literature and Gay Identity: The Literature of Loss*, Milton Park, Taylor & Francis, 2019.
Ricœur, Paul, *Time and Narrative*: *Volume I*, tr. Kathleen McLaughlin and David Pellauer, Chicago, Chicago UP, 1983.
Roden, Frederick S., "Queer Jewish Memory: André Aciman's *Call Me by Your Name*", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 18(2), 2019, 194–211.
Tóibín, Colm, "Learning to Love", *The New York Review of Books*, 54(6), April 12, 2007, 1–7.

Les Estivants, des gens de passage

Christakis Christofi
Université de Chypre

Abstract: *Summerfolk* by M. Gorky takes place in the historical and social context preceding the First Russian Revolution. The author presents upper and middle-class characters on a summer vacation. In the dachas (secondary houses in the countryside), the characters' way of life is reminiscent of the Pre-Revolution period. The summer atmosphere is dreary, imbued with a socio-political message, and provokes the need for a new start for the holiday makers at the end of the holidays and, to a greater extent a general change in the country. A summer vacation place, the dachas, hosts a drama, both individual and collective, associated with a blurry transitional moment. Summer visitors embody this confusion by having difficulties in shaping a future perspective. Thereafter, the summer period metaphorizes a transition, the necessity of the passage into action inferring a collective awareness for a new dynamic start.

Keywords: Gorky, dachas, holidays, social realism, prerevolutionary Russia.

Résumé : *Les Estivants* de M. Gorki s'inscrit dans le contexte historique et social qui précède de peu la révolution russe de 1905. L'auteur présente des personnages de la classe moyenne supérieure en villégiature d'été. Dans les datchas, maisons secondaires de campagne, le mode de vie de ces personnages rappelle la période prérévolutionnaire. Or, l'atmosphère estivale qui y règne est morne, imprégnée d'un message sociopolitique, et met en œuvre la nécessité d'un nouveau départ pour les estivants à la fin des vacances et, par extension, un changement général. Un lieu de vacances, les datchas, accueille un drame, à la fois individuel et collectif, qui s'attache à un moment transitoire confus. Les estivants incarnent cette confusion en ayant du mal à tracer une perspective pour l'avenir. Dès lors, la période estivale métaphorise une transition, la nécessité du passage à l'action qui implique une prise de conscience collective pour un nouveau départ dynamique.

Mots-clés : Gorki, datchas, vacances, réalisme social, Russie prérévolutionnaire.

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

Introduction

Dans *Les Estivants* (1904), Maxim Gorki dépeint la société intellectuelle russe au début du xx^e^ siècle dans un état transitoire (les vacances), ainsi que dans une période historique transitoire (peu avant la révolution russe de 1905). Les vacances, phénomène associé au fonctionnement, aux normes et aux valeurs d'une société (Célérier, 2011 : 1), permettent à l'écrivain d'en représenter les aspects, tout en leur accordant une dimension éphémère et mouvante. Les datchas, résidences de vacances typiquement russes, symboles du mode de vie d'une classe sociale, servent de séjour estival à la nouvelle intelligentsia du pays et à des gens de passage. L'ambiance de vacances devient un trompe-l'œil pour motiver la nécessité de changements sociopolitiques à l'aube du xx^e^ siècle en Russie.

Ces vacances ne renvoient pas à l'insouciance ou à un état paisible, mais elles sont imprégnées de conflits, parfois sous-jacents, toujours irrésolus. Ces conflits en voilent d'autres ou les mettent en évidence et sont propres à la société russe. En effet, des conflits mineurs cachent à peine des échecs humains plus profonds (Lovell, 2016 : 277), et l'existence d'un environnement aussi spécifique, celui des vacances d'été, rend propice le mélange et l'amplification de tensions individuelles et collectives. Sur scène apparaissent, implicitement et explicitement, les transformations qui s'opèrent dans le pays, le tout mélangé avec l'esprit de vacances. Dans *Les Estivants*, « il n'y a pas d'intrigue » (Audebert, 1976 : 116). Amour et déception, fidélité et infidélité, le tragique et le comique, les quiproquos, les confessions et les déclarations, activités productives et oisiveté, prise et manque de conscience, aspect poétique et fade caractérisent les rapports entre les personnages et leurs rapports à la vie. Gorki parvient à orchestrer ce mélange particulier pendant le séjour estival des gens de passage, au sens propre comme au figuré (Gorki, 2008[1] : 120), en métaphorisant le basculement vers une nouvelle époque, marquée par les décisions difficilement prises par certains personnages ou le conformisme des autres. Dans *Les Estivants*, nous examinons comment l'auteur représente l'évolution de la société russe en 1904 par la mise en scène des gens de passage pendant les longues vacances estivales dans les datchas, en démontrant la transition de l'inaction, des débats vifs ou des tensions accrues à un nouveau départ après les vacances.

1. Nous utilisons la traduction française d'André Markowitz, Gorki, 2008.

Des gens de passage

Le passage à une nouvelle société serait l'un des éléments clé de cette pièce, car l'auteur dramatique présente à la fois des « gens de passage » (Hellot, 1997) et la période transitoire entre la fin de la monarchie et la première révolution russe de 1905. Les acteurs de cette période sont en vacances, et leurs activités estivales révèlent la difficulté du passage d'un état à l'autre. Par l'aspect mouvant aussi bien qu'éphémère dans la manière dont elles se déroulent, les caractéristiques propres aux vacances peuvent être mises en correspondance avec le changement social que l'auteur dramatique met en scène. L'instabilité dans les relations entre les personnages, dans leurs préoccupations mêmes, donne l'impression que tout est en train de se faire tout en restant stagnant. Le dialogue entre les gardiens Poustobaïka et Kropilkine démontre cette stagnation : même si les vacances sont marquées par l'arrivée de nouveaux estivants à l'exemple du célèbre écrivain Chalimov, du riche oncle Deuxpoints, ou encore de Rioumine, ceux-ci « sont tous pareils » (Gorki, 2008 : 56) aux yeux de Poustobaïka.

Bien que tout paraisse stagnant, Gorki met en scène une société en évolution à travers des personnages qui dressent une mosaïque sociale et qui forment une microsociété rurale. Parmi les estivants, certains appartiennent à la classe supérieure comme les avocats (Bassov, Zamyslov) ou les docteurs (Doudakov, Lvovna) ou représentent l'intelligentsia du pays (Chalimov, Kaléria), tandis que d'autres sont d'une classe inférieure de la société comme les amateurs d'art dramatique, les gardiens de datchas, etc. Certains personnages ont les mêmes origines et le même statut social. D'ailleurs, même en lisant les *dramatis personæ*, le lecteur comprend qu'il s'agit de familles et de groupes sociaux, comme les Bassov, les Souslov ou les Doudakov : le nom de famille indique non seulement l'appartenance mais détermine aussi les relations entre les personnages. Même s'il est difficile de retenir immédiatement le rôle de chaque personnage, l'appartenance sociale est mise en évidence dès le début de la pièce, comme l'incarne la présence de Sacha, bonne de Serguéï Vassiliévitch et Varvara Mikhaïlovna. Les oppositions entre les classes sont mises en exergue, non seulement parce que la bonne sert les Bassov mais aussi parce que les Bassov parlent de « serviteurs » (Gorki, 2008 : 14). Les personnages s'unissent donc, directement ou indirectement, par des liens divers (de sang ou professionnels), y compris grâce à des points communs concernant leurs activités et leurs intérêts, parfois même par rapport à leurs faiblesses, comme l'alcool (Bassov, Souslov). Cependant, leurs similitudes ou leurs points communs ne suffisent pas à peindre une image harmonique de leur coexistence, même éphémère. Leurs discussions et leurs comportements révèlent ce qui les oppose et les conflits qui les définissent.

Ainsi, l'auteur dramatique met en avant la complexité de ce que l'on appelle « classes sociales », voire celle de la société elle-même. Les personnages manifestent des caractéristiques dont ils ne peuvent se débarrasser, tout en en embrassant d'autres, celles que l'état de vacances leur confère. Entre ce qui paraît figé dans la conception de la société et l'aspect éphémère de leur statut d'estivants, tout se relativise et acquiert une certaine fluidité. Ce n'est pas un hasard si les estivants sont également des arrivants qui reçoivent « un accueil sans condition » (Derrida, 2014 : 71) dans un lieu indéfini qui accueille toujours de nouveaux visiteurs et vacanciers.

C'est dans cette perspective que l'on voit apparaître d'autres groupes de personnes tels que les comédiens (omniprésents durant le deuxième acte), les mendiants (Gorki, 2008 : 56, 67) ou même les gardiens. Leur apparition sur scène permet de déstabiliser l'image que les groupes principaux de la pièce créent pour eux-mêmes, permettant au lecteur-spectateur de les observer en prenant de la distance.

Selon Audebert (1976), la plupart des vacanciers sont « bourgeois et intellectuels », ce qui définit d'une part leur statut social, d'autre part leur éducation. Les personnages dramatiques appartiennent à une classe sociale qui présente une dynamique, une évolution, plutôt qu'appartenant à la noblesse et dont le statut serait prédestiné. Certains d'entre eux, issus des familles pauvres, ont reçu une bonne éducation, et forment une nouvelle classe sociale aisée : Varvara et Serguéï, Ioulia et Ivanovitch, les deux groupes principaux de cette œuvre, en constituent l'exemple parfait. Parfois chaleureuses, parfois moins, leurs relations sont tendues. Ceci est dû, sans doute, à la personnalité de chaque personnage. Varvara est sensible, rêveuse, idéaliste. Bassov cruel, moqueur, matérialiste, ce qui rend la communication entre eux impossible (Gorki, 2008 : 156). Cependant, ce qui les oppose est notamment la manière différente dont ils affrontent le monde extérieur, la société et ses valeurs, la politique. Gorki installe ainsi dans sa pièce la dualité entre une existence privée, le microcosme, et une existence collective, le macrocosme.

On pourrait se référer, à titre d'exemple, à l'opposition entre Maria Lvovna, la femme qui lutte (Segel, 1975 : 14) et qui représente la dynamique du changement (Gorki, 2008 : 47, 66, 180), et tous les autres (Gorki, 2008 : 78). Des tensions caractérisent aussi les couples où des conflits de sentiments surgissent comme la passion ou la jalousie de l'amour de Vlas et de Maria. Le personnage de Varvara, figure majeure de l'œuvre du fait de son rôle d'hôtesse pendant ces vacances, fait apparaître une réflexion à propos des valeurs morales. À travers ses monologues, elle dénonce sa classe sociale, endormie sur ses récents privilèges. Souslov ne connaît pas son oncle, Deuxpoints, et lorsqu'il le rencontre, il ne s'intéresse ni à lui ni à sa fortune, il ne veut pas vivre avec son oncle. Mais,

au quatrième acte, il est déçu lorsqu'il apprend que son oncle va soutenir et financer les ambitieux projets caritatifs et sociaux de Maria Lvovna. Aussi, les épicuriens comme Bassov (Gorki, 2008 : 135) ou Zamyslov (37), aimant bien vivre et boire, s'opposent aux idéalistes qui, comme Varvara et Maria, voient le vide qui les entoure, car tout ce que les estivants font est inutile. Certains vacanciers comme Rioumine, qui demeurent presque inconnus, présentent pourtant une réflexion quant aux conflits sentimentaux.

Il est intéressant, alors, d'observer que les personnages, les rapports entre les personnages principaux ou secondaires, bien qu'il s'agisse « [d]es estivants [qui] se trouvent réunis par le hasard de la villégiature » (Autant-Mathieu, 2015 : 35), servent à construire une pièce où, paradoxalement, le hasard ou l'esprit des vacances lève le voile de tout ce qui n'évolue pas, de tout ce qui pèse sur ce que l'on appelle société (cf. réalisme social).

Selon Nemirovitch-Danchenko, une sorte d'inaction et de platitude caractérise cette œuvre (cité par Marsh, 1999 : 28-29). Tandis que la pièce débute *in medias res* en introduisant un décor estival et des vacanciers qui se connaissent apparemment depuis longtemps (Gorki, 2008 : 46), le lecteur reste perplexe. Il est clair qu'ils présentent des points communs, mais leurs affrontements créent la confusion et laissent soupçonner des situations qui se cachent derrière ce qui se présente. Il est pourtant difficile de distinguer ce qui entre dans la sphère privée et dans la sphère collective.

C'est dans ce sens qu'il faut comprendre la complexité que présente cette pièce, semblant s'appuyer à la fois sur les actions extérieures des personnages, et sur les actions intérieures relatives à leurs relations, leurs conflits ou leurs sentiments (Valdin, 1973). Les vacanciers obéissent à des habitudes peu éloignées de leur quotidien, comme prendre le thé (Gorki, 2008 : 24, 103, 109), pique-niquer (103), rendre visite aux voisins (15), jouer aux échecs (14) discuter, se promener. Cette microsociété multiplie à l'infini des scènes galantes. Ils se courtisent les uns les autres, mais ils ne se courtisent qu'entre individus de la même classe sociale. Or, ce sont des scènes qui ne construisent pas une action, et l'on a l'impression que l'on est face à une non-évolution, à l'absence même d'action. Il est significatif que, souvent, des événements ou des scènes aboutissent à l'échec, comme c'est le cas des scènes d'aveu amoureux de Vlas à Maria (Gorki, 2008 : 111, 152) ou de Rioumine à Varvara (116-117, 152). L'expression des sentiments, des préoccupations, des réflexions, des conflits semble créer une action parallèle, intérieure, puisqu'elle concerne notamment le monde intérieur des personnages eux-mêmes et leurs rapports aux autres. Mais, même dans ce cas, tout se mélange, car des préoccupations existentielles ou philosophiques (45), littéraires (24) se mêlent à des problèmes familiaux (65) ou à des soucis du quotidien (35), et aucune situation ne semble trouver d'issue.

Dès lors, dans *Les Estivants*, la mise en scène des vacances correspond à un parti pris poétique (Schoentjes, 2001 : 291) de Gorki. L'auteur montre la nécessité d'une prise de conscience et d'un passage de l'inaction à l'action, au changement. Les vacances, comme en trompe-l'œil, mettent en avant une émulation spirituelle et émotionnelle (Segel, 1979 : 14) et une critique amère d'une société passive, repliée sur elle-même. Les personnages eux-mêmes se définissent comme « l'intelligentsia du pays » (Gorki, 2008 : 65). Cette remarque est prononcée par Bassov, l'avocat, lorsqu'il s'entretient avec Chalimov, homme de lettres. Chalimov déplore le fait qu'il ne sait plus à qui adresser ses œuvres : « Mais il faut manger, donc il faut écrire. Et pour qui ? Je ne comprends pas… Il faut se représenter clairement son lecteur, mais comment est-il ? Qui est-il ? » C'est à ces questions que Bassov répond par d'autres questions : « Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, perdre le lecteur ? Moi… enfin, nous tous… l'intelligentsia du pays – est-ce que nous ne sommes pas des lecteurs ? Je ne comprends pas… ». Il s'agit, en fait, d'accorder une connotation négative au mot « intelligentsia » qui, dans la pièce, ne correspond pas à une perception de la réalité ou de ce qui était en train de conduire à la révolution russe. Cette ironie amère se renforce surtout si l'on prend en compte le fait que ce dialogue est interrompu par le chant des mendiants qui demandent l'aumône et sont chassés de la propriété de Bassov.

Des personnages qui se nomment eux-mêmes à plusieurs reprises « intellectuels » (36, 85) mais qui ne laissent partout que des « ordures » (192) selon Poustobaïka, le gardien des datchas, semblent mener une existence passive. Il y a une absence de prise de conscience, la situation est confuse, correspondant en partie à l'état qui règne en Russie prérévolutionnaire (Yaney, 1965 : 526). Pourtant, la passivité et la confusion qui caractérisent la pièce soulignent une réflexion essentiellement politique de la part de l'auteur. Le changement surgit malgré ces vies qui semblent exister en parallèle de la réalité. La pièce affiche un message politique assez clair (Gorki, 2008 : 132), l'écroulement de la prison à la fin de l'œuvre (162) annonce un changement (165, 171-175) et une révolution. Les longues vacances permettent ainsi à l'auteur d'installer dans sa pièce une critique amère.

Le temps estival, comme une longue attente, prépare le changement, le passage à l'action et un nouveau départ avec des nouveaux protagonistes, comme les femmes (Gorki, 2008 : 136, 191), qui vont assurer l'avenir. Même si l'auteur situe son action lors des vacances, même si les personnages semblent ne pas avoir conscience de ce qu'il est en train de se préparer. Les datchas deviennent, contre toute attente, le décor, le lieu d'accueil d'une situation transitoire.

Dans les datchas

Les datchas reflètent un type de vie associé aux vacances et font partie d'un environnement qui traduit une époque et un milieu social précis (Lovell, 2016 : 16-26). Cet environnement fonctionne comme un arrière-plan, comme fond d'inscription de plusieurs œuvres des écrivains russes tels que Tchekhov, Tourgueniev ou Gorki (Segel, 1979 : 15). Ce milieu dévoile les conditions sociales, politiques et économiques en relation avec les désirs des vacanciers (Kallus & Vinnitsky, 2016). Ainsi, ce type de milieu dynamique évolue et fonctionne à l'intérieur de la société russe (Selwood, 2006 : 118). Il fait partie intégrante de cette société tout en reflétant son évolution, ce qui constituerait, dans le cas de cette pièce, une sorte de prémonition de la première révolution russe. De plus, chez Gorki, les datchas permettent l'espacement et la dispersion de l'action dans des espaces privés et publics (Gorki, 2008 : 29, 116, 137, 138, 146).

Les datchas, lieu et décor de l'action, communiquent de manière fluide et accueillent des situations confuses aussi bien qu'instables. Étant des lieux de vacances longues, du début jusqu'à la fin de l'été, elles se remplissent alors de situations à la fois signifiantes et insignifiantes, de va-et-vient. Ces maisons, les unes à côté des autres, facilitent un mouvement incessant et renforcent l'aspect symbolique des contacts et des rencontres.

Au premier acte, le spectateur se trouve à l'intérieur de la datcha des Bassov, devant une grande salle à manger qui donne sur le bureau de Serguéï Vassiliévitch et la chambre à coucher de sa femme, à gauche et à droite respectivement (Gorki, 2008 : 11). Au deuxième acte, dominé par le théâtre dans le théâtre[2], l'action se déroule devant la même datcha, et derrière se trouve le chemin qui conduit chez les Souslov (55). Au troisième acte, les personnages se présentent dans une « clairière dans la forêt » (103) et vont souvent « vers la rivière » (110). Le quatrième acte reprend le décor du deuxième (149). La maison de Bassov constitue, alors, l'espace-centre de l'action.

La proximité des maisons entre elles et leur isolement dans une forêt permettent la formation d'une communauté suivant son *idiorythmie* (mot composé grec, *idios* + *rhuthmos*), « rythme-propre » (Barthes, 2002), indiquant précisément les rapports entre les membres d'une communauté (souvent limitée en nombre) dans un environnement donné, tout en préservant des rapports particuliers avec le rythme quotidien de la vie et du monde extérieur. Barthes lit ces espaces publics comme un type

2. Pendant cet acte, plusieurs personnages connus ou inconnus se rencontrent sur scène, sont de passage, chantent, parlent ou demandent leur « rôle » (Gorki, 2008 : 75).

d'organisation précise lié à l'activité humaine dont la littérature pourrait constituer une simulation (2002 : 29), une « expérimentation fictive » (44). Chez Gorki, les datchas constituent, certes, un lieu de vacances, ce qui présuppose un mode de vie qui s'écarte de celui qui renvoie au rythme habituel de la vie. Or, la manière dont se présentent les incidents en relation avec les conflits et le monde intérieur des personnages, les rapports entre ceux-ci avec l'espace, révèlent que cette microsociété préserve et reflète bien des caractéristiques de la société russe en général. Il n'est pas simplement question d'une simulation, mais d'un reflet qui rappelle que le lieu à lui seul ou l'état (les vacances) ne suffisent pas pour s'écarter des caractéristiques qui déterminent une société.

Cette perspective n'est pas sans rappeler le concept d'« hétérotopie », présenté par Foucault en 1967 lors d'une conférence au centre des études architecturales en Tunisie. Par cette notion, composée du grec ancien *héteros* + *tópos*, autre-lieu, Foucault tente de saisir comment l'espace devient signifiant dans son rapport à d'autres espaces. Dans un entretien avec P. Rabinow, Foucault définit ces « espaces autres », comme « espaces singuliers que l'on trouve dans certains espaces sociaux dont les fonctions sont différentes de celles des autres, voire carrément opposées » (Foucault, 1994 : 282). Pendant cette conférence, le philosophe interprète la signification et la structure de ces espaces en relation avec une évolution historique. Il affirme que ces lieux sont en rapport avec d'autres « mais sur un mode tel qu'ils suspendent, neutralisent ou inversent l'ensemble des rapports qui se trouvent, par eux, désignés, reflétés ou réfléchis » (775). Ces espaces, dans l'approche de Foucault, fonctionnent comme un nœud de rapports avec les croyances qui les soutiennent, les éléments auxquels ils renvoient (organisation, société, etc.) ou la manière dont ils sont perçus (espace vécu, physique, etc.). Une même métaphore clôt l'introduction et l'intervention de Foucault sur l'hétérotopie : la première mention concerne l'« emplacement de passage » (775) en relation comme susdit avec une certaine société, et la deuxième définit ces espaces *autres* entre les pays, les civilisations et l'imagination. Comme le navire rend possible la connexion des espaces séparés, des pays et des civilisations différents, la manière dont des espaces différents communiquent permet le développement de la civilisation. Pour Foucault, « le navire, c'est l'hétérotopie par excellence » (775). Même s'il est difficile de concevoir les datchas comme une hétérotopie, car l'espace chez Gorki ne se délimite pas, celles-ci constituent la parfaite exposition d'un endroit de vacances qui symboliserait la mise en œuvre des changements sociopolitiques. La fin des vacances marque un nouveau départ, mais ce sont les vacances qui facilitent la rupture.

Le dialogue entre ce qui entre dans la sphère du privé et dans la sphère publique apparaît à travers la manière dont chaque élément circule dans cet

environnement. Les bruits proches ou lointains (Gorki, 2008 : 77, 110, 115) établissent, par exemple, le contact entre différents espaces. En effet, les datchas ne constituent pas un monde à part du reste du pays. Les personnages comme le docteur Doudakov entretiennent des activités ailleurs, puisque le docteur s'occupe d'une colonie d'enfants délinquants (47). Une série d'événements inhabituels se produit tout au long de l'œuvre qui démontre un espace estival difficilement délimité, où des personnages deviennent des témoins imprévus, comme Sonia qui assiste à la confession de sa mère à Varvara au sujet de la déclaration d'amour du jeune Vlas (114). De plus, il y a ceux qui, se trouvant dans l'ombre, se taisent pour passer inaperçus et assister aux conversations des autres (151), les incidents que nous ne pouvons pas comprendre (104, 110), des révélations impromptues (110).

Assez souvent, une juxtaposition de scènes est provoquée par les entrées et les sorties des personnages ou des couples qui scandent la pièce, parfois même des simples passages des gens (66) ou des ruptures de scène (86). Des personnages font des allers et retours entre ces maisons et la forêt, malgré leur surveillance, parfois des personnages non nommés tels que les mendiants qui « *chantent à mi-voix derrière la datcha de Bassov* » (Gorki, 2008 : 67) ou des comédiens (75). Ces personnages confondent ceux que le lecteur spectateur connaît avec d'autres, inconnus (75). Ces alternances confèrent à chaque fois une nouvelle dimension à un espace qui semble destiné à avoir comme fonction ou valeur immuables d'accueillir des vacanciers.

L'intérieur comme l'extérieur de ces maisons sont vides et froids, comme les murs de la maison de Bassov, ce qui semble créer une distance entre ces constructions et les personnages qui y existent d'une manière ou d'une autre. Pourtant, dans ces résidences s'organisent et se développent plusieurs activités qui tissent un lien entre activité de loisir, d'ordre privé, et activité professionnelle (11), d'ordre public. Au premier acte, chez les Bassov, le bureau à l'arrière-plan montre l'avocat Serguéï Vassiliévitch, toujours occupé par ses affaires. Bassov n'est pas la seule personne qui travaille pendant cette longue période de vacances : c'est le cas aussi du jeune Vlas, le frère de son épouse, ainsi que de son associé Zamyslov. Ces espaces communiquent et permettent ainsi la coexistence des activités estivales qui semblent anodines et des activités ou des habitudes qui deviennent l'écho d'une vie loin des vacances.

Les datchas semblent donc destinées à préserver un équilibre entre les habitudes et le mode de vie dicté par les vacances estivales. Mais le fait de préserver ou créer d'autres habitudes révèle le caractère et le nombre limité des activités des estivants. Tout semble subir une répétition créatrice de stagnation. Les personnages ne font que discuter et boire du thé ; le rituel (24, 103, 109) accompagne presque toutes les réunions

dans l'œuvre, lorsque deux ou plusieurs personnes se rencontrent chez les Bassov (Actes I, II, IV) ou dans la forêt (Acte III), et pourrait être caractérisé comme une pratique sociale de convivialité pendant les rencontres et les réunions estivales (Barthes, 2002 : 152). L'habitude indique pourtant ce que les datchas représentent pour ces personnages : un espace privé, loin de la réalité de la vie quotidienne qui leur confère la réassurance de poursuivre leurs activités.

Cette élite sociale cherche des passe-temps, tout en préservant ses habitudes qui servent d'ancrage à une certaine réalité. Ils lisent souvent de la poésie (Gorki, 2008 : 50, 51, 94, 170, 179) ou chantent (104). Kaléria, la poétesse romantique (Segel, 1979 : 14), joue aussi du piano (Gorki, 2008 : 29, 50, 55, 149). C'est encore le personnage de Poustobaïka qui rappelle le lien de leurs activités avec leur statut social : « Eh oui… s'amusent… ils ont le ventre plein, eux… » (56). Il y a souvent de la musique, parfois de la mandoline et de la guitare (56, 103, 106). Cette petite société s'organise par ses activités comme l'indique la présence du samovar ou la consommation d'alcool (75, 103, 137, 161), sortir et aller à la pêche pendant le deuxième acte.

Les datchas constituent un espace à la fois ouvert et fermé et forment l'unité de lieu dramatique, étroitement associée à l'unité de temps, une longue période de vacances. Cette période n'en est pas moins dominée par une atmosphère particulière, selon Segel « oppressive » (1979 : 15) ou « morne » (Gorki, 2008 : 103), imprégnant le lieu et le décor, le piano de la salle à manger de l'intérieur de la maison des Bassov et les objets, les meubles d'été (11) ou les ustensiles utilisés comme le samovar (103). Les activités de ces vacanciers ou plutôt leur oisiveté permettent à l'auteur de mieux présenter leur état d'être. Cette peinture se concentre pourtant sur leurs sentiments, leurs amours et leurs haines qui apparaissent régulièrement, mais quoique tous les personnages soient concernés par ces questions, certains le sont davantage, comme Varvara, la femme idéale aux yeux de plusieurs hommes. Si le vide à la fois extérieur et intérieur domine leur existence et leur misère[3], cette dernière ne concerne pourtant pas le manque des moyens mais l'état psychologique des personnages ; ils souffrent. Vlas l'affirme : « Je n'aime pas quand les autres voient que je me sens mal » (25).

Si leurs résidences constituent le reflet ainsi que la manière de préserver leurs habitudes et leur statut, ce qui se trouve en dehors des datchas permet de constater que les rapports des personnages à l'espace dépendent étroitement de leurs sentiments, de leur monde intérieur. C'est ce que

3. Comme dans *L'Assommoir* de Zola.

l'on constate, par exemple, à travers le personnage d'Olga Alexéïévna qui, en s'adressant à Vlas, s'exprime ainsi :

> Attends ! là-bas, dans le monde libre – ça fait peur… et je crois que, dans la forêt, il y a quelqu'un qui guette… quelqu'un de méchant… Les gardiens qui sifflent, et ce qu'ils sifflent… c'est narquois et c'est triste… Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils sifflent ? (Gorki, 2008 : 30)

Le monde extérieur, souvent la nature, fait apparaître des sentiments contradictoires et, par extension, des manières opposées de concevoir la vie, la réalité. Parfois il fait rêver, d'autres il est menaçant. Bassov déclare :

> […] La nature, les forêts, les arbres… le foin… j'aime la nature ! (*D'une voix bizarrement triste*). Et les gens, je les aime… J'aime mon pauvre, mon immense, mon absurde pays… ma Russie ! J'aime tout, j'aime tout le monde ! […] (134)

Seulement Bassov s'exprime sous l'emprise de l'alcool, ce qui rend ses paroles peu fiables et confère à la scène un aspect comique. Les oppositions, qui surgissent à travers le point de vue différent de chaque personnage, mettent en avant l'aspect instable de la situation qui caractérise ces vacances, mais correspondent aussi paradoxalement à leur esprit : le non permanent, être de passage.

Des vacances en cours ?

Tout participe à attribuer à cette longue période de vacances un caractère transitoire. Ce n'est pas un hasard si l'obscurité est l'une des caractéristiques dominantes de la pièce. Le soir domine effectivement toutes les scènes. Des scènes crépusculaires se succèdent. La nuit au premier acte, au deuxième le couchant du soleil, au troisième le soleil est déclinant, au quatrième de nouveau la nuit. Cette obscurité symbolise-t-elle la fin ? Annonce-t-elle un nouveau départ ? Le spectateur se trouve devant une situation dont le caractère reste difficilement définissable, dû à l'imprévision du temps qui s'écoule entre l'arrivée et le départ des estivants. Au quatrième acte, Rioumine rentre de la mer (Gorki, 2008 : 154), Deuxpoints est prêt à financer les projets annoncés auparavant et entreprendre des activités caritatives sociales (159). Et le spectateur apprend que c'est la fin de la saison estivale avec l'annonce des adieux douloureux.

Cette absence de temporalité souligne la tonalité pathétique qui domine le texte et surtout la manière dont les personnages vivent leurs vacances. Tout est morne, en relation avec le passé, le présent et l'avenir,

et les personnages expriment leur malaise à plusieurs reprises (25, 39, 45, 97, 99, 103, 104, 110, 113, 131, 139). Cette tonalité se renforce progressivement non seulement en englobant la situation de ces gens en vacances, leur existence vide (89, 93), des personnages privés d'amour et de vie (114), mais ce vide est menaçant et les entoure. Varvara l'affirme : « Je sens la haine qui grandit » (120). On voit apparaître un aspect pessimiste, morne de la vie et un danger de rupture imminent.

Le langage remplit le temps de l'action, mais constitue une action particulière, semblant créer des événements ou des situations qui n'avancent pas. Sur scène, le silence apparaît peu (Gorki, 2008 : 140), il est parfois en rapport avec ce qui ne peut être compris (30). Cependant, le silence n'est pas l'absence de mots, car tous les personnages parlent beaucoup, mais concerne la manière de parler, le pouvoir de continuer. Les personnages se donnent mutuellement la parole, mais s'entrecoupent constamment. Les points de suspension dominent le texte, ainsi que les courtes répliques et les quiproquos. La parole serait alors en action, car elle révèle leurs rêves, leurs habitudes, leurs relations, leur monde intérieur.

Cependant, bien que la parole renforce le contact entre les personnages, qui se trouvent toujours parmi des amis, en famille, constamment accompagnés, ceux-ci se sentent seuls (Gorki, 2008 : 105) et ont envie de partir (23, 197), du fait que les longues discussions ne soutiennent pas forcément une communication essentielle entre eux. Cette absence de communication concerne des sujets à la fois insignifiants et signifiants. Le rejet des croyances ou les discussions que ce rejet provoque présentent un intérêt particulier. Rioumine discute longuement avec Maria Lvovna à propos du nouvel homme et demande :

> Accordez-lui le droit de se détourner vers les phénomènes qui le blessent ! L'homme recherche l'oubli, le repos… l'homme, c'est la paix qu'il recherche.

Et Maria Lvovna réplique tranquillement : « il a fait faillite, votre homme ? » (43) Ces thèmes qui ont un aspect existentiel reviennent fréquemment dans les discussions, mais ceci dans le seul but de faire passer le temps : une nouvelle fois, ces discussions sont sans issue, ni impact sur le présent.

Des personnages comiques comme Deuxpoints, ou marginaux comme les mendiants, révèlent un fond tragi-comique qui caractérise tous les personnages et la tonalité de l'œuvre. Deuxpoints, le riche oncle que rejette Souslov mais dont l'argent scande l'œuvre (Gorki, 2008 : 44, 73, 86-87, 91-92, 141, 150), le personnage comique par excellence, va soutenir le changement et forger un meilleur avenir pour les autres. Les tournures

philosophiques, comme chez Tchekhov, montrent toutefois comment tout effort comique s'inscrit dans un arrière-plan tragique. Et tout évolue même pendant les vacances.

Des vacances tendues : réalisme social

Comment cette pièce, qui présente une partie de la société russe dans un environnement particulier lors d'une période temporelle également particulière, s'approche-t-elle du réalisme social dont se revendique Gorki, malgré son refus de faire appartenir son œuvre à un mouvement littéraire précis (Gorki, 1999 : 226) ? Gorki, à travers son écriture, révèle la nécessité d'un changement social. Ses œuvres ont un contenu politique et incluent des préoccupations sociales, puisqu'elles sont clairement liées au réalisme social (Yedlin, 1975 : 1999). Ne devant pas tant copier le réel, le suivre ou en proposer une reproduction photographique stérile qu'en saisir l'essence (Gorki, 1997 : 274), le réalisme est pour Gorki le moyen de présenter la vérité cruelle de la vie (339). L'auteur exprime des idées révolutionnaires et met en scène la nécessité d'un changement, principes essentiels du réalisme social. Le théâtre peut ainsi servir à l'instruction du peuple et inciter à la révolution.

Gorki met en abyme la société de son époque et les problèmes sociaux comme la pauvreté (Gorki, 2008 : 67) ou la situation des femmes[4]. Cette mosaïque sociale aide l'écrivain à mieux montrer l'environnement extérieur mais aussi intérieur qui détermine les relations interpersonnelles des personnages et leur état psychologique, liés aux inégalités sociales. Les personnages doivent prendre en main la situation pour changer leur destin. Gorki montre l'inactivité des vacanciers intellectuels en relation avec leur vide intérieur. Le passage à l'action motive déjà leur volonté de se battre pour soutenir une cause. Cependant, ce ne sont pas tous les intellectuels qui entreprennent ce chemin. Dans une lettre à K. P. Piatnisky en 1902, Gorky affirme qu'il existe deux types d'intellectuels, ceux qui se tournent vers le passé et vers des valeurs passées sans vouloir entreprendre un changement, et ceux qui sont plus combattants, des travailleurs, ceux qui prennent la revanche (Gorki, 1997 : 72). Pourtant, il existe dans l'œuvre plusieurs types d'intellectuels, et chacun pose sa singularité (Gorki, 2008 : 107, 122-123).

Les personnages évoluent à travers les dits et les regards des autres, ce qui caractérise souvent une petite société en vacances, lorsque les gens

4. Des stéréotypes violents apparaissent dans le texte. Par exemple, Bassov affirme avec joie : « Les femmes indignes de respect sont mieux que les femmes dignes de respect » (Gorki, 2008 : 136).

veulent être différents, sans parvenir à l'être. Cependant, l'auteur montre l'ellipse de valeurs auxquelles ces personnages pourraient s'attacher, c'est pourquoi leur vie semble sans importance et vide. Personnages qui ne font rien et qui passent leur temps à se parler ou à s'accuser. Leurs habitudes, leur passé, leur avenir sont très souvent remis en cause. Leurs conflits internes en masquent d'autres, idéologiques (Segel, 1979 : 16). Souslov, en monopolisant la discussion, affirme :

> Ça me plaît, d'être un petit-bourgeois […] Et, pour finir, je n'en ai rien à braire de vos racontars… de vos appels… de vos idées ! (Gorki, 2008 181)

Et c'est l'écrivain lui-même qui peut et doit agir (Segel, 1979 : 17) par son œuvre. Maria Lvovna, *persona* de l'auteur, déclare :

> Tâchez d'élever ce caractère fortuit de votre existence au niveau de la nécessité sociale, et votre vie se découvrira un sens… (Gorki, 2008 : 44)

Les personnages expriment alors leurs sentiments et les valeurs que cette société promeut. Les Doudakov parlent de valeurs familiales (Gorki, 2008 : 124-125). Ioulia Filippovna et son amant Zamyslov, associé de Bassov, parlent de vices et de vertus (125), alors que peu avant elle a entrepris cette conversation avec son époux (122) qui était sous l'emprise de l'alcool. Ensemble, les Souslov constatent qu'ils ne peuvent décider qui se suicide le premier. Ioulia Filippovna propose à son mari : « Suicidons-nous, mon ami ! D'abord toi… ensuite, moi ! » (127). Il est pourtant toujours question des valeurs, des valeurs propres à la société russe de l'époque.

Ces groupes qui se forment sur scène dévoilent le fonctionnement de la société russe. L'opposition de sexes s'affirme à plusieurs reprises dans l'œuvre (Gorki, 2008 : 103), comme aussi l'aveu des femmes qu'elles vivent « mal » (107, 110). Cependant, ce sont les femmes qui constituent la force motrice du changement. Des oppositions entre hommes et femmes s'affichent au déploiement de l'intrigue, pendant les rencontres et les discussions estivales ; les unes plus sensibles, rêveuses et idéalistes, les autres moins.

Le nombre de personnages masculins est bien supérieur au nombre de personnages féminins, ce qui pourrait indiquer une société inégalitaire dans laquelle la place des femmes se restreint par la domination des hommes. Les femmes revendiquent pourtant le changement. Maria Lvovna, la femme médecin, perturbe la quiétude de la situation initiale et la tranquillité des vacances. Tout au long de l'œuvre, elle est souvent

visée par les critiques (Gorki, 2008 : 153), car c'est le personnage qui ose aller à l'encontre de ce qui arrange les hommes. C'est à travers la parole et l'engagement des femmes que le changement dans cette société sera possible. La révolution concerne alors non pas une évolution par rapport à ce qui existe mais une toute nouvelle vision de la société dans laquelle de nouvelles valeurs se mettront en place.

D'autres groupes s'opposent dans l'œuvre, comme les riches aux pauvres ou les habitants de la région aux vacanciers. Cependant, les oppositions concernent principalement la manière dont les uns perçoivent les autres, la manière de vivre ensemble ou de continuer à vivre. Des questions existentielles dominent la pièce, souvent liées à la solitude et à la souffrance que les personnages ressentent (Gorki, 2008 : 31, 37, 43, 44, 45, 71, 138). Deuxpoints avoue : « Je n'ai personne » (131), mais l'avenir n'est certain pour personne. L'impasse s'affiche nettement vers la fin des vacances, d'où la nécessité du départ ou plutôt d'un nouveau départ. Et les personnages qui font partie de la nouvelle intelligentsia ne sont pas ceux qui veulent amener le changement ; le changement s'effectue par ceux, comme Varvara, Maria, Vlas ou Deuxpoints, qui ont la volonté de le faire, à la fin des vacances.

Toutes les familles en vacances rencontrent plusieurs problèmes et la plupart d'entre elles sont démolies. Maria Lvovna a mal vécu son mariage, les Bassov en souffrent encore et tous les autres couples rencontrent également des difficultés. Parmi ces familles, certaines réussissent à surmonter les problèmes. Pourtant, le problème majeur au sein de ces dernières est la communication ou la manière dont leurs membres tentent de se comprendre. Maria Lvovna et sa fille s'entendent très bien, et Sonia conseille sa mère au sujet de Vlas (Gorki, 2008 : 146-147). Cependant, les relations au sein de ces familles sont en général tendues, et chaque effort visant à les améliorer montre la vanité de la démarche. Bassov demande à Chalimov de courtiser sa femme (68), et l'écrivain le fait (109), mais Varvara détruit la belle image qu'elle avait de cet écrivain intellectuel. C'est ainsi que Gorki réussit à cibler des valeurs conservatrices, en dénonçant l'hypocrisie qui règne dans la société malgré les apparences.

Les relations entre les personnages reflètent ainsi les tensions qui existent au sein de la société en général. Leurs relations montrent à la fois ce qui concerne chaque couple, comment vivre ensemble ou l'impossibilité de le faire. Les couples s'accusent mutuellement (Gorki, 2008 : 108), les uns se moquent des autres. Varvara, par exemple, entre et sort de la datcha, et la conversation entre Chalimov et Bassov se modifie considérablement (65). Bassov la qualifie d'« ânesse de Balaam » (176). Les personnages sont finalement privés de vie et d'amour (114), raison pour laquelle ils les cherchent désespérément. Pourtant, l'intérêt familial et le respect au sein de la famille

unissent certains personnages comme Kyrill Akimovitch Doudakov et son épouse Olga Alexéïévna (48-49, 124), et leur famille demeure unie jusqu'à la fin.

Bien que cette pièce fasse l'économie d'un approfondissement psychologique des personnages, l'ensemble des éléments définit la représentation scénique de la vérité qui caractérise chaque personnage. La satire de cette société, les oppositions nettes entre les personnages motivent le maintien de l'intrigue et dévoilent le passage à l'action après le départ.

La fin des vacances, au travail !

Ce qui semble caractériser l'activité estivale cache alors un vrai combat qui évolue au sein de la société russe prérévolutionnaire de 1904. Ce combat valorise la nécessité d'agir et la prise de décisions. Comme l'écrivain Chalimov, qui depuis longtemps n'écrit plus (Gorki, 2008 : 66), tous les personnages sont passifs. Le message politique de l'œuvre serait en relation avec la nécessité d'action, comme chez Brecht, le théâtre épique et le théâtre politique ou encore « le théâtre social »[5]. La question posée par *Les Estivants* à la fin des vacances concerne leur avenir : peuvent-ils rester ensemble, s'adapter comme ils le faisaient dans le passé ou entamer un nouveau départ ? Les vacances favorisent des rencontres éphémères ou de longue durée. Des personnages s'approchent les uns des autres ou s'en éloignent, mais la fin des vacances métaphorise un nouveau départ qui marque la rupture avec le passé, ce que les estivants étaient ou ce qu'ils deviennent. Varvara affirme :

> Oui, je vais partir ! Loin d'ici, où tout pourrit, tout se décompose autour de soi… Loin de fainéants. Je veux vivre ! Je vais vivre… et faire quelque chose… contre vous. (199)

Les Estivants expose la rupture avec le passé, ce que ces estivants étaient, sont et deviennent. Après les vacances, une nouvelle conscience s'affirme déjà, la nécessité d'agir, et les événements à venir : la révolution commence. La conscience de leur état et la mise en doute apparaissent :

> Nous sommes des estivants dans notre pays… des espèces de vacanciers. On s'agite, on cherche des places confortables dans la vie…

5. La définition de ce type de théâtre se trouve « dans le tissage des relations entre théâtre et politique ou même entre théâtre et propagande. Pour le critique anglais Eric Bentley, le théâtre politique se réfère aussi bien au texte théâtral qu'à quand, où et comment il est mis en scène » (Paranhos, 2016).

> Nous ne faisons rien et nous parlons tellement que ça dégoûte. (Gorki, 2008 : 172)

Les vacances sont propices au développement des relations interpersonnelles. Or, des personnages qui arrivent ou qui partent pendant ce temps vont colorer ces vacances, donner une tonalité souvent belliqueuse et tendre l'atmosphère. Les tensions sont évidentes dès le début de l'œuvre, lorsque la parole est en étroite relation avec les gestes des personnages et révèle leur personnalité. Dans la scène d'exposition chez les Bassov, Varvara rappelle à son mari qu'il est alcoolique, mais lui répond en riant :

> Comme c'est méchant, ce que tu viens de dire ! Mais, tu sais, tous ces bouquins épicés à la mode, ils font plus de mal que le vin, je te jure ! (Gorki, 2008 : 15)

Lui est alcoolique, elle vit dans un monde onirique et a un « amour-propre maladif » (15). Les vacances tranquilles laissent place à des tensions préexistantes au sein des couples, au sein de groupes de personnages, tensions qui peuvent être définies différemment pour les personnages (hommes/maris, femmes/épouses) ou leurs sentiments (amour/haine). Bassov affirme au début de la pièce : « comme c'est vide chez nous » (14), mais il faudrait voir cette vacuité comme la caractéristique essentielle de cette époque transitoire qui caractérise non seulement le décor de la datcha de Bassov et la vacuité de l'existence de ces gens de passage, mais aussi les problèmes du pays entier, en voie vers la révolution. La nécessité de tracer un avenir peut être recherchée dans ce qui porte une valeur collective. Le plus évident est le « nous », la première personne du pluriel, qui marque la pertinence d'une action collective.

Gorki critique cette nouvelle classe qui se croit supérieure, des gens du peuple qui ont reçu une bonne éducation et qui ont réussi à s'enrichir, cette nouvelle bourgeoisie matérialiste (Lovell, 2016 : 158-159). Cette nouvelle classe qui a oublié ses racines doit se ressourcer, retourner aux milieux d'origine et reprendre le travail à l'issue des vacances. Le drame personnel devient collectif et concerne un groupe qui porte dorénavant la vision d'un meilleur avenir pour toute la société. Les vacances favorisent justement cette rencontre particulière et la formation de la pluralité, de l'ouverture, et préparent déjà le passage à l'action.

La préparation de ce passage comporte un mélange particulier d'éléments comiques et tragiques. Le comique provoque la distanciation et le rire[6]. Chez Gorki, il existe certes un mélange tragi-comique, mais avant tout un soupçon du comique, qui s'inscrit dans un arrière-plan

6. Cf. préface de *Tartuffe* de Molière.

tragique. Le comique pur (Gorki, 2008 : 49-50) et surtout les personnages typiques de la comédie provoquent dans la première moitié de l'œuvre le rire et dans la deuxième la critique amère, et la rupture. Ces personnages changent et vont motiver le changement. Vlas, le bouffon, qui fait rire tout le monde avec ses blagues (96, 184), devient le personnage qui exerce cette critique par la poésie : « Des geignards et des petits minables // Marchent sur le sol de ma patrie […] » (178), et Deuxpoints rit sans cesse (80-81). Ces personnages portent toutefois une histoire tragique (71). Les vacances permettent à Gorki la révélation du comique et du tragique, de l'impasse où se trouvent les personnages et le nouveau départ qu'ils comptent faire après leur départ. L'auteur entreprend une caricature assez sévère d'une société à la dérive, injuste, qui éclate. Et ceux qui provoquent le rire amènent au changement.

Le monde du spectacle fait également irruption à plusieurs reprises dans la pièce (Gorki, 2008 : 69), et le deuxième acte est marqué par des va-et-vient des comédiens et des acteurs sans aucune raison apparente (75, 83, 84, 87, 90, 101, 163). Le monde du spectacle se mélange avec les personnages. C'est du théâtre dans le théâtre, lorsque les rôles des personnages se confondent avec d'autres personnages, et le théâtre est en train de dévoiler ses propres mécanismes (Vuillemin, 2009). Il devient alors difficile pour le spectateur de comprendre ce mélange, souvent assez confus. Cette confusion estivale ressemble à cette sorte d'inactivité qui caractérise le pays et qui invite à une nouvelle prise de conscience et d'action d'abord pour les personnages. Maria Lvovna l'affirme :

> Nous tous, nous devons être différents ! Enfants de lingères, de cuisinières, enfants d'ouvriers pleins de santé - nous devons être différents ! […] Ce n'est pas par pitié, par charité que nous devons travailler à élargir la vie… c'est pour nous-mêmes que nous devons le faire… pour ne pas sentir cette solitude maudite… ne pas voir l'abîme entre nous – en haut – et nos proches – là-bas, en bas, d'où ils nous regardent comme des ennemis qui vivent de leur travail ! Ils nous ont envoyés à l'avant, pour que nous trouvions une route pour eux vers une vie meilleure… et nous, nous les avons quittés et nous nous sommes perdus, et nous avons nous-mêmes créé notre solitude, pleine d'une agitation inquiète et comme secrètement écartelée… Voilà notre drame ! (Gorki, 2008 : 174-175)

Les vacances permettent et signifient ces changements et ce nouveau départ, promis ou imaginé. Elles fonctionnent comme une période de réflexion partagée par plusieurs personnes.

La nouvelle identité de ces personnages est collective, et chacun doit choisir son camp : ceux qui vont partir et travailler pour un meilleur

avenir et ceux qui continuent « tranquillement » leur vie (201). La situation de ces personnages au début de l'œuvre, comparée avec leur situation à la fin, est complètement différente. Le conflit dans l'œuvre de Gorki se fonde sur l'opposition non pas des classes sociales mais des idées, ce qui devient évident à la fin de ses œuvres (Beumers, 2011 : 215). Le manque d'événements qui caractérise *Les Estivants* va enfin être récompensé par le dénouement de l'œuvre, lorsque le départ signifie la rupture au sein de certains groupes et la poursuite de projets différents. Finalement les vacances permettent et la succession et la rupture, car les estivants peuvent prendre des décisions difficiles et choisir avec qui ils veulent continuer à trouver un sens dans leur existence. Les vacances aident à cette prise de conscience de la situation propre pour chaque personnage, une réflexion établie à travers le dialogue avec soi-même et avec l'autre. Trouver un sens à la vie c'est l'engagement des vacanciers après une longue période d'inactivité.

Conclusion

En guise de conclusion, dans *Les Estivants*, Gorki situe l'action dans le contexte sociohistorique de la Russie à l'aube de la révolution de 1905. Il présente les conflits entre les différentes classes sociales en relation avec l'atmosphère fade qui imprègne les datchas et l'incertitude par rapport à l'avenir politique de la Russie. Période estivale où tout semble provisoire et éphémère, le mode de vie qui s'installe révèle néanmoins l'accumulation de tensions interpersonnelles et annonce l'urgence de renoncer à la passivité afin de redéfinir l'implication et l'engagement social de chaque individu au sein d'un pays en mutation. Les vacances d'été deviennent ainsi la métaphore de la transformation d'une société entière. Ceux qui ont la volonté de travailler ensemble après les vacances effectueront ce changement social. Mais ce sont les vacances qui l'ont permis.

Christakis Christofi studied Plastic Arts at the University of Aix-Marseille, where he attained a Licence and a Master of Plastic Arts degree. He also studied Modern French Literature at the same university and acquired a Licence and a Master's degree in this field. He obtained a PhD in Arts and Human Sciences from the same university. Christofi is a Lecturer at the University of Cyprus since 2019. He published many critical works concerning theory and literary, artistic, and theatre practices.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2214-8562

Bibliographie

Audebert, Maurice, « Maxime Gorki, *Les Estivants* », *Raison présente*, 39(1), 1976, 116 (https://www.persee.fr/doc/raipr_0033-9075_1976_num_39_1_1829_t1_0116_0000_5).

Autant-Mathieu, Marie-Christine, « La vieillesse, révélatrice des changements sociaux, à travers l'analyse des *Estivants* de Gorki et de *La Cerisaie* de Tchekhov », *Recherches & Travaux*, 86, 2015 (doi:10.4000/recherchestravaux.731).

Barthes, Roland, *Comment vivre ensemble. Cours et séminaires au Collège de France (1976-1977)*, Paris, Le Seuil, 2002.
Beumers, Birgit, « Drama and Theatre », *in* Dobrenko, Evgeny & Balina, Marina (dir.), *The Cambridge Companion to Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011.
Célérier, Laure, « Bertrand Reau, *Les Français et les vacances. Sociologie des pratiques et offres de loisir* », *Lectures*, 2011, (doi:10.4000/lectures.6024).
Cole, Toby, Krich Chinoy, Helen (dir.), *Actors on acting: The theories, techniques, and practices of the great actors of all times as told in their own words*, New York, Crown, 1954.
Foucault, Michel, *Dits et écrits*, t. IV, Paris, Gallimard, 1994.
Hellot, Marie-Christiane, Compte rendu de « Gens de passage : *Les Estivants* », *Jeu*, 83(2), 1997, 38-43 (https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/25425ac).
Gorki, Maxime, *Les Estivants*, tr. André Markowicz, Besançon, Les Solitaires intempestifs, 2008.
Gorky, Maksim, *Maksim Gorky: Selected Letters*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1997.
Kallus, Rachel, Vinnitsky, Yulia, « The dacha: home away from home », *Journal of Architectural and Planning Research*, 33(4), 2016, 271-292 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/44987206).
Lovell, Stephen, *Summerfolk: a history of the dacha, 1710-2000*, Londres, Cornell UP, 2016.
Marshr, Cynthia (dir.), *File on Gorky*, Heinemann, 1993.
Moravcevich, Nicholas, « Gorky and the Western Naturalists: Anatomy of a Misalliance », *Comparative Literature*, 21(1), 1969, 63-75 (doi:10.2307/1769370).
Paranhos, Katia Rondrigues, « Dramaturges et groupes de théâtre au Brésil de l'après-1964 : art, engagement et politique », *Plural Pluriel*, 14, 2016 (http://www.pluralpluriel.org/index.php/revue/article/view/26).
Schoentjes, Pierre, *Poétique de l'ironie*, Paris, Le Seuil, « Essais », 2001.
Segel, Harold B., *Twentieth-Century Russian Drama from Gorky to the Present*, New York, Columbia UP, 1979.
Selwood, John, « Second homes Russian/Ukrainian style », *Prairie Perspectives*, 9(1), 2006, 118-142.
Yaney, George L., « Social Stability in Prerevolutionary Russia: A Critical Note », *Slavic Review*, 24(3), 1965, 521-527 (doi:10.2307/2492272).
Yedlin, Tova, « Maxim Gorky: His Early Revolutionary Activity and His Involvement in the Revolution of 1905 », *Canadian Slavonic Papers*, 17(1), 1975, 76-105 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/40866833).
–––, *Maxim Gorky: A political biography*, Westport (CT), Praeger, 1999.
Valdin, Bernard, « Intrigue et tableau », *Littérature*, 9, 1973, 47-55 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/41704313).
Vuillemin, Jean-Claude, « Réflexions sur la réflexivité théâtrale », *L'Annuaire théâtral*, 45, 2009, 119-135 (doi:10.7202/044277ar).

Holidays on Ice: William Morris and Lavinia Greenlaw in Iceland

Alix Cazalet-Boudigues
Université Jean-Moulin Lyon 3

Abstract: Going away is an essential part of our conception of holidays, which is why *Questions of Travel: William Morris in Iceland* (2011) can help inform a definition of holiday poetics. The book combines large portions of William Morris's *Icelandic Journals*, in particular from the first part which documents his 1871 journey to Iceland, with commentaries of Morris's text by contemporary British poet Lavinia Greenlaw. The work as a whole draws attention to in-betweenness as a central characteristic of holiday writing. Both texts bring to the fore the unstable situation of the holiday-maker who has to find their place away from home while knowing this displacement to be only temporary. In-betweenness is also to be found in how Morris and Greenlaw recount the events of the journey. Calling it an adventure enables Morris to alternate between the sublime and the heroicomical, while Greenlaw oscillates between the universal and the particular in the psychological analysis of Morris's experience. Genre is also considered: journal writing was not a common practice of Morris's, and it is here presented as a freer form of expression than either letter or poetry writing. The generic affiliation of Greenlaw's text is debated as well, given that it is published as non-fiction but is often more akin to free verse. Ultimately, a distinction between travel writing and holiday writing is attempted.

Keywords: Holiday writing, travel writing, in-betweenness, literary genre.

Résumé : Les vacances, c'est avant tout le « départ en vacances », la vacance de son lieu de vie. C'est pourquoi l'étude de *Questions of Travel: William Morris in Iceland* (2011) peut nous aider à élaborer une définition de ce que serait une poétique des vacances. L'ouvrage combine des extraits conséquents des *Icelandic Journals* de William Morris (tirés en particulier de la première partie de ces journaux, celle qui documente son voyage en Islande de 1871) et des commentaires du texte de Morris par la poétesse britannique contemporaine Lavinia Greenlaw. L'œuvre dans son ensemble fait de

l'entre-deux une caractéristique centrale de la littérature de vacances. En effet, les deux parties du texte mettent en avant la situation instable du vacancier qui doit trouver sa place loin de chez lui tout en sachant que cela ne sera que temporaire. L'entre-deux caractérise également la manière dont Morris et Lavinia Greenlaw rapportent les événements du voyage : en faire une aventure permet au premier d'alterner entre les modes héroïcomique et sublime, tandis que la seconde oscille entre l'universel et le particulier dans son analyse psychologique de l'expérience de Morris. On s'intéressera par ailleurs à la question du genre littéraire : Morris n'était pas coutumier de la forme journal, et on démontrera qu'il y voit une forme d'expression plus libre que dans les genres épistolaire et poétique. La catégorisation générique des textes de Lavinia Greenlaw pose également question, puisque l'ouvrage est publié comme un essai mais s'apparente souvent davantage à de la poésie en vers libres. Enfin, on s'efforcera d'esquisser une distinction entre littérature de voyage et littérature de vacances.

Mots-clés : littérature de vacances, littérature de voyage, entre-deux, genre littéraire.

Introduction

In contemporary collective imaginations, the idea of "holidays" is intricately linked to that of "*going* on holiday". In that sense, holidays are better ontologically defined by the American use of "vacation": to be on holiday is to temporarily vacate one's usual place – be it at work, at home, or in one's social circle. French philosopher André Comte-Sponville ponders on that point in his *Dictionnaire philosophique*:

> *Vacance(s)* [i.e. vacancy / vacation]
> In the singular: void, absence, idleness… Daily life must be really hard, or pointless, for the same word – in the plural and contrary to its original void – to suggest the fullness of a life, for once, more or less intense and joyful…What a shame that one must go to that effect! […]
> Alienation is the state of they whose life lies elsewhere – who must leave in order to come home.[1] (2001: 1033, translation mine)

The burden of his daily life is certainly one of the main reasons that led William Morris to leave his family and his newly rented home in Kelmscott during the summer vacations of 1871. As Fiona MacCarthy writes, "Morris's marriage was in disarray. The wife he had married

1. Original text : "*Au singulier : vide, absence, oisiveté… Il faut que la vie quotidienne soit bien dure, ou bien vaine, pour que le même terme, au pluriel et à l'envers de son vide initial, en vienne à suggérer le plein d'une vie, pour une fois, à peu près intense et joyeuse… Et bien triste qu'il faille pour cela partir.* […] *Est aliéné celui dont la vie est ailleurs – celui qui doit partir pour rentrer chez soi.* […]" My thanks to Timothy A. Heron for his help translating the last sentence.

13 years before, the dark, statuesque Jane Burden […] had virtually left him for his friend and brother artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti" (2010). Rather than facing the situation head-on, the poet and designer fled to Iceland, leaving from 6th July to 7th September, the better to come home. He kept a journal of his trip, which has prompted the (quite rare) critics who have taken an interest in it to declare that "[t]o this day, nobody writing in English has better captured the astonishing chill beauty of Iceland" (J. Morris, 1969: xx). However, what makes this text unique is not its masterful descriptions of the Icelandic landscapes, but the honesty[2] and precision with which he records his emotions and impressions every step of the way. It is that specific quality which allows Lavinia Greenlaw to write of the journal as "the document of a journey that becomes a description of all journeys" (Greenlaw, 2011: xxiii), in which she identifies what she calls "questions of travel", a phrase borrowed from Elizabeth Bishop.

One hundred and forty years after Morris went to Iceland, Greenlaw undertook what we could call a literary journey by exploring and commenting on the Victorian writer's text instead of writing down her own impressions of Iceland. The result is a surprising volume, entitled *Questions of Travel: William Morris in Iceland*, which features abundant fragments from the first of the *Icelandic Journals*[3] on its odd pages, faced with Greenlaw's corresponding glosses on its even ones. In her "Note on the text", she explains the process that led to this configuration:

> As I read each passage, a phrase stood out around which a question of travel seemed to formulate itself. I have extracted these, breaking Morris into the relevant sections, and have tried to give that question some room. I am not attempting to answer them more than Morris has. My intention is to direct the reader towards what Morris didn't know he was writing about. (xxiii)

Accordingly, each of her texts bears a short extract of Morris's prose as its title, presenting it as the starting point of her own reflections.

Given Morris's escapist drive to take this trip, and the relative shortness of the journey,[4] I propose to consider both the journal and its commentary as illustrations of holiday poetics. As a matter of fact and based on the definition given above, I identify *in-betweenness* – the fact of being torn between two places, two modes of existence (the ordinary and the

2. The journal was destined to Georgiana Burne-Jones's eyes only, and Morris refused that it be published before his death (MacCarthy, 1995: 310; 2010).
3. William Morris went back to Iceland in 1873, but the journal documenting this second trip is much shorter and was not included in Greenlaw's work.
4. May Morris, in her introduction to her father's text, remarks that "[a] seasoned traveller would have smiled at the adventure of six days in a small steamer and six weeks' riding among friendly people" (W. Morris, 1911a: xv).

extra-ordinary), fullness and void – as the central seme of the concept of holidays when considered from a philosophical point of view. My point will be to show that in-betweenness is precisely at the heart of both texts: in how they deal with the question of home, homesickness and the unfamiliar; in the way they alternate between the sublime and the comedic, between the universal and the particular in their relation of the holiday experience; and finally in how the writing itself escapes the usual constraints of poetry or essayistic prose.

'Neither staying nor gone' (G 180): the holidaymaker lost in time and place

Going on holiday is experiencing a form of exile, albeit voluntary and temporary. This sense of displacement, of being out of place, is omnipresent in Morris's journal, and Greenlaw regularly brings it to the foreground, making it one of the central themes of the shared volume.

From tourist to skjald: making oneself at home

According to Zoë Kinsley, it is 19th-century travel writing which originated the distinction between travellers and tourists. As she remarks, "while the term 'traveller' offers a positive and independent model of selfhood, 'tourists are never ourselves, always other people' (Thubron, 2012: 58)" (Kinsley, 2015: 237). This is very true of how Morris seeks to perceive himself and construct his image. At the beginning of the journey, the poet and his party spend a day in Edinburgh on their way to Iceland, and he is haunted by the thought that he is nothing more than a tourist, a mere "sightseer" there: "[Faulkner] and I afterwards drove about a bit in an open chaise thing with the uncomfortable feeling that one doesn't know where to tell the driver to drive to, and that he and everybody are pointing the finger of scorn at us for being strangers and sightseers" (M 7[5]), he writes. Greenlaw, on the opposite page, gives a voice to the "finger of scorn":

> – *Strangers and sightseers*[6]
>
> You are out of your life, with time on your hands and no purpose.
>
> You do not belong here and it is not where you are going.

5. All quotations for which the author and date are unspecified are taken from Greenlaw, 2011. When not made explicit, "G" indicates that the quoted text is by Greenlaw, "M" that it is by Morris.
6. The phrases from Morris which Greenlaw uses as titles for her texts will be given in italics (they appear in red in the original text).

> You know there is a life going on here and that you will not enter into it.
> […]
> You know that they know you do not belong.
> […]You get a haircut and look even stranger. (6)

Even though Greenlaw seems to be merely paraphrasing and addressing Morris, the anaphora in "you" conveys a sense of his radical strangeness in that place, while the haircut – she suggests – makes him a stranger to himself. Once in Iceland, Morris continues to fight this representation of himself, hence his reluctance to camp at Geysir where everything seems to cry "You are not the first visitor and you are one of many" (G 80). When faced with the syllogistic argument that "'You must [camp there] […]. All Englishmen do'", he replies: "'Blast all Englishmen!' […] in the Icelandic tongue'" (83), thus doubly reasserting his distinction through his choice of words and language. He had come to Iceland after translating some of the sagas and learning Icelandic with his friend Eiríkr Magnússon, who was also part of the expedition; he therefore had a claim to being recognised for his genuine interest in his place of holiday – as he was, for he reports one of his hosts saying to Magnússon: "'The *skjald* is not quite used to riding then'" (67). The comment contains in a nutshell the essence of William Morris's situation in Iceland: both belonging to the place – he is called *skjald*, meaning "poet" in Icelandic[7] – and foreign to it, someone who doesn't ride in a place where horses are at the heart of everyday life.

Because he is in a place which is both known and unknown to him, he works along the pages of the journal to *domesticate the unfamiliar*. This dialectic between what is familiar and what isn't is brought forward early in the text, when Morris's boat goes through the Faroe Islands and he is moved "to see all the familiar flowers growing in a place so different from anything one had ever imagined" (M 19). Past the first shock of the encounter with otherness, as any holidaymaker, he strives to reconstruct a sense of home away from home. In spite of his first distaste for the popularity of the place, he and his companions camp at Geysir for a few days (waiting for a member of the party to join them), which allows him to write enthusiastically: "I was quite pleased with the homelike look of the camp when I came back to it after a walk and found everything in apple-pie order" (M 91). The choice of the phrase "apple-pie order", evoking a quintessentially British reality, seems a stretch to describe a rustic camp in the Icelandic wilderness, but it brings this very rusticity into the sphere

7. Actually, it is probably a faulty transcription of the old Icelandic *skáld* (*skjald* being its modern Danish equivalent), but I chose to retain Morris's spelling, like other commentators. James Morris explains the word as meaning "travelling poet" (1969, xviii), but dictionaries give no hint of itinerancy being attached to the conception of the word (Cleasby: 1957, 541). MacCarthy mentions that "an Icelandic newspaper had welcomed Morris as the English Skald" (1995, 298).

of what Morris considers familiar. In her gloss of the passage, Greenlaw reflects on the little things that participate in the "homelike feeling":

> If the party separates, everyone is out of place.
> And then everything is back in place: your pony, your friend, the fire, the moon, good spirits, the excursion.
> You make clothe pegs, play whist and boil your lamb in a geysir. You are in place. (90)

The epiphora in "out of place" and "in place" points to the fragility of such a state, while the two enumerations bring to light how menial are the details on which our sense of belonging can rely, suggesting that clothe pegs and a good pony can affect our perception of the moon running its due course. Imposing familiar images onto strange realities is again resorted to in a more striking manner further on the way. Before reaching Ingjaldshóll on the 14th of August, the travellers go through a sandy strip of land of the most surprising nature: "ugh! the smallest grain of these sands was as big as the bowl of a wine glass and the biggest was a huge boulder as big as a fourpost bed: as big as an armchair was a favourite size", Morris writes (135). Greenlaw – picking on the phrase "the lack of all things was plenteous" slightly above – constructs the comparisons as the unconscious expression of a lack of comfort, contrasting the images chosen by Morris with the description of the empty shelves in the nearest store:

> You cannot have
> Candles
> Gloves
> Knives (for I had lost three)
> Let alone
> Wine glasses
> Armchairs
> Four-poster beds (132)

However, we could also consider that, instead of insisting on the absence of the said items of domestic comfort (on their *vacation* so to speak), these images domesticate the alien landscape by bringing them closer to Morris's conception of home.

The trick seems to be working, as the end of the journal indicates a reversal of what the travelling poet used to hold familiar and unfamiliar. On the 26th of August, when they meet other Englishmen, he cannot help but remark "the parson looked a queer phenomenon out there" (173). The reversal appears as complete when he arrives in Edinburgh and, having to buy his ticket to London, he finds himself at a loss: "I stood before

the ticket door quite bewildered, and not knowing what to ask for. Lord, how strange it seemed at first!" (191). This remark, which mirrors that made on his first being in Edinburgh about not knowing where to ask to be driven, shows that the *skjald* has now become more accustomed to riding than to taking a train. It only confirms his impression on getting back to Reykjavík, where they have to settle their affairs before embarking for England – a day that he describes as "a day of nothings, inexpressibly dull after our old life" (181). Greenlaw points out the significance of the final phrase, unfolding it as follows: "The journey is already the old life" (180). The use of "already" draws attention to the fact that "the old life", the one that had become familiar, is already over, thus bringing to the fore the essentially temporary dimension of every holiday.

Writing in a void: a journal of absence

The thought of home is everywhere to be found in the pages of the journal, yet "home" there is as much a temporal as a spatial concept, being synonymous with the time of Morris's return. Dreams of home are recurrent throughout his absence, but he only details one,[8] on the 16th of August:

> I dreamed very distinctly this morning that I had come home again, and that Webb was asking me what sort of climate we had in Iceland; I cried out 'atrocious!' and waking therewith heard the rain pattering on the tent […]. Waking again later on and hearing the talk of Eyvindr with some of the countryfolk, I lay for some time puzzled to think where I was, and with an unhappy feeling of being a long way from where I wanted to be, and there and then began an access of homesickness for me. (137-139)

This passage is very telling of the fact that, like Comte-Sponville's alienated holidaymaker, Morris has to go to the end of his absence before he can hope to come home appeased and fulfilled – even in his dreams. Iceland is a necessary detour to Kelmscott. Greenlaw picks up on this dynamic in several places, first remarking "A dream of home helps you on rather than pulls you back" (104), but then insinuating that he might be afraid to go home when, on the 24th of August, they decide to delay the next step of the journey:

8. At least in Greenlaw's selection from the *Icelandic Journals*.

> Is talk of home a way to get yourself to go on?
> Or what slows you down?
> Going on will from now on be going back.
> You don't want to go back? (G 160)

Here, she seems to play the role of Morris's psychologist, asking the thorny questions in between silences (materialised by the blanks on the page) left for him to think. Of course, we can never know the Victorian writer's answers to these questions, but this ambivalence towards home is a feeling with which any holidaymaker can identify.

Writing seems to be Morris's best cure for homesickness – "the rest or something made me homesick again, and I turned over scraps of verse that came to nothing", he writes (149). If poetry is of no avail, and letters are reduced to the bare minimum by the absence of post along the way, the journal itself becomes his best link with those he left behind. Indeed, Morris's writing is caught in a sort of temporal paradox: it is at once retrospective, since each entry is necessarily written *after* the events it relates, and anticipative, for it is destined to those waiting for him at home. He is troubled by the sheer incommunicability of experience to the absent, for which the journal is only a meagre consolation: "I have often noticed in one's expeditions how hard it is to explain to one's friends afterwards why such and such a day was particularly delightful, or give them any impression of one's pleasure, and such a trouble besets me now about the past day" (19). The journal acts as a time capsule in which he keeps the remains of what he has lived to then share them with his loved ones. In that sense, it also assists him in the deliberate construction of memory. Greenlaw underlines how he selects which details to remember: "You know what will strengthen into memory: an eagle, a mountain, a ship" (118). It is noteworthy that she, in turn, operates her own selection within his text and thus informs the reader's memory of the book.

Morris's careful attention to remembrance is also explained by his awareness of living a unique and fleeting experience. The fragility of this time away from home is conveyed through such statements as "we are nearer to it than we have been yet or shall be again" (M 77), in which "yet" and "again" bear all the weight of unchangeable past and future. This sense of writing in a void, on an offbeat, ultimately matches his impression of existing in a place where time seems to have run differently than in England, a place where "it looked as if you might live a hundred years before you ever see ship sailing into the bay there; as if the old life of the Saga time had gone, and the modern life had never reached the place" (M 21). Greenlaw, both in her introduction and in her glosses, pays particular attention to Morris's relation to maps. Quoting one of his unpublished lectures, she wonders: "Why did William Morris want to go to the corner of

the map?" (vii); later, she proposes a more metaphorical definition of the object:

> As a place becomes somewhere you are starting to remember, it empties out and becomes more absolute.
> It becomes the map. (118)

The journal indeed maps out the experience of the holidaymaker: it becomes an abstract materialisation of the land of absence – a "Map of Vacation" in the same way as there is a "Carte de Tendre" – on which Greenlaw's texts point out the main landmarks.

Holiday writing: the sublime, the real, the imaginary, the unconscious

Half the pleasure of going on holiday is the telling of one's adventures – big and small, wonderful, and humorous – when one comes back. The tale of holidays could be an (informal) genre in itself, and its main particularity would probably lie in this very tension between the extraordinary and the prosaic, aimed at prompting envy, laughter and empathy in turn. This fragile equilibrium is seminal to Morris's writing in the journal and greatly contributes to its enjoyment by the reader.

"It looked really like an adventure" (M 63): encountering the sublime

The key word of Morris's experience of his holiday in Iceland is probably "adventure": "I felt happy and adventurous, as if all kinds of things were going to happen, and very glad to be going", he writes as they set off from Reykjavík (13). The word combines the ideas of novelty, excitement, and of risk and danger. To Morris, "physically ill-designed for the environment, and temperamentally, one feels, born to stay at home" (J. Morris, 1969: xvi), the journey certainly encompasses all that.[9] His tale is accordingly informed by his sense of living something extraordinary, and even slightly heroic. It is nowhere more apparent than in his relation of their going through the pass of Búlandshöfdi on the 14th of August.

9. It is noteworthy that, apart from the forewords and introductions to the various editions of the work, one of the most substantial pieces of criticism on the *Icelandic Journals* is to be found in Marjorie Burns's *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth*. As a matter of fact, she devotes a chapter to the influence of the journals over *The Hobbit*, noting how "certain of Bilbo's adventures not only come remarkably close to experiences Morris described during his first Icelandic visit but Bilbo himself, in a number of ways, closely resembles the *Journal* persona that Morris chose to assume" (2008: 75). It is an unexpected origin for one of the most popular epics of modern days.

What makes it "really like an adventure" (M 63) is first that its dangers are anticipated. On the 11th of August, a few days before reaching the pass, Morris writes:

> I must now tell to my shame, how I have had the pass of Búlandshöfdi on my mind for some days and how last night I questioned Thorlacius upon it and his description of it didn't comfort me. 'Tis a narrow road along the face of a steep slip above the sea two days' journey ahead now […]. (123)

By voicing his own apprehensions, Morris builds the reader's expectations, while the sense of the danger ahead is heightened by the choice of the adjectives. The near paronomasia in "narrow road" and "steep slip" phonetically reinforces the abruptness conveyed by the words. When he and his companions finally come into view of the dreaded place, the suspense is conveyed by a sudden switch to the present in the narration:

> Our path holds ever nearer to the edge of the sea-cliffs, and the other cliffs draw ever closer in on us till at last we are at the end of the soft green slope, and there is nothing for our road but to pass over a rugged, steep mass of broken cliff that goes down sharp to the sheer rocks above the sea; this is Búlandshöfdi, a headland that is thrust out by the tumbling mountains that fill all the inside of the peninsula; the steep slopes of this slip are all in grooves, as it were, in and out of which the path must wind, and above them rises a steep crest of this shape so common in Icelandic hills. (127)

The passage constitutes a real hypotyposis, as the landscape seems to become animated under our eyes. The comparative forms ("ever nearer", "ever closer") as well as the verbs of action used in the description of the relief ("thrust out", "tumbling", "rises") create an impression of dynamism, while the sentence itself inflates to the size of a rhetorical period which climaxes in the sententious "this is Búlandshöfdi". The adjectives and verbs chosen convey a general sense of violence, painting a very ominous picture of the way they must take.

In reality, the feeling of adventure that suffuses Morris's experience in Iceland is mainly due to the nature of the landscape in which he travels rather than to any actual danger. His situation then perfectly matches those conducive to the sublime as famously defined by Edmund Burke in 1759:

> The passions which belong to self-preservation, turn on pain and danger; they are simply painful when their causes immediately affect us; they are delightful when we have an idea of pain and danger,

> without being actually in such circumstances […]. Whatever excites this delight, I call *sublime*. (Burke, 1998: 47)

The Icelandic scenery seems indeed prone to inspire such ambivalent feelings, as exemplified by Morris's reaction to the view in Thórsmörk[10] on the 22nd of July:

> [...] I could see [the mountain's] whole dismal length now, crowned with overhanging glaciers from which the water dripped in numberless falls that seemed to go nowhere […] and the furious brimstone-laden Markarfljót […] lay between us and anything like smoothness: surely it was what I 'came out to see', yet for the moment I felt cowed, and as if I should never get back again: yet with that came a feeling of exaltation too, and I seemed to understand how people under all disadvantages should find their imagination kindle amid such scenes. (59-61)

This short description in itself contains several of the elements that Burke associates with the sublime: the "dismal length" of the mountain and "numberless falls" participate in the idea of infinity (Burke: 1998, 67-68), while the characterisation of the river (the Markarfljót) as "furious" presents it as powerful (59-65). Accordingly, Morris comments on the mixture of pain and pleasure, of anguish and exaltation that this view provokes in him.

This attention to the sublime is sometimes heightened by Greenlaw. During the crossing from Edinburgh to Reykjavík, Morris gives an impressive description of the ship caught between huge waves,[11] before deflecting it with the somewhat self-conscious conclusion: "it was all very exciting and strange to a cockney like me, and I really enjoyed it in spite of my sickness" (17-19). On the opposite page, Greenlaw's text bears no mark of such restrictions but on the contrary emphasises the sublime elements of the scene:

> The loss of ground beneath your feet. No landmarks or horizon.
> Sick and frightened but overtaken by wonder. This is not curiosity but a condition in which you do not know and forget yourself. (G 16)

Decided to "direct the reader towards what Morris didn't know he was writing about" (xxiii), she brings to the foreground the experience of infinity entailed by the act of sailing. The power of the sea becomes a

10. "Thorsmark" in the *Journals* (W. Morris: 1969, 53-55).
11. "There seemed to be a great glittering green and white wall on either side of us, and the ship staggering down the trough between them; […] then I went to the little platform astern and lay about there watching the waves coming up as if they were going to swallow us bodily and disappearing so easily under her […]" (M 17).

mirror for the strength of "wonder" as an emotion, while its depth points to that of the psyche.

(Heroi)comedy and pragmatism

Though Morris appears to romanticise his holidays by calling them an "adventure", this construction also allows for a lot of self-mockery on his part, much of the adventure being told in the heroicomical mode. This places the *Journals* in a phase of transition between Romantic and 20th-century travel writing aesthetics: while emphasis on the sublime was a prominent feature of 18th-century and much of 19th-century travel literature, it tends to fade away towards the end of the Victorian era to give way in the early 20th century to the figure of the "comic, self-deprecating, anti-heroic traveller" (Ouditt, 2019)[12]. Morris, without completely renouncing the sublime, seems to anticipate that second trend. This ambivalence is nowhere more apparent than in the way he justifies his reluctance to camp at Geysir:

> […] and – I must say it – the place seemed all too near to that possible column of scalding water I had heard so much of: understand I was quite ready to break my neck in my quality of pilgrim to the holy places of Iceland: to be drowned in Markarfljót, or squelched in climbing up Drangey seemed to come quite in the day's work; but to wake up boiled while one is acting the part of accomplice to Mangnall's Questions[13] was too disgusting. (81)

The comedy springs from the contrast between Morris's fantasies of dying a hero's death in the terrible Icelandic landscape and the ridicule of the danger that appears to threaten him in actuality – a ridicule which is heightened by the fact that the danger in questions seems to be mainly a figment of his faint-hearted imagination.

Here as elsewhere, he paints himself as an anti-hero, whose main traits are cowardice and indolence,[14] forgetfulness (he keeps losing things) and a hearty attention to meals. He is the party's cook, and so records "every significant meal along with every significant mountain", as pinpointed by Greenlaw in her introduction (xiii) – but the former tends to

12. It should be mentioned, however, that the example provided by Sharon Ouditt seems to be a depreciation the landscape rather than of the person of the traveller, something which is not to be found in Morris's account of his journey.
13. A famous 19th-century textbook.
14. At one point, he laments his "*lâchesse*" (103), a Middle French word for "indolence" which is etymologically connected to later French *lâcheté* or cowardice. The use of the word is interesting in that, being Middle French, it evokes a medieval setting reminiscent of chivalric romances while deflecting by its meaning the construction of Morris as a heroic figure.

draw him away from the latter, as evidenced by the entry of the 18th of August:

> I confess I was a coward enough to feel dashed by this, and as if I should never get away home again: please to allow something to a woeful grey day and this terrible though beautiful valley. However whatever forebodings and sentimental desires I may have, I have to indulge them over the kitchen fire and under its shiny black rafters, for the others are hungry, and Evan's ptarmigan are waiting a stroke of my art. (145)

Once again, he is brought back from the imagination of his tragic fate by very pragmatic, down-to-earth concerns. The rupture between the two facets of his character and experience are the source of irresistible amusement. In her biography of Morris, MacCarthy remarks "It is curious how often Morris thinks of himself in terms of a Burne-Jones cartoon" (1995: 293), but it can probably be explained by the fact that the journal was destined to Georgiana, his friend's wife, and self-mockery is always an efficient way of creating a sense of connection, empathy and belonging. By mocking himself, he recreates the familiar circle of intimacy[15] – and eventually draws the reader within it. Indeed, it implies distancing himself from himself, thus looking at his situation from the same standpoint as his reader. While he is aware that the humour of some of his anecdotes might not resist the telling – "it doesn't sound very funny to tell of but amused us very much at the time to the extent of setting us into inextinguishable laughter" (99), he writes about one of the boxes containing their belongings flying open on the back of a galloping horse – self-mockery allows him to commune with the reader in laughing at himself from a distance.

Humour is almost entirely absent from Greenlaw's comments, with one notable exception. When Morris and his companions go back on board the *Diana* on the 1st of September, they meet "a friend of Evans, who after having been three weeks in coming here from Glasgow and walking about Reykjavík in the wet for an hour or two yesterday afternoon, is going back this morning with us to England" (185). This is echoed by Greenlaw as follows: "The failed traveller: turning back already. // Or perhaps all he needed to do was deliver a letter" (184). This reads as a witticism destined to the discerning reader, hinting at Morris's remark that the boat stopped to deliver "*one* letter" (185, Morris's emphasis). It works as some sort of a private joke bringing Greenlaw, Morris and the reader together in a circle of connivance. Because it comes towards the end of the volume, it confirms the feeling of familiarity – with both authors, Iceland and the

15. Although MacCarthy shows how the constant teasing – especially on Dante Gabriel Rossetti's part – was sometimes akin to bullying, something in which Georgiana Burne-Jones would have no part (1995).

text – experienced by the reader. Yet, even though she does not generally use it as a comedic tool, Greenlaw does share Morris's attention to prosaic details, and to objects in particular: "blankets and water bottles" (2), "hats and ponies" (24), "locks" and "taps" (32), "slippers and a pannikin" (44), "socks", "guns" and "nets" (106), "boxes" (120) all participate in anchoring her condensation of Morris's holiday experience in a sensible reality. Objects vie with feelings in the construction of holiday memories, as suggested by one of her glosses in which "The group // The laughter // The frying pan" (140) are equated by the layout, with the last item being given more lasting significance by its being placed in ultimate position. Thus, both layers of the text mix observations of the aesthetic sublime and the prosaically material.

Inside the holidaymaker's psyche: the imaginary, the real and the unconscious

> […] every now and then, we would pass little valleys leading down to [the sea] that had a most wonderfully poetical character about them; not a bit like one's idea of Scotland, but rather like one's imagination of what the background to the border's ballads ought to be: to compensate, the weather was exceedingly like my idea of Scotland, a cold grey half-mist half cloud hanging over the earth. (M 5)

Imagination is the yardstick for every one of Morris's experiences in Iceland. It is the degree to which each landscape or happening matches his anticipation of it that determines whether it will be depicted in the epic or the comic mode. After the pass of Búlandshöfdi, another high point of the journey is Thingvellir, "the heart of Iceland" (M 163) and the place of the first democratic parliament (MacCarthy: 1995, 306). It is a place for which the English poet had great expectations, but most of his pleasure in seeing it comes from the confirmation of his insight: "Once again, that thin thread of insight and imagination, which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it comes, did not fail me at the first sight of the greatest marvel and most storied place of Iceland" (167), he writes to conclude his first description of the site. Greenlaw's gloss details how sight and imagination intermingle in this instance:

> – *The reality of the sight*
> For once, you are heading towards things whose shapes you know.
> […]
> You also see what you know is there.
> […]

> That thin thread of insight and imagination. Not just seen in the mind but seen into. (164)

Imagination acts as a conscious remodelling of vision which increases the aesthetic pleasure of the sight by giving it a comfortingly familiar aspect.

However, Greenlaw is interested in more than what Morris consciously expresses of the workings of his psyche. Her aim is to unveil what the stories he tells reveal about his unconscious. For example, when the Victorian writer relates that he has undergone "a series of losses" (45) – losing first the strap holding his pannikin to his saddle, then the pannikin itself – Greenlaw comments: "You let go. // Discarding" (44), thus turning the losses into Freudian slips.[16] She actually uses the vocabulary of psychoanalysis, as when she discusses Morris's writing of first seeing Iceland: "The unanchored self is conscious of the hinge of simile: a distant connection, *as if*" (22, Greenlaw's emphasis). This psychoanalytical take on the journal allows her to identify universal psychological mechanisms under Morris's particular anecdotes. Indeed, her commentary gives a strikingly undetermined vision of the poet's experience:

> – *First sight*
> Somewhere constructing itself for you.
> Your idea of a place is built and half ruined as you enter it.
> The eye adjusting, filling form with colour.
> The moving picture of travel.
> The unanchored self is conscious of the hinge of simile: a distant connection, as if. (22)

The text starts with the undefined "Somewhere", but the idea of a specific context is sustained by the address to "you". However, the personal pronoun, as well as conjugated verbs, gradually disappear to be replaced by impersonal noun groups (the eye, the self) and the abstract present of -ing forms. The result is that, in this essentialised form, Morris's experience can match any traveller's. The address to "you", which is to be found in all of Greenlaw's glosses, is in itself ambiguous. It can be construed either as meaning Morris – Greenlaw's second-person pronoun being a direct answer to the Victorian poet's I in a dialogue across centuries – or as a general address, you being taken as a "non-referential you" which is "used to talk about people in general" (Stirling and Huddleston, 2002: 1467-68). What is certain is her will to translate Morris's particular adventures into something with which anyone can identify. This process can be seen at work from the very first of her glosses: "You make rapid new attachments:

16. This passage probably also attracted Greenlaw because it brought to her mind Elizabeth Bishop's "art of losing" presented in her famous "One Art" poem (Bishop, 1991: 178).

to each other, to blankets and water bottles, to whatever is going with you" (2). The blankets are a direct reference to Morris's entry on the opposite page, but the water bottles seem to come from her own experience – they are not mentioned in the journal and the term better applies to a modern reality than to a Victorian one – while "whatever is going with you" opens the door to the reader's own appropriation of the matter. This book about a poet's holidays thus becomes an essay on the psychology of all holidays.

A writer's holiday: language on vacation

Both the *Icelandic Journals* and *Questions of Travel* are exceptions in the works of their respective writers. Morris and Greenlaw have both written various kinds of texts: Morris had mainly published poetry at the time of his journey to Iceland, but he then went on to write essays and novels, among which the dystopian *News from Nowhere* (1890); as for Greenlaw, she has written poetry, novels and two collections of autobiographical essays, *The Importance of Music to Girls* (2007) and *Some Answers Without Questions* (2021), but *Questions of Travel* stands apart in her literary production, as underlined by the fact that it is the only one of her books to be published by Notting Hill Editions (which specialises in non-fiction) instead of Faber & Faber. The journal and its commentaries thus constitute spaces of freedom for their writers, away from the constraints of their usual modes of writing.

"The best prose Morris ever wrote" (MacCarthy: 1995, 281)

In her introduction, Greenlaw notes that "Morris's writing here is unlike anything else he produced" (xi). An effective way of putting this assertion to the test is to compare an extract from the journal to its equivalent in verse and in Morris's correspondence. The first sight of Iceland constitutes an interesting case study. To Janey, his wife, he writes in a letter of the 16th of July:

> […] on Thursday morning about three Magnússon called me up to see Iceland. I think I told you we were to go to Berufirth in the east first of all; and we were just at the entrance to it now; it is no use trying to describe it, but it was quite up to my utmost expectations as to strangeness: it is just like nothing else in the world; it was a wild morning too, very black out to sea, and very bright sun under a sort of black canopy over Iceland. (W. Morris, 1911a: xvii)

Here, he forsakes any attempt at description and only gives a very brief account of how the sight affected him. That the impression was strong, though, is demonstrated by the fact that he devoted a whole poem to it, entitled "Iceland First Seen", published in the collection *Poems on the Way* (1891). This long poem, made of six seven-line stanzas, consists mostly in an address to Iceland with references to Icelandic mythology. The first stanza, however, attempts the description from which Morris refrained in his letter:

> Lo from our loitering ship a new land at last to be seen;
> Toothed rocks down the side of the firth on the east guard a weary wide lea,
> And black slope the hillsides above, striped adown with their desolate green:
> And a peak rises up on the west from the meeting of cloud and of sea,
> Foursquare from base unto point like the building of Gods that have been,
> The last of that waste of the mountains all cloud-wreathed and snow-flecked and grey,
> And bright with the dawn that began just now at the ending of day.
> (W. Morris, 1911b: 125)

Most of the elements he mentions, and the images he uses (the pyramid, the wreath of clouds) can be traced back to the journal's entry for the 13th of July:

> So I have seen Iceland at last…[17] It was about three a.m. when I went up on deck for that great excitement, the first sight of new land. The morning was grey still, and cloudy out to sea, but though the sun had not yet shone over the mountains on the east into the firth at whose mouth we were, yet patches of it lay upon the peaks south-west of where we were […] and beyond that we saw the mainland, a terrible shore indeed: a great mass of dark grey mountains worked into pyramids and shelves, looking as if they had been built and half-ruined; they were striped with snow high up, and wreaths of cloud dragged across them here and there, and above them were two peaks and a jagged ridge of pure white snow… (23)

Comparing both texts fully demonstrates the validity of Greenlaw's observation that "[u]nlike Morris's poetry, the journal is not constrained by an idea of style" (xiv). His language avoids the circumvolutions that complicate his verse – a pyramidal form is called a pyramid, and not likened to "the buildings of the Gods that have been" – and gains fluidity

17. The ellipses indicate Greenlaw's cuts.

from this increased simplicity. Delivered from the constraint of the versified line, his sentence freely expands to gigantic dimensions, while double punctuation marks offer breathing spaces.

The freedom from the codes of poetry and the pressure of publication[18] also enables Morris to mix different styles of writing: he sometimes uses orality markers such as "I can tell you" or "as I live by bread" (95) and at other times poetically personifies the moon: "Then the moon rose big and red, the second time we had seen him so in Iceland […]: he scarcely cast a shadow yet though the nights were got much darker" (93). One same page can combine unpolished syntax and alliterative prose, as in the first entry of the journal:

> […] we droned away as usual in such cases, though I for my part was too excited to sleep, though we made ourselves comfortable with two of the huge blankets that were to be our bedding in camp.
> Day dawned, dull and undramatic as we left York, over the dullest country in England, striking neither for build of earth, nor for beauty of detail… (5)

The first sentence, with its repetition of "though" seems to have been written without a second thought, whereas the second one is chiselled by a strong alliteration in [d] – plays on sounds being indeed ubiquitous throughout the text. Hence Morris's writing itself appears to be on holidays, in an undefined space between the poetic and the epistolary genres where it can spread to its fullest.

"A longish essay about questions of travel"? (MacCarthy, 2010)

To my knowledge, Greenlaw hasn't made public the date of her own journey to Iceland, but one can infer it happened around the middle of the 2000s, based on the online publication of a poem entitled "A Broader Question" on the 31st of December 2008. Surprisingly, whereas poems about her trip to the Arctic Circle in Finland and Norway figure prominently in her 2003 collection *Minsk*, "A Broader Question" does not appear in her next collection, *The Casual Perfect*, published in 2011. It might be that by the time she organised the collection, the poem seemed to her only an imperfect expression of what she had felt in Iceland. It is however interesting to observe that her first production on the subject is

18. He insisted that the text should not be published in his lifetime (MacCarthy, 1995:310), but in her "Note on the Text", Greenlaw reminds us that he still revised his notes to make his fair copy for Georgiana Burne-Jones, "add[ing] introspection, cut[ting] gossip […] and eas[ing] up on the practical detail" (xxv).

already a composite, hybrid, undefined piece of writing. The poem is made of two stanzas: the first one comprises an extract from Louis MacNeice's "Eclogue from Iceland" (lines 73 to 78) from his and W. H. Auden's *Letters from Iceland* (1937), followed by a few lines of commentary; the second starts with biographical details about Morris,[19] segues into the main part of "Iceland First Seen"'s second stanza – duly referenced in the text, like the "Eclogue" – and concludes with "As the lights go out, perhaps we will see further into the dark" (Greenlaw, 2008). Hence her poem consists mostly in extracts from other poems to describe the views of Iceland – seemingly confirming James Morris's assertion that "the astonishing chill beauty of Iceland […] is in a way more a literary than a living beauty" (1969: xx) – interspersed with prose commentaries on her part. Her own words focus more on the inner experience than on exterior landmarks: "I heard no harmoniums, ate no pancakes and wore no beret, but the landscape and twenty-hour nights disarranged my vision and so my economy" (Greenlaw, 2008), she answers MacNeice. Already, her text is organised around the idea of the journey as a transformative experience, one that raises "broad questions". Although it is evident from the subsequent publication of *Questions of Travel* that she felt she needed more space than that of a single poem to explore these questions, that first attempt reveals two issues which are fundamental in the longer volume: that of the nature of the relation between her words and Morris's text; that of the definition of her writing in terms of genre.[20] In reality, both considerations are closely intertwined.

In her 2010 article, Fiona MacCarthy, with whom the female poet collaborated, declared that Greenlaw was working on "'a longish essay about questions of travel'". To anyone who has had the opportunity to open the book, the phrase is surprising: Greenlaw's text does *not* look like "a longish essay". On the page, her commentaries are strikingly short and fragmentary, and the layout makes them visually more akin to free verse than to essayistic prose. This doesn't apply to all of them, however. The first text in the volume is probably the longest, and its central paragraph is characterised by hypotaxis:

> As anticipation of the journey gives way to its actual start, you become fidgety. There is growing tension between the part of you that wants to be off, moving and gone, and the part that wants to stay at home, even in bed. You conjure the sudden event that would force

19. "William Morris made two crotchety, determined journeys around the country in the 1870s, which he documented in his remarkable Icelandic Journals. His biographer Fiona MacCarthy describes how he 'returned to England with an altered sense of scale'" (Greenlaw, 2008).
20. The reference to *Letters from Iceland* is a meaningful one in that respect, the book consisting in a combinatin of prose and poetry of various sorts and written, according to Auden in his 1965 "Foreword", "in a 'holiday' spirit" (Auden, MacNeice, 1985, 10).

> you to cancel – illness, accident, death – even as you fret about the taxi being late, the train delayed, that the boat will sail without you. (2)

This extract really works as a gloss, in as much as it paraphrases Morris's discourse while explaining and expanding it to evoke a more generic or contemporary situation. Such a piece of psychological analysis, developed over several long sentences, could indeed be termed essayistic. This is nonetheless not the model on which most of her texts in the volume are built. At the other end of the spectrum, the passage entitled "Poor spirits" (68) looks unmistakably like a poem with its four stanzas of two or three lines. Besides the "title" of each comment – the phrase she has decided to "extract" from Morris's prose to make it a "a question of travel" –, it is noteworthy that Greenlaw includes other quotations from the corresponding page(s) of the journal, which she reworks into her own writing. What is interesting is that there seems to be a correlation between the amount of quoted text she uses and the generic affiliation of her pieces: the less she quotes, the more essayistic the result; the more she appropriates from Morris, the more poetic her writing. In the paragraph from the first gloss cited above, she only borrows a few words ("fidgety", "accident", "at home") which can barely be held quotations. On the contrary, some of her shortest texts appear as poetical recompositions of Morris's words:

> *– The astounding nature of the road*
> When you consider what the road is made out of,
> it becomes impossible.
> The loose, jagged, rent, tumbling impassible.
> You pass.
> The faraway clear. (94)

Apart from "impassible" and "clear", all the adjectives used here come from Morris, where they are spread over a page and a half of description. Having thus extracted and accumulated them is a tribute to Morris's style in the *Journals*, which is characterised by a lavish use of adjectives. "Impassible", that Greenlaw adds to the list, cleverly creates a bridge between its paronomastic double "impossible" and the idea of passing over or across an obstacle. While Morris in the corresponding entry grumbles about the quality of the road and describes the landscape as far as meets the eye, Greenlaw offers a symbolic journey across the impossible in haiku-like form. Morris's words, extracted from their context, gain in weight and meaning by existing in the void of the page rather than lost in the fullness of the text. In that sense, she takes them *on vacation*, displacing them to make them exist differently.

Conclusion

Morris's *Icelandic Journals* and Greenlaw's take on them in *Questions of Travel* help us define a holiday poetics based on in-betweenness and freedom from the codes that rule the major literary genres of poetry and essay. Yet what would distinguish holiday writing from travel writing? Firstly, it should be said that both are intimately connected: holiday writing (at least in the sense in which it has been studied in this article) would constitute a subgenre of travel writing. Indeed, the displacement from home and the consciousness of its brevity that we have deemed characteristic of holiday literature are also central to travel writing, of which Simon Cooke writes that it is "a genre which, almost by definition, documents experience away from the trappings of one's 'normal' life" (2015: 19). I would however argue that neither Morris's journal nor Greenlaw's commentaries fully fit in with travel literature as a whole. It is perhaps obvious of Greenlaw's glosses, but less so when it comes to Morris's text.

As a matter of fact, the choice of the journal as a form is in keeping with the codes of travel writing, in which the epistolary and journal modes have had an enduring success from the late 17th century onward (Kinsley, 2019: 408). The use Morris makes of the form, though, differs from the main trends of the genre, which fall under two categories. Kinsley reminds us that until the end of the 18th century, "[p]lain and direct writing was preferred, and discussion of self was to be avoided wherever possible, in favour of objective delineation" (2019: 415). After what is generally called the "inward turn" of the late 18th century, travel journals on the contrary tend to focus more on introspection, in texts where "the autobiographical experience of the journey itself is inextricable from the view it affords over the life as a whole" (Cooke, 2019: 20). Neither modality seems to apply to the *Icelandic Journals*, for factual objectivity clearly isn't Morris's object, but neither is transformative meditation on life as a whole – which is why Greenlaw had the opportunity to reveal the psychological depth that was hidden in between his lines. Morris uses the journal form to record his impressions of the Icelandic landscape (in the purest travel writing tradition) but also to tell all the minute, insignificant and amusing happenings of his journey. This lightness of tone is precisely what makes his journal a piece of holiday writing rather than travel writing.

As for Greenlaw's interpolations, it would be difficult to call them travel literature, in as much as they give no account of her own journey to Iceland, no information about how she travelled, the experience she had, or the land she crossed. In that respect, her work would indeed more rightly be called an essay: using Morris's particular journey as a starting point, she offers a meditation on what it means to travel. Nevertheless, it *is*

holiday writing not in the sense of writing about a holiday, but of writing itself being *on* holiday. Her writing in *Questions of Travel* shows unusual freedom, ranging from reflection on Morris's prose to paraphrase to mere quotation, from psychological analysis to poetic attention to words and details. It is playful in the way it recomposes text and meaning, sometimes lazy in its commentary. As such, it offers a different take on holiday poetics, defining it not thematically, but metapoetically.

Alix Cazalet-Boudigues passed the agrégation and now works as an ATER at the Université Jean-Moulin Lyon 3, where she is also registered as a doctoral student under the supervision of Prof. Lawrence Gasquet. Her thesis is entitled *Poésie, photographie et réenchantement du monde : mise en regard de pratiques victoriennes et contemporaines en Grande-Bretagne* and her research themes include text-image relations, Victorian and contemporary poetry and aesthetics, as well as the Arthurian legend.

Bibliography

Auden, W. H., Macneice, Louis, *Letters from Iceland* [1937], London, Faber & Faber, 1985.
Bishop, Elizabeth, *Complete Poems*, London, Chatto & Windus, 1991.
Burke, Edmund, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1759, Oxford, New York, Oxford UP, 1998.
Cleasby, Richard, Vigfusson, Gudbrand, Craigie, William A., *An Icelandic-English Dictionary*, London, Oxford, Clarendon, 1957.
Comte-Sponvile, André, *Dictionnaire philosophique*, Paris, PUF, 2001.
Cooke, Simon, "Inner Journeys. Travel Writing as Life Writing", in Carl Thompson (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, London, Routledge, 2015, 15–24.
Kinsley, Zoë, "Travellers and Tourist", in Carl Thompson (ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, London, Routledge, 2015, 237–245.
–––, "Travelogues, Diaries, Letters", in Nandini Das & Tim Youngs (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Travel Writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2019.
Greenlaw, Lavinia, "A Broader Question", Poetry Foundation, 31 December 2008 (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2008/12/a-broader-question).
–––, *Questions of Travel: William Morris is Iceland*, London, Notting Hill, 2011.
Maccarthy, Fiona, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
–––, "William Morris in Iceland", *The Guardian*, 27 March 2010 (https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/mar/27/william-morris-iceland-ian-mcqueen).
Morris, James, "Introduction" of William Morris, *Icelandic Journals*, Fontwell, Centaur, 1969.
Morris, William, *The Collected Works of William Morris. 8, Journals of Travel in Iceland 1871, 1873*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1911a.
–––, *The Collected Works of William Morris. 9, Love Is Enough, Poems by the Way*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1911b.
–––, *Icelandic Journals*, Fontwell, Centaur, 1969.
Ouditt, Sharon, "Sublime", in Charles Forsdick, Zoë Kinsley & Kathryn Walchester (ed.), *Keywords for Travel Writing Studies: a Critical Glossary*, London, Anthem, 2019, n.p.
Stirling, Lesley, Huddleston, Rodney, "Deixis and anaphora", in Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey K. Pullum (ed.), *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2002, 1449–1564.

IMAGINAIRES #24

Part 2:
Spaces in Brackets

Ad Limine: Martin Parr's Humans on the Beach. Re-empowering the English Seaside Resorts as Pop Culture

Silvia Pireddu
Università di Torino

Abstract: In the 1960s, the British working class gradually replaced the coastal landscape with the beaches of the Mediterranean. The coastal resorts of England experienced a decline and a transformation into "toxic" places, *ad limine*. The paper investigates British coastal culture as a source of hybrid narratives. Developing the work of Ingleby and Kerr (*Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh UP, 2018), it discusses the visual coastal stories of Martin Parr to understand his view of Britishness. Parr's photographs investigate places that witnessed the empowerment and profound transformation of the English working-class identity. He provides a non-judgmental analysis of humans performing universal and ritual actions in his coloured and saturated shots that evoke impressionist beach painting. The photographs represent the English northern beach as a bright and glossy place in contrast with the political and cultural issues faced by the British working class during the last decades of the past century.

Keywords: beach culture, Martin Parr, Britishness, cultural history, visual culture, narrative culture, pop culture.

Résumé : Dans les années 1960, la classe ouvrière britannique a progressivement préféré les plages de la Méditerranée au littoral de la Grande Bretagne. En Angleterre, les stations balnéaires ont alors connu le déclin et se sont transformées en lieux « toxiques », *ad limine*. Cet article étudie la culture côtière britannique comme source de récits hybrides. À partir du travail d'Ingleby et Kerr (*Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh UP, 2018), il s'intéresse aux récits graphiques que Martin Parr offre de la côte britannique pour mieux comprendre sa vision de la britannicité. Les photographies de Parr explorent des lieux qui ont été témoins de

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

l'*empowerment* et de la profonde transformation de l'identité de la classe ouvrière anglaise. Dans ses clichés colorés et saturés évoquant les peintures de plage impressionnistes, l'artiste propose une analyse qui refuse de juger ces humains dont les actions sont universelles et rituelles. Ses photographies représentent la plage du Nord de l'Angleterre comme un endroit éclatant de lumière, ce qui contraste singulièrement avec les problèmes politiques et culturels auxquels la classe ouvrière britannique a été confrontée au cours des dernières décennies du siècle passé.

Mots-clés : culture de plage, Martin Parr, britannicité, histoire culturelle, culture visuelle, culture narrative, culture populaire.

The starting point

Many factors redefined British culture in the second half of the 20th century. Post-war Britain created a new post-colonial identity by 'exporting' the English language worldwide, while fashion, music, and pop culture became universal points of reference for the new generations. At home, a new idea of Britishness spread among the popular and middle classes with television comedies and tabloids that exposed private lives, created celebrities, and represented the national character with new symbolic objects. 'Pop creativeness' competed with the idea of 'good old Britain'. Tradition and modernity faced each other and redefined the narrative of nationhood as the political opposition between the Labour and the Conservative parties soared (Heath, Pottre, 2005; Black, 2010; Beckett, 2015; Black, Pemberton, Thane, 2013; Lawrence, 2013).

The 1980s witnessed clashing ideologies and divisive personalities, including football for the masses, pop music and fundraising, MTV, and private television channels. Scandal, violence, and morality found their way into television comedies and the press. Margaret Thatcher changed how people related to the establishment: traditional social classes were questioned, only to be replaced by new forms of social division. Feminism, race, and sexual orientation grouped the British on a new basis. The decade witnessed the rise of yuppies, dinkies and woopies while advertising became the pivot of mass culture. Market strategies manipulated social habits. Pubs served white wine along with ale. As fashion became a vital aspect of this new culture, American icons and glossy colours, unisex and skinny attire matched oversized jumpers and shoulder pads. Leasure and sport were synonyms of wellbeing and health while people re-imagined their holidays as many flew to exotic resorts (Hill, Metcalfe, 2003).

The British working class gradually replaced the domestic coastal landscape with the beaches of the Mediterranean. Progressively, the

coastal resorts of England experienced a decline and turned into places, *ad limine*. Places that were marginal compared to the urban environment, but because of their marginality, they preserved Britishness in the forms of significant objects, architecture and memories (Walton, 2000).

By adopting the perspective of discourse studies, the paper investigates British coastal culture as a source of liminal narratives. By developing the work of Ingleby and Kerr (2018), I will consider examples from the visual coastal stories of Martin Parr and how they represent the idea of Britishness[1]. In his long career, Parr has shown a particular interest in beaches. His photographs generally investigate places that witnessed the empowerment and profound transformation of the English working class with its cultural and racial (white) identity. Beaches flatten diversity; bodies are exposed in their nature: on the beach, one can always spot people who share habits and cultural symbols, yet each photograph is unique in spotting an object or a detail quintessentially British. [2]

Parr's beach photography collects glossy, colourful images in which the author ironically presents the place and its rituals (sunbathing, beauty contests, picnicking, street food, arcade games) as typical British rites. The books he dedicates to beach photography explore holiday life between bad taste and absurdity, kitsch and the most genuine humanity, which all of us express when we ease up and relax on holiday. We observe an indulgent and comprehensive gaze of humans yearning for freedom and ritual actions in coloured and saturated shots. The photographs represent the windy English beach as a sparkling place, in contrast with the political and cultural issues faced by the British working class during the 1970s and 1980s. They testify to social change and the recreation of national identity.

In the following paragraphs, I will first describe the symbolic value of the beach in British culture from a historical perspective, and then I will examine samples of symbolic cultural objects in Parr's photographs and their function as narrative elements of his stories. Interestingly, some of these objects were recurrent items in Impressionist beach paintings. I do not argue that Parr reproduces the Impressionist beach scenarios on purpose, and I acknowledge that the comparison may seem farfetched, but the presence of recurrent items on the beach points to the persistence of

1. Martin Parr is a documentary photographer. His books collect photographs that encapsulate details that document the lives of people. The colour and the situation though are picked up among a set of shots, which means that Parr decided which one best represents an idea. Rather than mere representation of reality, there is interpretation at the level of composition and of the technical aspects of light, contrast, focus, editing etc. The subsequent organization in a photo book creates a narrative around a topic. More about his approach can be seen in the documentary and interviews available on his website and freely available on YouTube (for example: https://youtu.be/9KA_qm7HWgo; https://youtu.be/ibqDOm3i0eA; https://youtu.be/MCRyB2SFQZ4).
2. See:https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/martin-parr-interview-only-human-national-portrait-gallery-brexit-britain.

topoi in the imaginary that modernity has built around the beach. The distance and cultural difference of these works shed light on the ritualism associated with beach life and the universal relevance of the beach environment in Modernity (Triani, 1988).

In fact, around 1870, there was a rapid increase in the creation of bourgeois holiday resorts. The health implications of bathing gradually lost importance, while its social significance became fundamental. Evidence of this change can be found in the works of numerous painters who made the bourgeoisie at the beach the subject of many scenes of social life. The habits and customs that characterise the daily life of people colonised a new and decidedly unusual space: the beach and its surroundings were then equipped with some comforts and indispensable objects: the parasol, the book, the comb, the chair, the tent, the stroller pointing at a progressive integration and display of the intimate life, the corporeal dimension in particular, and public life (Corbin, 1988; Rubini, 1994).

The objects

The last century is segmented into decades associated with specific cultural phenomena. The 1960s saw the rise of pop culture, baby boomers and the Vietnam War. We imagine the 1970s as the decade of feminism, environmental consciousness, and the Arab-Israeli conflict. In contrast, the 80s are symbolised by hedonism, videogames, the Aids epidemic, and the fall of the Berlin War (Vinen, 2010: 103 -110).

In this perspective, cultural movements are equally crucial as political events. At a personal level, we may also populate our imagination with well-defined objects, symbols, and recurrent themes that we associate with the decade and circumstances significant to us. On the one hand, personal imagination is created by memories and individual experiences. Conversely, the media amplify recursive pictures that fuel personal imagination and understanding of a period. This 'myth-making' process testifies to the extreme richness and the rapid change in habits, social relations, and lifestyles characterising the century. Furthermore, the notion of culture has been extended to phenomena that are not exclusively related to the arts but comprise ideas of health, food, and social relationship that were previously irrelevant. In this perspective, disciplines like cultural history construe time and space as separated from wars or significant political events, forefronting all the material and immaterial objects that characterise a specific decade (Burke, 2004).

After Roland Barthes published *Mythologies* (1957), the semiotics of objects focused on the role of real objects in defining culture. Barthes proposed an investigation of human nature, right from the interpretation of habits and behaviours that surround us. His semiology turned 'trivia' into subjects of academic investigation: cars, national dishes, plastic toys and kitchenware, sports, and, of course, everything in the sphere of fashion that could be the subject of advertising was scrutinised and investigated as a testimony to culture (Barthes, 1957). In Barthes' view (1964), mass society develops meaningful symbolic objects. In practice, an object's concrete function is absorbed by a more or less implicit meaning that people share and develop as a collective body (Barthes, 1970). For this reason, history is a narrative that involves personal memories, impressions, and recollected experiences. Objectivity is an academic necessity that needs to face the *other* history, *i.e.* the history of the masses.

Mass culture redefined its identity in the aftermath of the two world wars. The totalitarian regimes had granted the masses a special position in the organisation of society; propaganda used symbolic communication to mould the masses and shape political ideas. [3] Schools were central, and activities like sports, cinema, and newspapers supported the regimes by developing meaning around symbols (Postoutenko, 2010). After World War II, the trend continued, boosted by fast economic growth. TV, in particular, made visual culture pervasive and placed cultural objects into a broader system of relations, thus identifying new functions in both the instrumental and the symbolic sense (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2020; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2010).

Photography also played a significant role in adding meaning to cultural objects. The network of relations established by advertising and how photojournalism has interpreted 20th-century history is unique. Both created infinite interpretations and roles for symbolic cultural fetishes: not surprisingly, photo narratives are one of the most debated aspects of contemporary historical research, given their political and ideological role in shaping mass cultures. While Barthes emphasised the importance of personal experience (*punctum*) in evaluating photography, images have disclosed their communicative function for marginal social groups and specific generations. Images are a shared experience, not personal, in their powerful myth-making. They freeze the object's significance and pass it on to personal and collective memory. They testify to the political gaze of the photographer who may act in line or against ideologies: whatever the

3. It is well known that the beach became a special place in fascist imaginary. Documentaries praised Mussolini's holidays on the Riviera Romagnola and vacation camps for children were a potent tool of propaganda, social cohesion and development for the urban working classes. See: Dogliani, Patrizia, "Environment and Leisure in Italy during Fascism", *Modern Italy*, 19(3), 2014, 247–59 (doi:10.1080/13532944.2014.940152).

perspective, they augment imagination (Barthes, 1957; Moran, 2005: 1-28; Niola 2012: 10-11).

In general, the mythographic repertoire of the century has constantly been updated with our active participation as consumers. In his photographs, Parr depicts this process of 'enrichment' of the imagination. The narratives he creates are encapsulated in minor details, i.e. the objects placed as foci of the image remind us of class, age, and peculiar habits. They may look like fragments, but they have a lot to tell about the personality of the subject, the situation in which he/she is caught etc. By spotting the odd, he reveals the truth (Mellor, 2007).

Indeed, the emergence of everyday life as a myth-maker has progressively developed into a super-production of myths. The pervasiveness of the media, which profoundly affects the sensitive sphere of experience, is responsible for the availability of competing narratives around the same symbolic objects. This is combined with a rapid propagation of myths and their deterioration. This hyper-communication enhanced by the widespread use of images results in overexposure in everyday life; the phenomenon can be seen in embryos in Parr's 1980s beach images. The beach is a space of consumption: a public space that is dynamic and sensitive to the habits they help to spread. A beach is a place for the spectacular staging of goods and a pole of social attraction. Beaches are places of collective blending and disorientation, magnifiers of the virtues and defects of our time.

Decades for the people

In Britain, the aftermath of WWII was dominated by trauma, sad memories, economic insecurity, and food rationing, which continued well into the 1950s. No international leisure travel was permitted during wartime, and domestic travel was discouraged. Currency allowance was also introduced so that money could not be spent abroad on travel but with solid limitations to preserve and restore the national reserve. Government control over the money spent on holidays abroad continued well into the 70s and was the object of debate both from an economic perspective and a social one, as it limited freedom of movement and prevented the low and middle classes from becoming tourists (Oliver, 1971). Consequently, foreign travel remained except for the majority of the population. Domestic travel remained the main option: once the barbed wires and the mines scattered on the South-Eastern coasts were removed, the coastline was returned to the public. Trains commuting from London to the beach allowed people to rest during the weekend and bank holidays,

although the summer season enlivened coastal villages and small towns like Weston-super-Mare, Hastings, Worthing, Eastbourne, Bournemouth, Brighton, Torbay, and Broadstairs, among the others. However, it took time to recover from war poverty and restore hotels and facilities to leisure as they had often been converted during the war as lodgings for the troops (Sladen, 2002).

In practice, only at the end of the 50s, the economic situation allows people to change their attitude toward leisure and save time and money for a holiday. Personal and family incomes increased as the post-war economy recovered, creating the circumstances and context for spending on goods such as cars, television, and leisure. Demand for domestic holidays continued to grow, but by the mid-60s, more people began to travel abroad, and coastal destinations saw the first traces of decline. While day trips remained, for the most part, domestic and grounded on the south-eastern beaches or in the central-northern countryside, the long holiday trips turned to the modern facilities in the sunny destinations of the Mediterranean (Andrews, 2011).

As long as domestic holidays were popular, these places continued to be furbished with symbolic architecture. Georgian terraces, marine villas with gothic or oriental details, promenades, decorative railings, bandstand near the pleasure piers stretching into the sea, decorative benches, welcome shelters, and colourful beach huts that had dotted the Victorian coastline continued to be used and restored. In time, other architectures appeared: brutalist car parks, indoor leisure centres, ballrooms, ice cream, and street food kiosks dotted the landscape, adding to a sense of modern kitsch. The first casino opened in the luxury Metropole Hotel Brighton in 1962, adding to the list of pleasures along with donkey rides and boat trips: change in the architecture progressed with change in the type of leisure that people looked for and the kind of lifestyle that they wanted to experience during their spare time. The result was a unique mixture of old and new, tradition and modernity blended with some confusion (Ferry, 2009).

In the late 1960 and 1970s, the typical beach leisure environment faced a substantial improvement in accommodation, increasing comfort, food, and entertainment availability. Piers generally offered a more comprehensive set of amusements ranging from slot machines to auditoriums hosting tea dances and live music. Seaside theatres, pavilions, music halls, and variety shows were also offered seasonally. Moreover, open-air swimming pools, boating lakes, boat trips, rides on horses, and mini-golf completed the offer, along with beauty contests, are all events that fuelled the imagination of holidaymakers well into the 1980s. Strolling along the promenades and sitting or lying on the beaches sunbathing, observing

other people, chatting, eating french fries, and icecreams were also engaging activities for any age. Places and architecture became symbolic as they networked the idea of leisure and indicated social relations and conflicts within class identity. Oppositions such as rural/urban, north/south, working class and the middle classes, and immigrants vs natives reshaped British society as one or the other element emerged as the leading force of change (McSmith, 2010; Jones, 2010; Jones, 2012).

In sum, the beach turned from a place for the better ones to anybody who comprised the white lower classes. Change in the imaginary and identity of this social class went hand in hand with the progressive abandonment of these places handed over to (white) retired people and immigrant families looking for cheap affordable holidays. The beach became a place where classes ebbed and flowed, moving to and from modernity to tradition. The objects representing the beach holiday lifestyle moved from new to old as high street shops gave way to charity shops collecting paraphernalia of the good old days (Smith, 2004; Price, Narchi, 2018).

In the 1980s, the UK underwent a large-scale reorganisation of its economic system, transforming the country, landscape, and social relations for good (Johnston, 2000). These changes involved the progressive decline of the industrial sector, which was taken over by the service industries. It was as if the City and the London area concentrated on a new workforce: commuting became the norm, and the North was forced into severe deindustrialisation. The transformation that followed left a large section of the skilled and semi-skilled manual labour force either without employment or in temporary and insecure jobs. In parallel, a new economy based on the provision of services (often the finance industry) enabled a young generation with university education to significantly improve their living standards. The North of the country and Wales witnessed the decline of the mining industry. London extended its influence more than ever before as the place for the financial élites. The country's geography reflected a polarisation between deprived populations living in the de-industrialised areas and the service class with high salaries afforded a multicultural networked London lifestyle. The death of traditional industrial complexes in the North left whole areas of the country almost de-populated. The change also affected the coast and its resorts which looked unattractive to the rich and unaffordable to the new poor (Newton, 2017; Mann, Fenton, 2017, 71-97)

As for the landscape, the gentrification of dismissed urban areas created a new geography of places to buy leisure. Abandoned factories were turned into shopping centres, theme parks, or heritage sites for tourism. This involved 'theming' places – designing and advertising a place as a marketable concept – the consequence of the gentrification of villages

and small towns. Clusters of abandoned period houses could be seen next to malls facing a constant shop turnover—places with no real economy but services that waxed and waned according to the number of residents. (Urry, Larsen, 2011; Kearns, Philo, 1993).

The progressive decay of the leisure economy turned them into cheap localities for white pensioners from the public sector. The beaches were for the elderly connecting to their idea of Britishness as it was rooted in their personal experience of youth. They experienced it as young and physically connected to their interpretation of it. In practice, the national past was indexed by the buildings and the simple activities that symbolised British heritage, fuelling the imagination of these generations. Coastal resorts concentrated on these symbols, connecting them to the Victorian past or the recent pop memorabilia so much loved by the boomers born in the 1960s (Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, 2017).

Life is a beach

Parr's view

Parr is a documentary photographer as, decade after decade, he testified for social change.[4]

In the mid-1980s, he moved on from mainstream black and white to colour and flashlight, which produced an intense, saturated palette that is his unmistakable style. His compositions focus on real-life scenes where the details are forefronted as the symbols of consumerism, eccentricity, and the bitter-sweet fact that the flashy and glossy world around us may hide distress, sadness, and poverty as well. Thus the key to his photography is light that may disclose the pure pleasure of gazing at humans or a deep sense of tragedy (Williams, 2014).[5]

Parr's shots of the English beaches display a series of vivid, hyper-realistic images in which a cruel gaze highlights the contradictions of the 1980s. The typical rituals of beach life are recorded with biting humour and ferocity at the same time. However, the artificiality of the scenery created by the saturated colours brings out a story beyond the visible. Here

4. See https://jamesmaherphotography.com/historical-photography-articles/history-photography-martin-parr.
5. As Parr declared "With photography, I like to create fiction out of reality. I try and do this by taking society's natural prejudice and giving this a twist". See https://www.magnumphotos.com/photographer/martin-parr.

we see gleaming pictures of people knotted into their own lives. A stain on a dress, a belly brimming over the costume, blue nails and reddish lips, baldness, and hair growth are turned into glamorous markers of ordinary life. Extracted from the ordinary, they construe people with such clarity and authenticity than any word could. They show life's beauty and sadness (Williams, 2004, 156-157).

The beach is more than a setting. It is a mood and a way of being. Humans on the beach exist despite class and norms. Individuals matter even if they are plunged into a mass. Food, colourful dresses, paraphernalia, plastic rubbish, and iconic objects crowd around *the people*. Strollers and children, the old and the young are caught while eating, resting, sleeping on the beach, walking on the promenade, waiting at a bus stop, and acting freely in their leisure time.

In Parr's words, "You can read a lot about a country by looking at its beaches: across cultures, the beach is that rare public space in which all absurdities and quirky national behaviour can be found" (Parr, 2013: 3). Humans are part of the landscape in the photographs, but something is always incoherent. Something peculiar that stirs the interest of the photographer and triggers the narrative. Something that indicates the *mythologie* of the place and the contrast with reality.

For example, strollers do not just carry babies; they are parked next to babies as if carrying the burden of their life: grinning faces, cries, and a mess surrounding them indicates something else. Babies and their strollers are out of place, dragged along the beach, stuck in corners where they seem in danger, such as a bus stop, a shelter on the promenade or, even worse to contemporary eyes, left under the sun surrounded by plastic dishes, cans, bottles, and food waste (Scott-Samuel *et al*., 2014: ii,; Brown, 2018). From sunburnt skin to fatty food, what was acceptable in the past looks now dangerous, unhealthy behaviour, but it is the epitome of a decade that we recall with a mix of attraction and disgust. Looking at those behaviours, we feel a sense of unrest or sympathy and nostalgia, if age permits. People who experienced the holidays of the 1970s and 1980s can now look back at those experiences as part of their personal history, reviving sensations and renewing their memory– something that shows the importance of the viewer in the construction of the photographic narrative. Younger viewers may feel surprised or outraged by the same situations.

Technically speaking, the sensation of unrest is created by the sharp contrast of the colours, which forefronts the presence of scattered garbage, for example, or the unpleasant imperfection of the real bodies. The odd grimacing faces or the distracted outlook of the characters all reveal the contradictions of the characters: feeling the push to find a place in society,

or not living the life one would deserve but 'dreaming it all', and pretending to be pop stars.

Sometimes the eccentricity of the scene suggests disorder. One feels embarrassed and intrigued: is there any beauty? Parr's holidaymakers act instinctively; they connect to other humans in a promised land of pretended freedom. Far from being a place of escapism, the beach brings humans to the brim of something undefined: another time, another space, somewhere, somehow, a grotesque dimension.

Grotesque designates everything bizarre, extravagant, ridiculous, gulf, monstrous, and deformed. The hyperrealism of Parr's photography turns grotesque as the photographs are neither jokingly comic nor painfully tragic, but both: paradoxical and surreal, artificial, absurd, deforming people. The beach is not a romantic environment but a place of deviation.

Human bodies have focused on art, cultural and political theorising since the 1960s: photography witnessed bodies in revolt, politicised bodies, bodies exposed by the artistic gesture, and finally, bodies plasticised by the consumerism of the 1980s. Parr's photography may also be understood in the light of this interest in the corporeal dimension. His sunburned bodies and the staring faces, fatty adults and the elderly in their plain attires, white skirts irradiating light, plastic shoes, and puffy hairstyles adorn bodies in a way that we now perceive as grotesque even if it was the habit and the fashion of the time (Haynes, 2002; Hoving, 2003). From a Foucaultian perspective, the moment the subject is placed within economic relations is also placed within a network of power relations. In Parr's beach photography, holidaymakers are consumers belonging to a confused, rackless, uneducated state, and their grotesque posing makes them vulnerable and exposed.

The Last Resort is a series of forty photographs taken in New Brighton, a beach suburb of Liverpool, between 1983 and 1985 that was harshly criticised for the bourgeois exposure of working-class misery (Chambefort-Kay, 2018). It represents the first example of his colour beach photography developed in many other works. In the 1980s, *The Last Resort* was interpreted as a display of all the damages done to social cohesion and growth by the market-led economic policies of Margaret Thatcher. Some critics understood Parr's photographs of the coastal resorts as pictures of poverty with a patronising attitude towards the working class that was untouchable and 'pure' from a left-wing perspective.

Val Williams, instead, highlights the unconventional perspective typical of Parr and the idea that social classes have been flattened by modernity. What matters is not income but the human condition. The

social norms that were respected and typified by British society disappeared and turned into something different. According to the perspective adopted, one can identify with consumerism or multiculturalism or many other *-isms* that changed from the roots of the idea of tradition. Parr's photography seems to interpret all this with a curious benign eye rather than scorn and contempt (Williams, 2004: 161).

What saves Parr from the tragic and the negative? Indeed, the irony, whereby the images reveal how reality is a construct, a box containing human essence, but at the same time highlight that the human itself escapes the container to express something deviant: the pain, the ambitions, the obscurities and light-heartedness of many. Addressing Parr's work from an aesthetic point of view rather than merely considering him a documentarist severs to unfold the richness of his approach and account for the value of his narrative abilities. Parr goes beyond the mere documentation by letting 'the viewer' suppose stories captured in the crowded scenes he amplifies by the saturated close-ups. Stories are served on a colourful plate.[6]

Faces

In landscape art, a beach may be a place of suspension and eternity were to contemplate the sea. However, a beach is a tight physical space squeezed between the infinity of the horizon and the land behind it with its houses, shopping malls, train and bus stations, parking, and supermarkets. In Parr's shots, the sea is marginalised: he portrays stretches of concrete and pebbles where people meet. The beach is a stage where life happens (Fiske, 2017: 43-45; Coëffé, 2010; Lageiste, 2018).

People and their stuff are recurrent in the beach imaginary. From an iconographic point of view, objects reinforce the beach's identity as a place of signification, a well-defined area of meaning, and a mirror of the times. On the beach, everything seems naturally recursive, whatever the medium of representation (Williams, 2004: 155-162; Beyaert-Geslin, 2020; Wells, 2021, cap.1).

Bourdieu's well-known essay *Un art moyen* (1965) highligted the role of clichés in photography. In particular, he referred to tourist photographers consecrating their middle-class view as unique while the same place is recorded under identical circumstances by thousands of other people

6. Parr is a keen collector of diverse objects. See https://www.martinparr.com/objects and, for example, the volumes Martin Parr, *Parr World*, vol. 1, 'Objects', New York, Aperture, 2008; and *Real Food*, London, Phaidon, 2006.

– something that especially fits the beach environment as a producer of clichés.[7] Clichés on the beach are reassuring and safe, creating affection and familiarity around the place even if the place is marketed and experienced as a place of transgression and freedom. A paradox whereby, in Parr's photography, the sea is distant, the beach is trash, and everything is ordinary and British (Pollen, 2018).

I believe the impressionists first collected beach clichés and rituals, and their beach paintings remained a legacy to artists who resorted to the same environment for their art. These clichés, rituals and symbolic objects can be explained in terms of social history and technique.

Though separated by the Channel, Normandy and the English coastal line share a common history of attraction and separation between the two nations. Both became, at one point, tourist attractions, mediated and reproduced by art. Historically, the windy and coldish Northern environment attracted Londoners and Parisians bourgeois alike, making the beach the testimony to a new class beyond nationalities (Smith, 2010). Be it the beach landscapes of Impressionism or Parr's photography, clichés define people as belonging to the same category of holidaymakers and privileged ones. A world apart, enclosed and suspended during the short holiday time.

Moreover, the 'instant', a moment in which light and colours modulate the surface on which artists challenge their vision and hence the interpretation of reality, is a well-known aspect of impressionist painting that was probably developed in response to the example of early photographers. Early photographers looked for the same effects to be legitimised in aesthetic terms. This points to the close relationship between beach painting and photography that existed from the beginning. Beach light represented a challenge for both past and present art forms (McNamara and Aubenas, 2010; Messina, 2010). As he described in his interviews, Parr used the palette of commercial photography and flashed the light, in particular, to define with precision every detail of the shot to the point of creating a 'plastic' world, hyperreal and hence unreal.[8] The augmented light and the spatial awareness he identifies as crucial aspects of aesthetics create a multidimensional effect by using colours on details that forefront meaning.[9] Balancing curiosity, obsession, and his collector's push to possess what he sees, Parr brings out the oddity of humans as they are

7. https://www.magnumphotos.com/arts-culture/travel/global-tourism-martin-parr.
8. See, Marie Gautier, Aurore Fossard, "'I'm the antidote to propaganda': A conversation with Martin Parr", *La Clé des langues*, 2012 (http://cle.ens-lyon.fr/anglais/arts/photographie/i-m-the-antidote-to-propaganda-a-conversation-with-martin-parr); and "Reportage sur Martin Parr", *La Clé des langues*, 2012 (http://cle.ens-lyon.fr/anglais/arts/photographie/reportage-sur-martin-parr).
9. See https://www.canon-europe.com/pro/stories/martin-parr-style-vision.

busy building quirky lives. He sees the patterns that shape what we are by brightening contrast and light.

Let me describe a few examples. *The Last Resort* (1986) opens with the image of a couple facing each other in a tea room (fig. 1). The dominant colours are black, a light greenish tone and cream. The wall is decorated with a light-coloured band; a lamp above the two figures balances the composition on the top area of the photograph with a touch of colour. The woman is wearing a cream coat, looking at her nails, while the man stares outside the scene with a cigarette hanging from his lips. Bread and butter have been served. Salt, pepper, and sauce wait for the meal to be taken in. A calm, tidy, modest atmosphere surrounds the two. Concentrated or lost in their thoughts, the couple conveys a feeling of isolation, a feeling shared, for example, by the couple portrayed in the painting entitled *On the beach* by Manet (1873) (fig. 2). Both couples are absorbed by their privacy: the location invites a sensation of void and stillness provided by the horizontal line of the gaze. Their dresses and the close-up give the sense of filling. One can hardly perceive the sea and the natural environment, yet in both pictures, the contrast between the indoor/ outdoor dimension conveys the same feeling of suspension and boredom. In contrast, the women appear accustomed and accommodated. The two men look edgy as if waiting for something to happen.

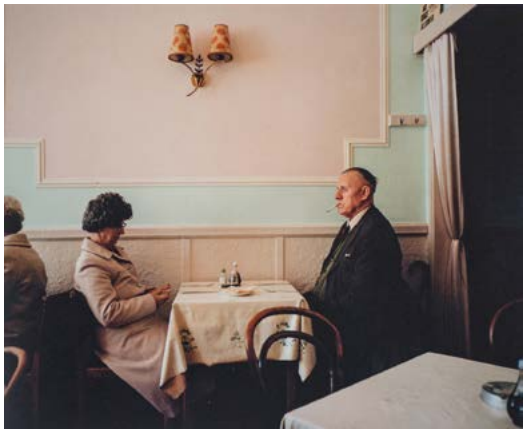

Fig. 1 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 11 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

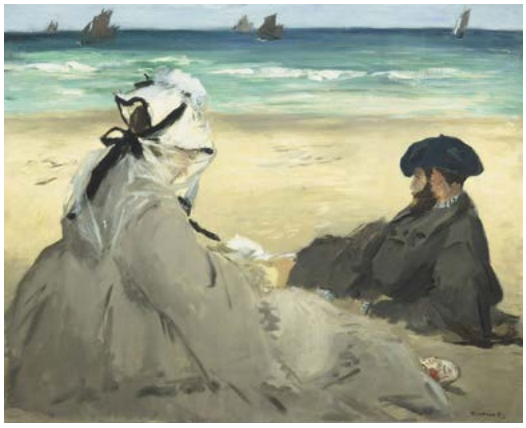

Fig. 2 : Édouart Manet, *Sur la plage*, 1873 (Public domain via Wikimedia commons).

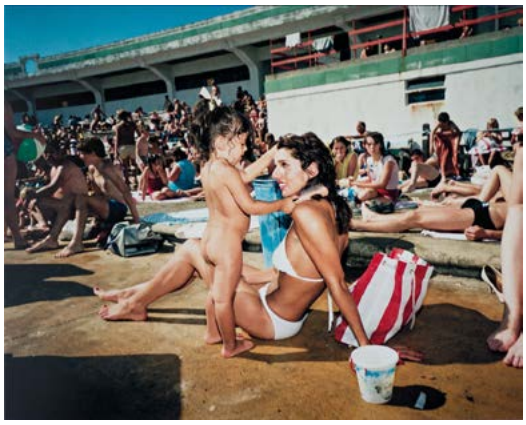

Fig. 3 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 45 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

An interesting instance of a *topos* in beach life representations is the combing of the hair (fig. 3). In Parr, a naked child is combing the hair of, possibly, her young mother. They sit on concrete in full light at the centre of the scene. In the background, two adolescents glower at the photographer as if surprised or annoyed. The flash and the white costume, the bag, the bucket, and the white wall in the background also increase the light so that the gesture looks more than a simple game of affection: will she look like her mother in the future?

In Degas's painting *'Beach Scene'* (1869-70), the role is reversed, and the adult woman is combing a girl relaxing on the beach. The young girl in the

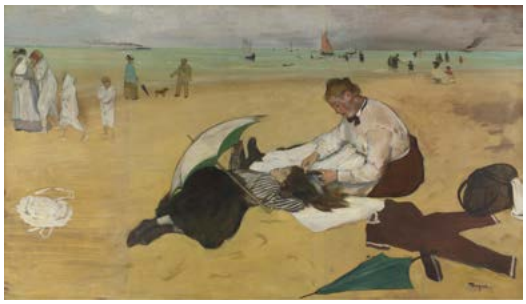

Fig. 4 : Edgar Degas, *Beach Scene*, 1876-1877
(Public domain via Wikimedia commons).

foreground has been swimming, and her nurse (?) is combing through her wet hair (fig. 4).

Along with the parasol and basket, her swimsuit is laid to dry next to her. The picture may seem almost two-dimensional, as it was probably painted indoors. The position of the characters and the umbrella form a semicircle that reminds of a hug, a self-contained position signalling intimacy. The reddish swimming costume on the right and the brown bag, the black skirt of the girl, contrast with the white of the other garments around it and the tiny figurines on the left. A nanny carrying a baby, a young woman with a reddish towel on her head, and two children were drying in their towels. A couple talks in the background with their dog, while others bate in the background. A scene of peace where the beach's ochre melts into the sea's greenish hue. A scene that cannot capture the outdoors, the fresh air, the smells, and the sounds that can be imagined in Parr's scenes but forefronts the intimacy of gesture.

In the previous paragraphs, I mentioned the importance of objects captured in positions and functions that transform them into symbols. Parasols, wooden chairs, tents, and bathing machines characterise the impressionist environment and their holidaymakers. Prams appear, too, as in fig. 5, where Eugène Boudin, for example, portrays one next to a group of women reading in a circle. The pram is a mere element of the composition that fills the group in the painting. From the focal centre of the image, i.e. a woman on her back with a large black skirt, the gaze moves to the left towards the pram's black cover and into the tent. The pram then becomes a key element in the composition where the objects dominate over people on a seemingly dusky day.

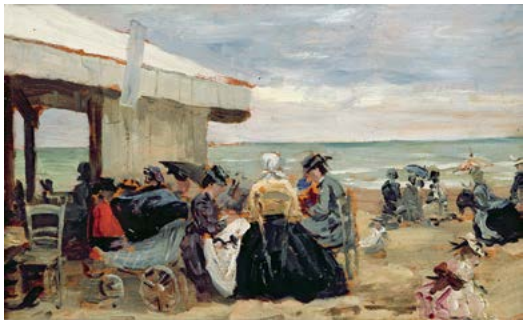

Fig. 5 : Eugène Boudin, *A Beach Scene* [?]
(Public domain via WikiArt).

Likewise, the American painter Edward Henry Potthast (1857-1927) places the baby carriage at the heart of the painting. A young woman in the shade is reading or chatting peacefully beside the pram, surrounded by people. On the back, the sea is lighted, and the sand almost feels heavy and deep. A composition that conveys a more serene atmosphere thanks to the balance between the human and natural components (fig. 6[10]).

Babies and their prams are a peculiar presence on Parr's beaches. On the one hand, babies stay with their family and parents under the sun.

10. Potthast, Edward Henry, *Baby Carriage on Beach*, Vero Beach Museum of Art, Florida (https://pixels.com/featured/baby-carriage-on-beach-edward-henry-potthast.html).

Fig. 7 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 18 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

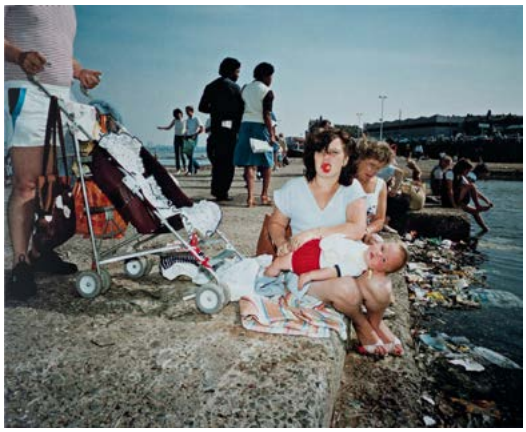

Fig. 8 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 40 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

Fig. 9 : Eugène Lepoittevin, *Bains de mer à Étretat* , c. 1866 (Public domain via Wikimedia commons).

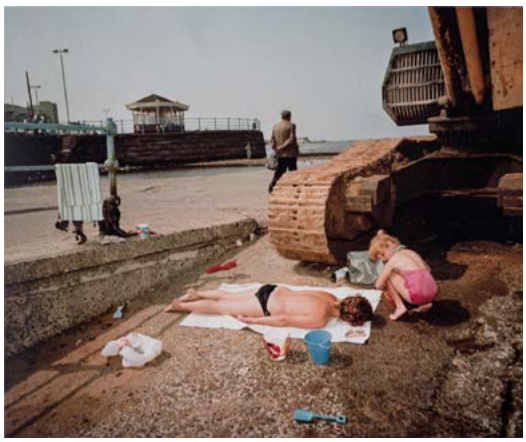

Fig. 10 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 83 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

On the other, they go with them to the casino, the amusement arcades, or the indoor funfair. The images are all disturbing as they render the sufferance of the baby in an uncomfortable, unfamiliar situation: the hot sun, the crowd around them, and the overstimulation of the environment. The baby or toddler entertains the adults around him/her, feeding on formula or junk food.

In fig. 7, for example, the scene is indoor: the baby is out of focus and looks like a ghostly presence evaded from the pram to play and touch with the arcade games. On the left of the picture, three distracted ladies in a row are absorbed by their game. An outdoor photograph (fig. 8) shows a stroller positioned so the vector slopes down to the baby in a sort of L-shaped pose. The reading of the picture is left-right. The picture represents three stages of life, different generations and conditions: the past, the present, and the future. The father (?) stands outside the scene, and the grandmother is just behind the mother, gazing somewhere behind the photographer with a red pacifier in her mouth. The baby's diaper is being changed while staring at the camera: but who is the baby in the scene? Only the baby seems to be aware of the photographer. All the others are caught by some other experience. They all sit on concrete; the sea is full of litter, but nobody seems to notice. It is just a place to be.

In Parr's picture, the ordinariness of many scenes is counterpointed by the grotesque setting: people sit on concrete steps with their feet soaking in the sea, surrounded by garbage, oddities, and machinery. Artificial items on the beach are not uncommon and can be seen in beach paintings. The example shows people diving from a wagon that seems to have been brought to the shoreline (fig. 9).

Parr's beaches are not natural. The impressionist's eye explores the natural environment where humans intrude, but nature lingers. Parr's landscape is full of the same light and colours of the en-plein air scenery, but the beach is now a human artefact. From this perspective, the famous image of

Fig. 11 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 27 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

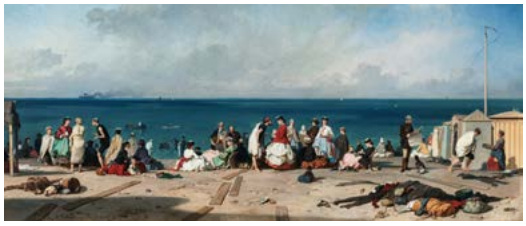

Fig. 12 : Eugène Lepoittevin, *Les Bains de mer, Plage d'Étretat*, 1864 (Public domain via Wikimedia commons).

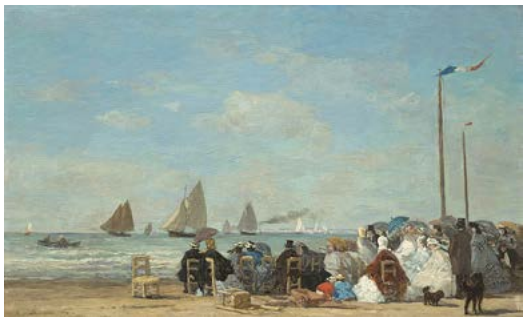

Fig. 13 : Eugène Boudin, *Beach Scene at Trouville*, 1863 (Public domain via Wikimedia commons).

Fig. 14 : Martin Parr, *The Last Resort*, 6th printing, 2020, p. 70 (courtesy of Martin Parr and The Parr Foundation)

the child playing next to a large tank-like crawler is especially significant (fig. 10).

A low wall crosses the picture plane, splitting the visual space. The child and the mother stay on a path leading to the water on the right hand. On the left, three buckets, a spade, a pair of red jelly shoes, and a plastic bag stand out with the bath towel as if these elements had been inserted artificially into the scene. They are out of place and contrast with an older man walking by while carrying a grey bag. The hands are clasped behind the back: he belongs to the scene while the sunbathers do not.

The fast, full-bodied strokes of colour are illuminated by an intense, robust and transparent light that makes all the elements in the composition of the painting shine and glow.

On the impressionist canvas, one feels the fine grains of sand, the sound of the waves, the sun's warmth, and the breeze that lifts the clothes of the protagonists. The ocean's scent and the waves' force provide a dynamism so much needed in life. Parr's beaches, instead, are crowded (fig. 11). People troop to absorb sunlight but sit on concrete and in parking lots surrounded by rusty, abandoned structures. The garbage constantly fills the shots: food waste, leftovers, plastic containers, and all paraphernalia abandoned with no care. There is no nostalgia: reality is on full display.

Scattered objects are part of the beach landscape whenever bathers appear: Lepottevin in *Bathing, Étretat Beach* (1864) and Boudin in *Scène de plage à Trouville* (fig. 12-13) portray people with their objects: chairs, children, shoes, and garments left on the beach by the little crowd lined along the shore; dogs are also present as in some of Parr's photographs (fig. 14).

The example point to the presence of recursive symbolic objects that build the beach environment. Parr's people are poles apart from the Impressionists' characters on the beach. Rather

than privileged in being bourgeois, Parr's people are unique in their oddities and what they bring around them, but the contrast highlights the persistence of a symbolic beach identity.

What is left

The impressionists viewed the beach as a place to experiment with open-air painting. Their works also testify to the transformation of the northern coast of Normandy and the first holidays in Côte d'Azur. Rather than being loci of picturesque wilderness, villages like Trouville became seaside resorts where the Parisians could replicate their urban habits in a more relaxed meditative atmosphere. In the same way, small villages on the other side of the Channel were soon transformed by tourism. The impressionists collected the emergence of new habits that became recurrent themes nourishing the marine holiday imagination throughout the 20th century. The trend migrated across the Atlantic too, and American painters embraced the same perspective. Impressionist beach painting disclosed a new lifestyle also handed over to photography. Photography, in turn, became the privileged testimony of the new leisure by popularising habits and clichés (Damisch, 2001: 10).

In this perspective, Parr's beach photography collects this tradition of the beach as a locus of transition from one state to another: a place to experience the body and some nakedness, a place overloaded with expectations: fun, sex, freedom, or boredom, rest and family amusement. The continuous presence of symbolic objects testifies to the beach as a myth-maker worldwide.[11]

In the case of Britain, the beach established itself as a place apart for the middle and working classes, where basic needs such as eating, resting and socialising could be satisfied in multiple ways, different from the ordinary: not personal but shared. The exceptionality of the setting was needed as much as the comfort of the habits. Socialised leisure was the key to life, whether a day trip or a holiday.

People also brought on the beach their urban dimension. They did not look for Nature or the sea: the beach, as Parr well demonstrates, was an appendix of town and city life. A paradox that emerged in the 1980s, when the clash between tradition and modernity was emerging in British society. The rituality of the beach lifestyle preserved the quintessential *topoi* of Britishness while letting out social change with a disruptive force:

11. Parr has shot beaches all over the world. See https://www.magnumphotos.com/theory-and-practice/martin-parr-beach-therapy.

this paradox is the core of Parr's view. In his shots, humans themselves are symbolic elements, hence the preference for close-ups or the presence of architectural items that cut lines into the scene that compel the viewer to fill in the missing points and create his/ her mental fillers and narratives. The beach is often away from what the looker sees. The shore is crushed, and the light irradiates throughout, turning litter into gold. The importance of the spatial arrangement surrounding people on the beach testifies to the shift from the dominance of the natural environment to the artificial one. Beaches turned from wild places into places of comfort, i.e. urban places with a touch of Nature. It started when the bourgeois of the impressionists settled on the Northern coast and reached the apex of this anthropic transformation in the second part of the 20th century, before the progressive take over of a green consciousness as the new trend in consumerism that we are still experiencing. In this perspective, Britain was the country that first met the change.[12]

Images, especially photographic images, from the moment they are reproduced, multiplied, and transmitted, establish a norm of perception: 'the world's "photographability" has become the condition under which it is constituted and perceived' (Cadava, 1997: xxviii). In this perspective, landscapes seduce amateur photographs. The sight of an image, whatever the vehicle (advertisement, postcard, or social media), persuades the viewer to visit the place. Every time the place is visited, another picture is generated due to a personal experience. In time, the place will be turned into a new source of experience and a new spring of images, while more pictures will be collected, either mental or real. This mechanism also fixed the beach imaginary (Hagarty, 1986: 9-10).

Parr's photography is recursive and cyclical in representing beaches as he draws on his experience, yet it is new as Parr can spot the novelty. We change, society changes and people change: on the beach, the recursive presence of mythologies, though, acts as the cohesive devices of the narrative.

In his long career, Parr has been able to grasp the turning points of change in British social history both in terms of technique and scenario: the beaches witnessed the arrival of immigrant families, a blend of the young and the elderly, eccentrics and ordinary people. Parr reproduced everyday mythologies with a pop-art approach in which the ordinary

12. Henry Lefebvre observing the survival of capitalism in the 20th century foresaw the political role of landscape (Elden, 2007). In his perspective, the leisure dimension of the beach is the escape from the constraint of class and social divisions typical of urban life. A place to relax is a place to drop constraints. Even when the beach absorbs the oddity of modern life, it is constantly recast as a place of freedom. The concrete merging in the sand and the sand pouring in the sea are scenarios where the natural and the artificial melt into one: humans face their contradictions as they manipulate nature while desperately seeking it.

turns into eccentricity and becomes familiar and attractive. The elderly and the children queue impatiently for ice cream and chips, babies drink cans of Coke and men and women lounge around amongst the littered debris of contemporary life. They all display what they are, being 'compelled' to have fun. They create a carnivalesque visual mesh of sense and nonsense. Social relations, fundamental abstractions, will always exist in and through liminal spaces, but Parr turns them into art.

Silvia Pireddu holds a PhD in English and American Cultures from IULM University in Milan. She worked under several post-doctoral grants at the University of Pavia and is currently an Associate Professor of English Language and Linguistics at the University of Turin. Her research interests include the history of culture, translation and stylistics, with particular reference to the intersection of the theoretical principles and the practical frameworks of art, media and history.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3357-6391

Bibliography

Andrews, Hazel, *The British on Holiday: Charter Tourism, Identity, and Consumption*, Bristol, Channel View Publications, 2011 (doi:10.21832/9781845411848).

Barthes, Roland, *Elements of Semiology*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1968 original text *Éléments de sémiologie, Communications 4*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1964.

–––, *Mythologies*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1972 original text *Mythologies*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1957.

–––, *Empire of Signs*, New York, Hill and Wang, 1983 original text *L'Empire des signes*, Geneva, Skira, 1970.

Beyaert-Geslin, Anne, "La photographie comme méta-image", *Signata*, 11, 2020 (doi:10.4000/signata.2749).

Black, Lawrence, *Redefining British Politics: Culture, Consumerism, and Participation, 1954–1970*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2010 (doi:10.1057/9780230250475).

Black, Lawrence, Pemberton Hugh (ed.), *Reassessing 1970s Britain*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2013.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Un art moyen*, Paris, Minuit, 1965.

Brown, Rebecca, "Resisting Moralisation in Health Promotion", *Ethic Theory Moral Practice,* 21, 2018, 997–101 (doi:10.1007/s10677-018-9941-3).

Cadava, Eduardo, *Words of light: theses on the photography of history*, Princeton UP, 1997.

Chambefort-Kay, Karine, " Martin Parr's Signs of the Times, A Portrait of the Nation's Tastes: antidote pictures to consumerism?", *InMedia, The French Journal of Media Studies*, 7(1), 2018 (doi:10.4000/inmedia.1216).

Coëffé, Vincent, "La plage, fabrique "une touristi(cité) idéale", *L'Information géographique*, 74, 2010, 51-68 (doi:10.3917/lig.743.0051).

Corbin, Alain, *Le territoire du vide. L'Occident et le désir du rivage: 1750-1840*, Paris, Aubier, 1988,

Damisch, Hubert, *La dénivelée : à l'épreuve de la photographie*, Paris, Seuil, 2001.

Dubini, Renzo, *Geografie dello sguardo. Visione e paesaggio in età moderna*, Torino, Einaudi,1994.

Elden, Stuart, "There is a Politics of Space because Space is Political: Henri Lefebvre and the Production of Space", *Radical Philosophy Review*, 10(2), 2007, 101–116.

Ferry, Kathryn, *The British seaside holiday*, Oxford, Shire, 2009.

Fiske, John, *Reading the popular*, London, Routledge, 2017.

Hegarty, Paul, 'The Last Resort at Open Eye Liverpool', *Creative Camera*, March 1986.

Haynes, Deborah J., "Bakhtin and the visual arts", in Paul Smith, Carolyn Wilde (ed.), *A companion to art theory*, London, Blackwell, 2002, 292–302.

Heath, Joseph, Potter, Andrew, *The Rebel Sell: How the counter culture became consumer culture*, Chichester, Capstone, 2005.

Hill, Jeffrey, Metcalfe, Alan, "Sport, leisure and culture in twentieth-century Britain", *Labour*, 52, 2003, 316–318.

Hoving, Kirsten, "Convulsive Bodies: The Grotesque Anatomies of Surrealist Photography", in Frances Connelly (ed.), *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2003, 220–240.

Ingleby, Matthew, Kerr, Matthew (ed)., *Coastal Cultures of the Long Nineteenth Century*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh UP, 2018 (doi:10.3366/edinburgh/9781474435734.001.0001).

Jones, Ben. "The uses of nostalgia: autobiography, community publishing and working-class neighbourhoods in post-war England", *Cultural and Social History*, 7(3), 2010, 355–374.

–––, *The Working Class in Mid Twentieth-century England. Community, Identity, and Social Memory*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2012.

Kearns, Gerard, Philo, Chris (ed.), *Selling places: the city as cultural capital, past, and present*, Oxford, Pergamon, 1993.
Kress, Gunther, Van Leeuwen, Theo, "The Semiotic Landscape*",in Patrick Griffiths, Andrew John Merrison and Aileen Bloomer (ed.), *Language in Use: A Reader*, London, Routledge, 2010 (doi:10.4324/9781003060994).
Kress, Gunther, Van Leeuwen, Theo, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* (3rd ed.), London, Routledge, 2020 (doi:10.4324/9781003099857).
Lageiste, Jérôme, "La plage, un objet géographique de désir", *Géographie et cultures*, 67, 2008 (doi:10.4000/gc.1002).
Lawrence, Jon, "Class, 'Affluence' and the Study of Everyday Life in Britain, c. 1930-64", *Cultural and Social History*, 10(2), 2013, 273–299 (doi:10.2752/147800413X13591373275411).
Lefebvre, Henry, *The Survival of Capitalism*, London, Allison & Busby, 1976.
Mann, Robin, Fenton, Steve, *Nation, class, and resentment: The politics of national identity in England, Scotland and Wales*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
McNamara, Carole, Aubenas, Sylvie, *The lens of impressionism: photography and painting along the Normandy coast, 1850-1874*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Museum of Art; Manchester, New York Hudson Hills, 2010.
McSmith, Andy, *No Such Thing as Society: A History of Britain in the 1980s*, London, Constable, 2010.
Mellor, David, *No Such Thing as Society: Photography in Britain 1967-87: from the British Council and the Arts Council Collection*, London, Hayward Gallery, 2007.
Messina, Maria Grazia, "Monet on the Normandy Coast: Ecology and Vision", in Stephen Eisenman (ed.), *The Ecology of Impressionism*, Milan, Skira, 2010, 97–106.
Moran, Joe, *Reading the Everyday*, London, Routledge, 2005.
Newton, Scott, *The Reinvention of Britain 1960–2016: A Political and Economic History*, London, Routledge, 2017.
Oliver, Frank R., "The Effectiveness of the UK Travel Allowance", *Applied Economics*, 3(3), 1971, 219–226 (doi:10.1080/00036847100000006).
Parr, Martin, *Life is a Beach*, Munich, Schirmer/Mosel, 2013.
–––, *The Last resort*, [Stockport], Dewi Lewis, 2020.
Pollen, Annebella "When is a Cliché, not a Cliché?: Reconsidering Mass-produced Sunsets", in Ben Burbridge and Annebella Pollen (ed.), *Photography Reframed New Visions in Contemporary Photographic Culture*, London, Routledge, 2020, 74–81.
Postoutenko, Kirill, *Totalitarian communication: hierarchies, codes and messages*, Bielefeld, Transcript, 2010.
Price, Lisa, Narchi, Nemer (ed.), *Coastal Heritage and Cultural Resilience*, Bern, Springer, 2018.
Scott-Samuel, Alex, Bambra, Clare, Collins, Chik *et al.*, "The Impact of Thatcherism on Health and Well-Being in Britain", *International Journal of Health Services* 44(1), 2014, 53–71 (doi:10.2190/HS.44.1.d).
Sladen, Chris, "Holidays at Home in the Second World War", *Journal of Contemporary History*, 37(1), 2002, 67–89 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/3180746).
Smith, Graham, "The Lens of Impressionism: Painting and Photography on the Normandy Coast", *History of Photography*, 34(2), 193–199 (doi:10.1080/03087291003757130).
Smith, Melanie Kay, "Seeing a new side to seasides: Culturally regenerating the English seaside town", *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 6(1), 2004, 17–28.
Sutcliffe-Braithwaite, Florence, "Discourses of 'class' in Britain in 'New Times'", *Contemporary British History*, 31(2), 2017, 294–317.
Triani, Giorgio, *Pelle di luna, pelle di sole: nascita e storia della civiltà balneare (1700-1946)*, Venezia, Marsilio, 1988.
Urry, John, Larsen, Jonas, *The tourist gaze 3.0*, London, Sage, 2011.
Vinen, Richard, *Thatcher's Britain The Politics and Social Upheaval of the Thatcher Era*, London, Pocket, 2010.
Walton, John K., *The British seaside: Holidays and resorts in the twentieth century*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2000.
Wells, Liz, *Land matters: Landscape photography, culture and identity*, London, Routledge, 2021.
Williams, Val, Parr, Martin, *Martin Parr*, London, Phaidon, 2004.

Summertime France as Ethno-Sociological Experiment: Finding the Extraordinary in the Ordinary in Jacques Rozier's *Du côté d'Orouët* (1969)

Hugo Frey
University of Chichester

Abstract: This article provides an original close reading of Nouvelle Vague filmmaker, Jacques Rozier's major contribution to the representation of the summer holiday in post-war French cinema, *Du côté d'Orouët* (1969, released 1973). It analyses how Rozier's comedy provides a unique sociology of changing gender and class structures, after the confrontations of May '68. It suggests that the work is a forgotten masterpiece that has too often been overlooked in favour of Rozier's own heritage as a figure from the Nouvelle Vague or in preference for work from more familiar contemporary directors who were working with the popular film stars of the period (a world that Rozier himself eschewed). Against that mainstream tradition of cinema, the deliberately minor, quasi ethnographic or sociological work of Rozier invented an original social-fiction which captured the trials and tribulations of the lower middle class youth who had gained some freedoms compared to in the 1950s, but who remained economically and culturally marginalized. Yet this group are not patronized by the filmmaker's method which prefers empathy with its subjects, a position supported by Rozier's powerful photography of the Atlantic ocean.

Keywords: Jacques Rozier, *Du côté d'Orouët*, *Adieu Philippine*, Summer, holidays/vacations, provincial France, social class, lower-middle class, comedy, realist aesthetics, youth and leisure, ethnographic film, found footage and amateur film, Pierre Bourdieu.

Résumé : Cet article propose une lecture originale du film de Jacques Rozier *Du côté d'Orouët* (1969, sorti en 1973), contribution majeure du cinéaste de la Nouvelle Vague à la représentation des vacances d'été dans le cinéma français d'après-guerre. Il s'agit

d'analyser comment la comédie de Rozier fournit une sociologie unique de l'évolution des structures de genre et de classe, après les affrontements de Mai 68. Cette étude suggère que ce film est un chef-d'œuvre oublié, trop souvent négligé, éclipsé par l'héritage de Rozier en tant que figure de la Nouvelle Vague et par les œuvres d'autres réalisateurs contemporains travaillant avec les stars du cinéma populaire de l'époque (un monde que Rozier lui-même évitait). À l'encontre de cette tradition cinématographique dominante, le travail délibérément mineur, quasi ethnographique ou sociologique de Rozier a inventé une fiction sociale originale qui a su capter les épreuves et les tribulations de la jeunesse de la classe moyenne inférieure qui avait certes gagné quelques libertés par rapport aux années 1950, mais qui restait économiquement et culturellement marginalisée. Pourtant, cette jeunesse n'est pas traitée avec condescendance, grâce à la méthode du cinéaste qui préfère l'empathie avec ses sujets. Cette prise de position est d'ailleurs rendue manifeste par les puissantes photographies de l'océan Atlantique réalisées par Rozier.

Mots-clés : Jacques Rozier, *Du côté d'Orouët*, *Adieu Philippine*, été, vacances, France provinciale, classe sociale, classe moyenne inférieure, comédie, esthétique réaliste, jeunesse et loisirs, film ethnographique, *found footage* et film amateur, Pierre Bourdieu.

THE French film director Jacques Rozier remains best known today for his debut film *Adieu Philippine* (1962) because of its powerful contribution to the Nouvelle Vague school. It was widely celebrated at the time for contributing to the promotion of the new cinema that was dynamic, real, and engaged with contemporary themes. Afterall, famously, it is a photographic still from the work – a picture of the two young women actors waving from a sailing boat on holiday in Corsica – that the *Cahiers du cinéma* selected for the cover of its own special issue that it dedicated to the Nouvelle Vague in December 1962. This was a perfect snapshot image of youthful zest for life with the young women clad in swim wear waving enthusiastically to the beach while keeping their balance by holding the mast of the pleasure boat. Also, by 1962, when the new wave's initial *force de frappe* had concluded, it was the same cover-still that evoked a bittersweet nostalgia associated with finding long lost holiday photographs, once prized possessions that had been subsequently filed and forgotten in old unopened albums. Relooking at the cover of the magazine, it is as if the young women are already waving goodbye to a different epoch of filmmaking.[1]

While there is only one well known scholarly work dedicated to Rozier's career as-a- whole, the critical attention garnered by *Adieu Philippine* has grown over the years of commemoration of, and discussion

1. The same image is repeated for the cover of one of the key much later histories of the new wave (Marie, 1997).

on, the meaning of the Nouvelle Vague (Burdeau, 2001).[2] Rozier's presence in reproductions of group photographs of the new generation of filmmakers is often spotted in this material. Notably this is found in the image of his participation at the 1959 'young cinema' conference at La Napoule, near Cannes, that was recorded in *Arts* magazine at the time.[3] Similarly, it is repeated in the literature that Jean-Luc Godard lavished praise on *Adieu Philippine* when it was first released, while a little later on François Truffaut included his admiring review of the work in his collected *The Films in My Life* (Truffaut1975, 1980: 324-325). Let me note next that Truffaut had worked with Rozier on the promotional trailer for *Adieu Philippine* and Rozier had done set-documentary films for Godard's *Le Mépris* (1963). More recently, Antoine de Baecque has described Rozier's first work as one of the most beautiful films of the young cinema of the early 1960s, while Jean Douchet has emphasized its thematic consistency with works from Godard, Agnès Varda, and Eric Rohmer (de Baecque, 1998: 133; Douchet, 1998: 125). And, rightly so. Rozier's portrayal of a young television technician, his life and loves, in the months before conscription into national military service has aged well with time. The director's original intention to capture the ordinary daily life of young people remains authentic and his depictions of the nascent media industry in early 1960s Paris have only gained in historical relevance as the years have gone by. Michel Marie is wise to underline the film's importance in his work on the new wave movement when stating that Rozier's film was "le chef d'oeuvre du naturel" that the *Cahiers du cinéma* critics had dreamt of (Marie, 1997 : 84).

It is also the case that Rozier's work was one of the few films to be able to shed any contemporary light on the French experience of the war of decolonization in Algeria which was for the most part entirely restricted from public representation by a regime of strict government censorship (Stora, 1992; Frey, 2014: 138-146). Rather cleverly, on multiple levels, Rozier's *Adieu Philippine* managed to circumvent this restriction. Firstly, his storyline openly emphasized the subject of conscription and the presence of the Algerian war was signalled fully in an initial on screen text which alerted viewers to the regulations of the censor. Secondly, Rozier reflected the looming presence of the war in the work through a series of suggestive visual metaphors. Thus, we are invited to see the Corsican hills as a reference to the similar mountain terrain across the Mediterranean in North Africa. Similarly, when the concluding images of the work show the conscript taking a ship from Corsica to report for duty in Marseille one is equally encouraged to compare this image with the equivalent image

2. The relative lack of interest in Rozier in academic circles is only slowly changing. My own interest in his work is foreshadowed in Hugo Frey, *Nationalism and the Cinema in France* (2014); while important new work is found in the analysis of Gilles Chamerois (2016 cited herein) and with the recent doctoral thesis of Ernest Tremper, *Memory, Language, Utopia: Deferred Idylls in Three Films by Jacques Rozier* (2021).
3. See *Arts* (27 May 1959) 'Dossier Nouvelle Vague'.

of the military boats which were regularly deploying young conscripted troops from France to fight in Algeria. In the diegesis of the film Rozier shows a man leaving Corsica but this image-idea stands for the poignant moments of when a military ship departs for a war zone.[4] Let me underline that these were precisely the scenes that were in fact occurring across the southern French ports between 1954 and 1962 and that were only years later 'published' in cinema in Bertrand Tavernier's remarkable historical documentary, *La Guerre sans nom* (1992). Thus, in *Adieu Philippine*, Rozier was able to speak relatively openly on young Frenchmen's and Frenchwomen's experience of waiting to go-to-war while all the time avoiding any explicit images that may have raised the attention of the censor. The film was however not released to the public because of technical production difficulties on the sound of the film until 1962 when the worst of the war for the French conscripts had stopped. Nonetheless, the immediate legacies of decolonization remained 'hot' even if conscription to national service no longer meant a direct combat role for soldiers.[5]

In *Du côté d'Orouët* (1969, released 1973) Rozier tells of how three Parisian young women take a late summer vacation at one of their families' holiday homes on the western, Vendée, coast, around Saint Gilles Croix de Vie. The eponymous village of Orouët is located nearby and features throughout as an inland spot to visit. Joelle (Danièle Croisy), Caroline (Caroline Cartier) and Kareen (Françoise Guégan) sunbath, eat holiday food, drink cider, read magazines and try to relax. Shortly after their arrival on the coast one of their male, Paris office work-life superiors, Gilbert (Bernard Ménez) arrives suggesting that he is visiting family nearby, although it is self-evident that he wants to spend time with the young women, especially the one who he manages in the office and who he has developed romantic feelings for. Scenes of gentle comedy punctuate the film often at the expense of Gilbert who is relentlessly teased by the young women and who is clumsy and maladroit, while always trying to impress through his abilities to perform as an attractive young man (to be suave, to be sporty, to be a skilled chef in the kitchen). Rozier sets off Gilbert's failed efforts to perform a conventional heterosexual masculine role against a local sailing type, Patrick (Patrick Verde), who is both more physically attractive, dynamic and confident, and able to gallop on a horse and pilot a sail boat which he owns. In between the sections of gentle comedy Rozier enjoys showing off the final days of the summer in

4. For further readings on this aspect see the ground-breaking work of Mani Sharpe, "Screening decolonisation through privatisation in two New Wave films: *Adieu Philippine* and *La Belle Vie*" (Sharpe, 2017: 129–143).
5. See for example discussion on the continued importance of a colonial ideology on the extreme right and its role in the growth of the Front National in "Questions of decolonization and post-colonialism in the ideology of the French extreme right" (Flood and Frey, 1998: 69–88).

western France through images of the beach and sky, as well as the site of the ocean waves from the window of the holiday house.

Not a lot happens really. The young people sun bathe, mess around on deckchairs, go to the local creperie or visit the inland countryside, to repeat the very slow and loose plot. In short, throughout the 150 minutes of the picture, the set piece moments of comedy and pathos are framed by lots of naturalistic summer holiday material. Rozier organizes this late summer narrative through inter-titles of a diary marking the days in September when the story takes place. He films the material through extended passages without marked editing (with no or very little montage) in an extremely naturalistic style which I will come back to shortly in this article. In fact, *Du côté d'Orouët* is arguably the perfect summer seaside movie – entirely about and located through – the idea of showing life out of the city and the experience of sea and sunshine at that most poignant moment of the summer during its gradual eclipse, when the beginnings of the first glimmers of the new season are also peaking through. Jean-Michel Frodon who clearly admired the film suggested that this kind of work was unable to find an audience in the early 1970s because the seriousness of the times (the oil crisis; the end of years of economic growth; and the culmination of the violence of the Vietnam war) wanted more weighty material. Or, as he explained, there was a desire for bigger subjects than "de flirts et de bisbilles entre trois jeunes femmes et deux hommes sur une plage vendéenne" (Frodon, 1995: 358).

Re-viewing of *Du côté d'Orouët* fifty-years after its completion merits a more nuanced consideration. It is in discussing *Adieu Philippine* in *Arts* in 1962 that Rozier offers us a new key to re-engage with *Du côté d'Orouët*. Therein he complained that the film critics had not all appreciated his film because he had wanted to give a visual-narrative space to a social class that was rarely seriously addressed in filmmaking: the people who anyone would meet on every street corner in France. Rozier continued to explain that in fact it was the ordinary, working/lower-middle class, people that were precisely the group that he found the most interesting to make films about. He expanded:

> *Évidemment, ils ont de petites moustaches, ils poussent des voitures d'enfants le dimanche au Bois de Boulogne et vont en vacances à Saint-Brévin-les Pins ou à Castelnaudry dans la famille, et sans doute existera-t-il quelques esthètes qui trouveront le film ordinaire pusiqu'il représente des gens ordinaires* (Rozier qtd in Douchet, 1997: 219–220).

For information, the town of Saint-Brévin-les Pins is about a ninety-minute car journey from the village of Orouët. However, what is more important here than literal questions of geography is Rozier's avowed

commitment to social class, his ambition to giving the right to representation in the cinema of the ordinary people, by which he means working class and lower middle class groups. Furthermore, it is in *Du côté d'Orouët* that Rozier continued this defence and celebration of this social group. Whereas in *Adieu Philippine* the summer holiday section of the film worked as a metaphorical mode to address national conscription and war, in *Du côté d'Orouët* he makes the idea of the summer vacation as experienced by the ordinary people his exclusive subject. Yes, on one level, following Frodon, the second major work by Rozier is just a very good light comedy. However, as I will adumbrate further in this article, on a deeper level again, it is also Rozier's outstanding contribution to the quasi-documentary representation of the modes and dispositions of the ordinary people as they experienced late summer leisure circa 1969.

In *Du côté d'Orouët* Rozier therefore tracks the contemporary documentary film movement as espoused by figures such as Jean Rouch (*Chronique d'un été*, 1961) and Chris Marker (*Le Joli mai*, 1963). On the one hand, *Du côté d'Orouët* is a light dramatic comedy. On the other hand, it is a detailed examination of the habitus of the lower middle class. In *Du côté d'Orouët*, Rozier is a sociologist or ethnographer as much as he is a comedian. In other words, Rozier pulls together moments of work that nod to a classic comedy (of a Pagnol or a Tati), while all the while exploiting a cinematography of social realism that looks to socio-ethnography, as well as of course Italian neo-realist cinema which also he admired greatly. To be clear, his work was a fiction: compared to a Rouch, Rozier worked with actors; he invented a story-world; and he used colour, sound and lighting to paint this world. However, he selected a sociological subject (youth on a summer-holiday); an under-represented social group (the lower middle class); he cast unknown actors; and very importantly he encouraged them to talk for themselves in the roles they had been given. He avoided montage in favour of allowing very long scenes of semi-open conversation to flow naturally. Only the loose plot and the comedy episodes generated by the dramatic situation punctuated this method and they were created out of the normal social experience of informal flirtations and group inter-action. In this way fact and fiction were entirely blurred in the making of the work. For example, recalling *Du côté d'Orouët* Rozier remembers that a scene in which Gilbert/Ménez expresses his frustration with being teased was a direct response from Ménez to his own experience of the making of the film. Rozier mused:

> *Tous les interprètes sont d'ailleurs très proches de leurs personnages respectifs. La préparation du repas, il suffisait de la tourner en continuité. La mise en scène est plutôt intervenue au moment du montage. Quand Gilbert pique une crise de nerfs et casse des assiettes, c'est très proche de la réalité: il était devenu un peu le toutou de ces demoiselles,*

> *qui l'appelaient Nénesse, le taquinaient tout le temps* (Rozier qtd in Burdeau, 2001: 42).

Du côté d'Orouët is a unique work. Neither full documentary nor outright commercial comedy it always hovers between the two and, true to Rozier's response to the critics of *Adieu Philippine*, at its core there is the representation of the people you would meet on any street corner or for that matter on any small-town holiday beach at the end of summer. We are in the territory of invented documentary and from my perspective, with *Du côté d'Orouët*, Rozier was filming as a contemporary of Pierre Bourdieu who was at this same time far more systematically theorizing class, power, influence and habitus in works such as *Les Héritiers* (with J.C. Passeron) and *Un art moyen* (for example, Bourdieu and Passeron, 1964; Bourdieu, ed., 1965). My point is not to claim here that Rozier was influenced directly by Bourdieu or his sociology. Instead, it is to indicate that the director was working on similar social questions through his cinema. Clearly what is different is that Rozier couched his sociology as a comedy and not as a social science or a formal documentary film. His mode is dramatic improvisational filmmaking and not theoretical research. Remarkably Rozier invented a cinema where documentary and drama played off and with each other. The subcategories of each format blurring together to achieve the powerfully telling account of the summer holiday. This hybridity is what made Rozier's work difficult to interpret when it was first released and precisely why today it is an absolutely fascinating and important window on its own time and place. Certainly, this synthesis of ultra-realism (documentary) and genre work (comedy) was also always an ambition for the Nouvelle Vague circa 1958 and one can see Rozier's film as a late flourishing of this ambition. Indeed, it was a profound deepening of the idea in its long length, languid exposition, and attempt to look 'natural' while all the while being entirely intellectually conceived. Furthermore, Rozier was arguably also loyal to the deepest origins of the Nouvelle Vague. Not only did he continue the new wave ambition and tropes, but he also reached back to the social survey mode that had first conceptualized the term, Nouvelle Vague. Let us recall that it was Françoise Giroud who had originally employed 'Nouvelle Vague' to describe her journalistic-sociological survey of young people, their lifestyles, aspirations and views on the world (Giroud, 1958). In microcosm *Du côté d'Orouët* revisited precisely this terrain to record and capture a portrait of the young. In other words this is a film out of its own time, which was rather the earlier Nouvelle Vague era, – yet one with the necessary ambition of engaging with its own social context precisely because of the purpose to address the present day conditions of 'ordinary' France.

What then does Rozier's film have to say about its subject? What sociology of the ordinary people does Rozier conclude on in this work?

Rozier is not a didactic filmmaker but rather he allows his portrayal of the young in summertime to seep into the viewer's consciousness rather than for us to be told what to think. We learn, or at least witness, three fundamental aspects: (1) the ambiguous traces of the May '68 conflict; (2) a representation, an image, of the 'ordinary people' – broadly defined here as Parisian, white collar, lower middle-class youth; and (3) a comparison between this everyday human experience and the natural environment of the Atlantic coast. Let us next unpack further and in turn each of Rozier's conclusions.

(1) Through his film Rozier suggests an ambiguous legacy of the youth revolt of May '68. Across the work none of the protagonists refer to the youth revolt of the previous year and each of the youths acts and seems entirely apolitical. The world outside the holiday home is far away and leisure time holds seemingly no space for political debate or reflection. Similarly, the context of the cold war and the American hot war in Vietnam that are contemporaneous to the holiday are entirely overlooked by Rozier and his actors. The young French shown in the film have the luxury of enjoying a summer holiday without much anxiety at all which contrasts with Rozier's underlying thesis in *Adieu Philippine*. Times have changed and there is something reassuring about seeing the young having a fun time with each other by the seaside. Rozier therefore implies that at this time and for this group the clouds of war are long gone. In addition, this group were not students and they represent a youth (18-30) who had *not* been explicitly politicized one way or another. Nor for that matter are the characters the trend seekers flocking to watch films like Michael Wadleigh's rock documentary record, *Woodstock* (1970). White wine is the only drug shown in the film and although some of the girl's clothes evoke something of the counter-culture they are clearly the shop purchased, respectable versions, of the fashion. Holidays on the Atlantic coast were not going to become 'happenings' for the young French you would meet on a street corner (according to the director). As such Rozier asserts the presence of a lower middle class that is unaffiliated to the *avant garde* culture or to any political radicalism. Most young people did not go to university in this period and the four young holiday makers are a powerful reminder that the majority of Western Europeans were not engaged in explicitly radical politics but were rather building careers and making new family groups.

Nonetheless, there are also important signs that conventions and power dynamics have changed or at least are changing through the course of the last month of the summer. Certainly, the film is suggestive of new gender power structures in its depiction of the interactions between the girls and Gilbert. Now that the young women and their male superior are away from Paris (and off work), it is the women who become in charge of

the man who has the power over them in much of the rest of their daily lives. They now host him in their 'home' and he is the one made to perform for them. This is not only displayed in the works underlying plot and the scenes in which Gilbert is teased but through the women's physical control of Gilbert who is often pushed around, touched by them, as opposed to him touching them, and manipulated to where they want him (he is literally made to camp in a tent in the garden outside the house rather than share the space in the house proper). Such inversions of power speak to the growing feminist movement which was developing in France both before and after May '68 and is exemplified in film by the mid-1970s in work such as Delphine Seyrig's documentary masterpiece, *Be Pretty and Shut Up*. The dynamic and playful wit of the women in Rozier's work also reveals the man's relative foolishness and thereby all the more indicating the inappropriate power structures at work in the normal economy of the year back in the office in Paris where the male is constituted as a leader. The film therefore shows a subtext close to what Rod Kedward has identified as the carnivalesque nature of the youth revolts of '68 (Kedward, 2000: 227-239). By which I mean that in this film the summer holiday pause represents more than a holiday, it is also a space in which everyday roles are inverted and the radicalism of May '68 is open to be re-staged just a little once again. This is a perspective that Rozier himself underlines in the burlesque nature of some of the comedy and in the repeated dwelling of his camera on a weather-beaten statue of Pan that sits in the front garden of the holiday home. For example, in an extended passage of physical comedy, the girls and the boy lose control of the live eels they have bought to cook for dinner. Long and short slippery fish squiggle over the kitchen floor as Gilbert tries to gather them in and the young women shriek and scream. Later in an echo of this earlier section, as discussed above and noted by Rozier in his memory of the making of the film, Gilbert makes himself drunk and is unable to finish making a full fish meal to any kind of satisfaction. To repeat, the women let him into their domestic space and he is unable to take any control there at all. It is the complete inversion of the power he is able to display in the professional work environment.

Yet Rozier is more subtle an observational filmmaker than a purely anarchic or festive one. As the film progresses, and the summer season elapses, his sympathies seem to grow closer to Gilbert. After a final comic scene, Gilbert leaves in despair and one of the women regrets their treatment of him, while another states quite boldly that without him their holiday would have been nothing much at all. In an especially wistful passage of the film, they spot one of his tent pins has been left behind and in tribute to him they leave it behind outside the house as a memento for years to come.[6] Moreover, in the final minutes of the film, which return to Paris

6. The same scene is identified as being at the heart of Rozier's poetics in the nuanced and persuasive work by Gilles Chamerois, "Vacance: Vacancy and vacation in the films of

it is Gilbert who seems to have something of the last laugh by showing off to a new potential girlfriend that he had shared his summer holidays that year with three women (and rather amusingly selects steak frites to eat for lunch instead of fish, which he declares he has gone off). In summary, Rozier is the gentlest of radical filmmakers here, a position in line with his observational fascination with the ordinary rather than any explicit revolutionary position. His work taps into and exposes the post May '68 gender power dynamics and explores the inversion of the traditional conservative mode. However, his conclusion is to restore the pre-existing order. This was arguably simply down to his realism too as the spirit of May '68 fast elapsed and converted into the dominant liberalism of the 1970s. The gender politics of the film are similarly shaped in more conservative direction than one may always imagine with the introduction of the successful male figure, Patrick. Patrick attracts two of the women and establishes a conventional romantic rivalry between them; although to add nuance this abates when the women leave the holiday home to return to Paris. Rozier's male role model is an important foil for the comic Gilbert to run up against but he is also a rather one-dimensional stereotype.

Generally speaking, Rozier is also conservative in his work's uncritical evocation of nostalgia. Rozier's nod to Proust in the title of the work (*Du côté de chez Swann*) raises the importance of time and memory in the film. The world of the summer holiday house represents a moment of life and history that is timeless: never changing when compared to the speed of daily city life or political turbulence and social-economic change. For Rozier summer holiday time is a period of timelessness as he shows the girls exploring the holiday house which has not changed much at all over many years. There remains the sparse old fashioned furniture, an ancient clock which chimes, and the sound of the sea metronomically lapping nearby. Under the stairs there are old things from past times that the young women excavate and play around with, as well as the decrepit Pan statue outside. In the house itself the young women return to more childish state as they genuinely play around with each other and no longer maintain adult formalities. If the summer holiday represents a chance to witness a microcosm of socio-political power of gender, class and economy after May' 68, then it also means a return to innocence and childhood, a domain where linear time is less important than the circular repetition of rituals of play and enjoyment associated with the traditions of being by the seaside. Note again that the women leave a memento of their stay on the side of the house when they depart, making it as much a living museum as standard holiday home. Local regional cuisine is not only sold based on cultural geography but also precisely because it is deemed unchanged, authentic, coming straight from the past to the plate. Rozier's

Jacques Rozier" (Chamerois, 2016: 106–107).

world of the summer-break is that of the return to better days or at least to repeat what is familiar and re-assuring. Intriguingly, to repeat, Rozier portrays Gilbert as having no connection to the nostalgia of seaside cuisine and it is his final failure in the kitchen that precipitates his departure and slowly also the conclusion of the film. Thereby Rozier shows that Gilbert's lower middle class status means he does not 'know' a nostalgic history of the Atlantic coast and so he has no skill set to function successfully there. At the seaside this is disempowering for him while back in the city such things are meaningless again and he is able to invent his own history of that summer, one that can impress and edit out his social humiliation. By showing Gilbert's social condition the film invites the viewer to think more thoroughly on how class and role performance work, what it really means to come from one social group and not another. This is the politics of Rozier's film and his agenda to engage with the everyday life of the society around him. Rozier shows us what class position teaches us and how that is played out in social interaction. This occurs all the time but it is rarely visualized and represented for audience evaluation.

(2) The work holds up a unique sociological mirror to the lower middle class. What Rozier shows is the daily social experience of the growing number of French who no longer fitted into a distinct traditional working class identity, yet were nonetheless not a full part of the middle class (Royant, 2012: 80). In fact, his setting is seemingly sociologically typical for the holiday experiences of 1960s and 1970s modernizing French. Thus economist Jean Fourastié suggests that in this time of the growth of holiday making: 20% of French took holidays in either a second home or a rented property; and that 42% went to their parents or to friends. Exactly then as is reflected in the film that claims the mantle of showing the normal modes. Gilbert who is technically camping in *Du côté d'Orouët* is also confirmed as 'statistically typical' in the same survey data which noted that 15% spent time 'camping'. The long sections of the work that show the young people doing not very much other than being together and messing around adds to the quality of the work. Rozier re-creates low key leisure time to show how much fun it can provide and also maps in the specific details of this experience: joking around, eating together, café visits, sunbathing, walking, romantic flirting, and some amateur sport (horse riding/sailing). The women talk about food and as the film progresses the meaning of their relations with the two men. Patrick (the perfect man) is always dressed well in sailing sports clothes, a uniform of a kind which indicates some greater confidence and competence than Gilbert (who over-dresses on one occasion). None of the characters engage in the more upper bourgeois hobby of shopping or participating in a cultural or arts event. The ordinary stuff listed above is enough. Let me underline this work was not a formal documentary. What Rozier delivers is a reconstruction of a social scenario for a large number of people in France in the later

1960s and maps into place a careful range of details and power relations that suggest a pattern of experience, including how class equates to social skill and opportunity (see above). This world is neither especially good nor particularly bad for these people yet it is marked with the micro-details of everyday experience as reimagined and improvised by director and crew. Rozier's film works here as a poetic-imagination of a cinema verité documentary work; it is a qualitatively detailed and informative reconstruction of a social group as exemplified in four created characters and their experience of each other during the seaside holiday. The deep observational, ethnographic, claims of the film are probably why audiences were not so engaged. We tend to want to experience film as fantasy rather than as a research mirror on our own lives. An edited entirely comedy version of the work may have found a more extensive audience but this was not Rozier's methodology (*Du côté d'Orouët* is not *Les Bronzés* 1978, dir. Leconte).

As noted earlier in this essay, nuances and telling details are revealed in the film. For example, not all the ordinary people have the same economic power or resources. Thus, Gilbert is maybe a successful lower middle class office manager in Paris but it is the young woman who has access to a resource such as the second family holiday home on the coast. This embodiment of class subtleties marks the film and allows Rozier to offer a historically resonant picture of his terrain. As its title suggests, the question of place and social geography is quite as important as a standard description of a class. Neatly deployed throughout the film is the comedy of metropolitan versus provincial coastal western France. For example in a particularly memorable and funny scene, the Parisians have all spotted the amusingly named village of Orouët and the girls have made fun of it. However, when they arrive dressed up for an evening out, all there is to discover is a few farm houses and not much else. Rozier allows his audience to see both sides. On the one hand, coastal-rural western France is very different from the capital city and its entertainment culture is almost non-existent, ridiculously exaggerated in trying to copy more high-end resorts with a 'casino' (e.g. Monaco; Le Touquet *et al*). Instead in reality it is limited and old fashioned. On the other hand, the Parisians are expecting too much and are naïve to imagine that the facilities they are familiar with can be replicated in this provincial space. This is a divide that is further underlined in the costumes used in the film. The local fisherman wear-warm work clothes and for them the sea is a site of economy and labour (fishing), while the tourist-visitors consistently wear bright and modern leisure clothes or swimwear. In this staging Rozier underlines that summer does not mean holidays and fun for the local population: instead, it is a time of work and business, whereas for the young visitors it is an opportunity to show off their new fashions and to display their bodies on the beach. Tellingly at the end of the film the woman who runs the creperie is shutting down the café to return to a boulangerie in Rennes. It is an important

snippet of information about the economy of a seaside town and its reliance on the tourist season. Through such details Rozier shows that not everyone is quite as economically equal as the neutral landscape of the beach may quite suggest. Some people have access to second homes; others work hard lives from the resources of the sea; and some again are entirely reliant on the seasonal economy of tourism. One might note finally here that others again do not have access at all to any of the worlds shown by Rozier in his film and do not feature in it at all. One thinks for example of those struggling to eke out an existence in the *bidonvilles* that had grown up around Paris.[7] Others again who were 'invisible' because they were 'confined' to official camps that housed Algerian migrants across the south coast of France (Jordi and Hamoumou, 2003).

Let me next note that Rozier's eye for the lower middle class social-strata was itself still relatively unusual: he was pioneering in offering storytelling about this group. Compare him to for example a contemporary director, Claude Sautet, and for instance his *Les choses de la vie* (1970, the adaptation of a novel by Paul Guimard). Although the film also narrates a love-triangle, it is set among the international jet set Parisian haute bourgeoisie. Therein the protagonists live in smart apartments and stroll about near harbours with yachts. They have cars and don't use trains or the metro (which is shown by Rozier in a Paris sequence at the end of his work). This is completely different social terrain to *Du côté d'Orouët* which instead focusses on small dingy sail boats, local farmers loaning out their riding horses, and the down at heel creperie. As noted above, Rozier's film also includes local people from the small holiday town most of who are fisherman working for a living from the sea. Rozier's casting decisions of course add to this aesthetic. The film has no 'stars' and it is the debut feature of Ménez, who was not from an acting or arts family. In summary, Rozier's far too often overlooked film is a significant contribution to cinema's role as a sociological barometer of post-war France. Where *Adieu Philippine* measured the temperature of the tensions of the war in Algeria, *Du côté d'Orouët* invented a new social cinema for France that aimed to capture a vision of the emerging petit bourgeoisie. This is not the popular terrain of the standard representations of the working class hero in the mode of the Jean Gabin films of the 1930s. However, it was also distinct from the likes of Sautet's work or that of Claude Lelouche's *Un homme ete une femme* (1966) or the Catholic middle class world of Grenoble seen in Eric Rohmer's *Ma nuit chez Maude* (1969). There was also of course none of the explicit militancy of the Left in the film that was being pursued in Godard's work from around this time. However, what Rozier achieves is case study fieldwork on the experience of a lot of French and West Europeans in the later 1960s and 1970s where class structures

7. For early campaigning sociology on this aspect, see Hervo and Charras, 2022.

were reshaping into an expanded, if ill defined, 'lower middle class', that remained nonetheless precariously positioned in terms of both the economic pressures it was always exposed to and lacking in cultural power of the historically established and secure elite social groups.

Rozier's insights merit much greater recognition from scholars and critics precisely because he was able to 'show' his social subjects without too much explicit exposition or any didactic position other than a general empathetic tone. Moreover, his languid slow film style neither exploited nor spectacularized its subject but rather allowed it to breathe and to show the everyday banality of the youth without much economic glamour.

(3) Rozier posits that social experience is situated in a natural environment – the geography and ecology of the Atlantic coast. Throughout the work Rozier captures powerful images of the coastline and the sea to place between his sections of ethnographic description and narrative advance. In so doing it seems to me that Rozier suggests that there is the banal social order of human experience and the profound environmental (what we might call today ecological) rhythm of nature itself.[8] This aspect is first established through the almost permanent sound of the tide in the film and glimpses of the Atlantic from the holiday home windows. It is developed by some of the films few examples of demonstrable montage when Rozier cuts directly from the comedy to view the empty space of the ocean or the expanse of the beach. These passages not only punctuate the social drama but they equally set out the importance of nature itself compared to the everyday modern human existence of the characters. They set in context the failures of Gilbert to show off his masculine prowess and implicitly compare his struggles with the timeless beauty and poetry of the natural order. In this film, the summer is not only a time of social disorder and reorder, but it is also a pause to experience the utterly dramatic force of the environment. *Du côté d'Orouët* does not claim to be a celebration of western France (indeed it also gently mocks the provincial in the mode described above) yet it is one of the best works to show off that region's natural beauty and the force of the ocean. Rozier captures the stunning power of water, sand, sea, wind and light, in each of these passages to great effect. Against the mundane and the everyday world of the holiday home (sociologically observed), Rozier shows us something more powerful and stunning when he films the ocean and its shore. It is in these passages that the work moves out from its enclosed invented-documentary space to something different again. The lives of the protagonists are suspended temporarily and the audience is invited to experience the visual pleasure of the photography of nature. The first montage cut to 'show' the Atlantic is incredibly powerful after the extended passages of

8. The importance of the sea is emphasized greatly in the analysis pursued in Sylvain Coumoul "La Mer monstre", in Burdeau (ed.), 2001: 87–91.

quite claustrophobic interactions between the characters and relatively plotless descriptions of their everyday encounters. Rozier is not a mystical cineaste and there is no sacred aspect to this material. Rather it aims to genuinely capture the ordinary but equally amazing effect of coastal panoramas and the space where land and sea meet. What is interesting is that these pauses, the insertions of landscape/seascape are polysemic. They may speak of the eternal truths of the human experience or they may contrast the triviality of that same experience with the idea of the force of nature. Or differently again, they may stand for the tourist's gaze that lower middle class people were fascinated in and exploited in the growth of what Bourdieu defined as the typical lower middle class hobby of amateur photography. Let me note that Gilbert does not claim expertise as a photographer precisely because Rozier's drama needs Gilbert to be maladroit, to not have an expertise to show off any skill in whatsoever and photography is exactly what his social group were fond of and 'good' at. Visually speaking the same images offer beauty and a chance for the audience to reflect on the social comedy sequences that have preceded them. There is a meditative aspect to the material not unlike that found in the later work of Marguerite Duras on the Normandy coast in her *Baxter Vera Baxter* (1977). For all of these reasons Rozier's first cut from the endless conversations of the girls and Gilbert to the water's edge and the Atlantic sky is a truly memorable moment in cinema.

In short, Rozier shows a great facility to mine the social-political stakes of his times without ever taking an explicit political position of his own. Watching *Du côté d'Orouët* in 2021 means plenty of Rozier's social realism style (free moving camera work, informal dialogue, intradiegetic sound, subject selection) feels now very familiar because of our knowledge of later works from for example the Dardennes brothers, or Rozier's closest cinematic British cousin, in my opinion, Mike Leigh.[9] Yet we must acknowledge that in 1969 his work was highly original and the Rozier aesthetic of blending realist fiction with imagined sociological fact in *Du côté d'Orouët* was ground breaking. The work is an experiment on mixing comedy with ultra-real sociological observation. For precisely these same reasons the work is open to criticism. Fiction is suggested as truth, imagined ethnographic observation that is entirely invented (or at best improvised) was framed by a story-working script, the sociology of a struggling class and gender group is repeatedly aestheticized by the landscape photography of the ocean. In other words, Rozier's works search for the authentic is in many aspects almost entirely inauthentic because after all it is constructed and not just found and observed. And, yes, it is

9. The social comedy meets documentary realism sentiment is also oddly suggestive of the BBC television comedy, 'The Office' (Ricky Gervais and Stephen Merchant, 2001). Remarkable to then discover that Rozier had teamed up again with Ménez in the 1970s to make an observational television comedy for Antenne 2 that is set in a marketing company office, *Marketing Mix* (Rozier, 1978). Therein the Ménez executive figure is named 'Maginot'.

ideological too in its selections, emphases and omissions. Artificially composed 'found footage'-sociology is neither hard sociology nor is it original found material. Nonetheless, for me, *Du côté d'Orouët* is a masterpiece in and of its own terms. For all of its potential failings and frustrations, Rozier created an entirely new form of cinema and did give the ordinary people his image of themselves. His hybrid aesthetic set in play a fascinating experimental space which was edited and framed but also allowed space for free speech, real physical encounters between people, and the sharing of a typical experience with an audience. It holds on screen forever one idea of the summer holidays that the majority of North West Europeans were experiencing in the mid to late twentieth century. It captured this world with its own 'honesty', or better to say empathy, because Rozier's ethnography is never horribly cruel. Certainly, the work feels like a last hurrah of the Nouvelle Vague search for realism and new genre blends: a very long epilogue to better known work from Truffaut and Godard that could not find an audience in 1973 because it was too late. In fact, it is also the case that Rozier invented a form of cinema that chimes more with today than yesterday. In its hybridity and engagement with the aesthetics of homemade film, found footage and or street digital film and photography, *Du côté d'Orouët* anticipated the twenty first century formats of camera phones, youtube channels, and the like. To conclude, Rozier makes us laugh at our own experiences and we should be grateful for that as well.

Hugo Frey is Professor of Cultural and Visual History at the University of Chichester, where he is also Director of Arts and Humanities. He has published books on Louis Malle, Nationalism and the Cinema in France and, with Jan Baetens, several works on the history and idea of the graphic novel. In 2023 he will publish with Jan Baetens and Fabrice Leroy (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to the American Graphic Novel*.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9268-597X

Bibliography

Bourdieu, Pierre, Passeron, Jean-Claude, *Les Héritiers*, Paris, Minuit, 1964.

Bourdieu, Pierre (ed.), *Un art moyen. Essai sur les usages sociaux de la photographie*, Paris, Minuit, 1965.

Burdeau, Emmanuel (ed.), *Jacques Rozier. Le funambule*, Paris, Cahiers du cinéma/Centre Pompidou, 2001

Chamerois, Gilles, "Vacance: Vacancy and vacation in the Films of Jacques Rozier" in Sophie Fuggle and Nicholas Gledhill (ed.), *La ligne d'écume: encountering the French beach,* London, Pavement, 2016, 89–110.

De Baecque, Antoine, *La Nouvelle Vague. Portrait d'une jeunesse*, Paris, Flammarion, 1998.

Douchet, Jean, *Nouvelle Vague*, Paris, Cinémathèque française, 1998.

Flood, Christopher, Frey, Hugo, "Questions of decolonization and post-colonialism in the ideology of the French extreme right", *Journal of European Studies*, 28, 1998, 69–88.

Frey, Hugo, *Nationalism and the Cinema in France*, New York, Berghahn, 2014.

Frodon, Jean-Michel, *L'Âge moderne du cinéma français*, Paris, Flammarion, 1995.

Giroud, Françoise, *La Nouvelle vague. Portraits de la jeunesse*, Paris, Gallimard, 1958.

Hervo, Monique, Charras, Marie-Ange, "Bidonvilles : l'enlisement", *Cahiers libres*, 219-220, 1971.

Jordi, Jean-Jacques, Hamoumou, Mohand, *Les Harkis, une mémoire enfouie*, Paris, Autrement, 2003.

Kedward, Rod, "The Anti-Carnival of Collaboration: Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (1974)" in Susan Hayward and Ginette Vincendeau (ed.), *French Film: Texts and Contexts*, London, Routledge, 2000, 227–239.

Marie, Michel, *La Nouvelle Vague – une école artistique*, Paris, Nathan, 1997.
Royant, Olivier (ed.), *La France heureuse*, Paris, Match-Historia, 2012.
Sharpe, Mani, "Screening decolonisation through privatisation in two New Wave films: *Adieu Philippine* and *La Belle Vie*", *Studies in French Cinema* 17(2), 2017, 129–143.
Smith, Alison, *French Cinema in the 1970s: The Echoes of May*, Manchester, Manchester UP, 2005.
Stora, Benjamin, *La Gangrène et l'Oubli*, Paris, La Découverte, 1992.
Tremper, Ernest, *Memory, Language, Utopia: Deferred Idylls in Three Films by Jacques Rozier*, Boston University, 2021.
Truffaut, François, *The Films of My Life*, London, Allen Lane, 1980.

The iconography of the summer vacation in Julie Delpy's *Le Skylab* (2011)

Felicity Chaplin
Monash University

Abstract: Set over a weekend in the July summer holidays, *Le Skylab* (Julie Delpy 2011) depicts a typical family gathering in the late 1970s. On the occasion of her grandmother's birthday, eleven-year-old Albertine and her parents travel by train from Paris to spend the weekend in Brittany with her extended family. The film is loosely autobiographical and is in part an evocation of Delpy's own childhood; yet it nonetheless offers a universalised image of its milieu. Visually, Delpy's film can best be described as an impression (in the sense given the term in relation to painting) of a summer weekend spent in Brittany in which Delpy draws on a cultural storehouse of images and tropes to construct a milieu at once particular and universally western, which captures a certain time and place and also offers a more generalised and relatable representation of the summer vacation through its recognisable images and themes. Taking an iconographical approach, this article is primarily a pictorial or compositional analysis of the representation of the summer vacation in *Le Skylab*. The focus is on two main motifs or tropes of the summer vacation: the summer place and the beach. It will also consider typical tropes and themes of the summer vacation narrative including arrival, summer romance, anticipation and departure.

Keywords: summer, summer place, the beach, iconography, nostalgia.

Résumé : *Le Skylab* (Julie Delpy, 2011) se déroule le temps d'un week-end pendant les vacances d'été en juillet et dépeint une réunion familiale typique de la fin des années 1970. À l'occasion de l'anniversaire de sa grand-mère, Albertine, onze ans, et ses parents voyagent en train depuis Paris pour passer le week-end en Bretagne avec sa famille élargie. Le film est d'inspiration vaguement autobiographique et constitue en partie une évocation de la propre enfance de Julie Delpy. Il offre néanmoins une image universelle de son milieu. Le film de Julie Delpy peut être visuellement décrit comme une impression (dans le sens donné à ce terme par la tradition picturale) d'un week-end

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

d'été passé en Bretagne. Delpy puise dans un réservoir culturel d'images et de tropes pour construire un environnement à la fois particulier et universellement occidental, qui réussit à capter un certain temps et un certain lieu. Le film offre également une représentation plus générale des vacances d'été à laquelle les spectateurs peuvent facilement se rapporter, à travers des images et des thèmes identifiables. Adoptant une approche iconographique, cet article est avant tout une analyse picturale et compositionnelle de la représentation des vacances d'été dans *Le Skylab*. L'accent est mis sur deux motifs ou tropes principaux des vacances d'été : la maison de vacances et la plage. L'analyse porte également sur les tropes et thèmes typiques du récit des vacances d'été, comme l'arrivée, la romance estivale, l'anticipation des vacances et le départ.

Mots-clés : été, maison de vacances, plage, iconographie, nostalgie.

A CANICULAR sky, early afternoon, midsummer. A luncheon party congregates around a long table carelessly laid with a linen cloth, ceramic plates, cutlery, glasses and bottles of wine and pastis. Some are seated, some standing; all are enjoying a leisurely lunch *en plein air* amidst the trees in a sprawling country garden. The scene is awash with green – the seasonal colour of summer – in its various hues: the green-gold grass, the dark green cypress, the Veronese green and yellow-pear green foliage of poplars and elm trees, and the chartreuse green table umbrella. The atmosphere is free and relaxed and the voices of the guests overlap as the conversation moves easily from one topic to the next in the luminous dappled sunlight. In both its subject matter and its atmosphere of conviviality, this scene from Julie Delpy's *Le Skylab* (2011) recalls Pierre-Auguste Renoir's *Le Déjeuner des canotiers* (1881). In Delpy's depiction of an outdoor lunch, however, the *belle époque* details of the *mise en scène* are substituted for late 1970s period style: the straw boaters worn by Renoir's oarsmen are replaced by the straw fedoras of the bohemian street theatre performers; white cotton singlets by polyester polo shirts; the midnight blue and marine blue afternoon dresses, trimmed with white ruffles, with synthetic midi-dresses, blouses and skirts; the red and white striped awning by a green geometric print canvas table umbrella trimmed with natural cotton fringe. John Rewald described Renoir's painting as an attempt "to seize the animated outdoor mingling of people in an atmosphere glistering with sunshine and joy of living" (1973: 456). In *Le Skylab*, the guests are gathered for the birthday of the family matriarch and Delpy's scene is, like Renoir's tableau, a depiction of summer leisure; but it is also, more broadly, an episode, one among many, in the summer vacation of the eleven-year-old Albertine (Lou Alvarez). The colours, the light, and the subject matter all reference a western iconography of summer, while the particulars of the *mise en scène* locate the action of the scene in late 1970s France. This scene is one example of how Delpy composes her film, drawing on and updating pre-established tropes and motifs of summer to create universally western vision of the summer vacation.

This article adopts an iconographical approach to Delpy's film. The theory and practice of iconography was first developed by Erwin Panofsky in relation to Renaissance art and later applied to cinema. In *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Panofsky proposed a model for the analysis of Renaissance painting which corresponds to three levels or strata of meaning. For our purposes here, the second level or stratum is the one proper to iconographical analysis: identification and description of images or motifs (Panofsky, 6). Jean-Loup Bourget adopted Panofsky's model for cinema arguing that an analysis of cinema which draws on models or methods from art history is highly productive, primarily because it restores an imbalance in film studies, which has often focused on questions of narrative or plot derived from the history of literature, often neglecting the image or figure (38). Bourget also considers a reference to art history in the analysis of cinema fruitful in that films will often cite motifs, either intentionally or unintentionally, which come directly from the history of painting (40). For Bourget, nothing assures that the reference to painting is completely intentional, while at other times the reference is manifestly intended (40–1). Ed Buscombe's synonym for iconography is 'visual conventions' (Neale: 15). While there is some merit in this definition, the term is too narrow because iconography often encompasses more than just the visual, extending to more literary motifs such as narrative and character. Furthermore, these conventions are subject to historical variability. For Laurence Alloway, Panofsky's theory provided the foundation for a 'descriptive aesthetic' (qtd in Whiteley: 276) which begins with the "physical reality of the photographed world" (Alloway: 16).

What follows in this article is primarily a pictorial or compositional analysis of the representation of the summer vacation in *Le Skylab*. The focus is on two main motifs or tropes of the summer vacation: the summer place (including the typical outdoor lunch) and the beach. It will also consider typical tropes of the summer vacation narrative such as arrival and summer romance and themes such as anticipation and disappointment. The motifs, or visual and narrative references, in *Le Skylab* are at times intentional and at other times unconscious, belonging to a personal history or vision on the one hand, and a collective, specifically western cultural imaginary on the other. What this article thus proposes is an iconographical analysis of what might be called the film's 'holiday style'. *Le Skylab* demonstrates the way an individual artwork both draws on and reworks motifs from its own socio-cultural history.

Set over a weekend in the July summer holidays, *Le Skylab* depicts a typical family gathering in the late 1970s. On the occasion of the birthday of her grandmother (Bernadette Lafont), Albertine and her parents Anna (Julie Delpy) and Jean (Éric Elmosnino) travel by train from Paris

to spend the weekend in Brittany with their extended family. The film is loosely autobiographical and is in part an evocation of Delpy's own childhood; yet it nonetheless offers a universalised image both of its milieu and of summer vacations. *Le Skylab*, which might best be described as a choral family comedy drama, includes many tropes of a typical summer vacation narrative: arrival, communal outdoor lunch, outings to the beach and the disco, ghost stories, communal breakfast, and departure. At the same time Delpy offers a glimpse into the psyche of late 1970s France by exploring family dynamics within a broader socio-political and cultural context which includes the legacy of May 1968, second wave feminism, and the Algerian War. Filmed over six weeks in Brittany during the summer of 2010, *Le Skylab* in its evocation of the 1970s has been considered a nostalgia film. Jay Weissberg described it as "a nostalgia ride back to 1979" (2011), Isabelle Regnier notes the film's nostalgic tone (2011), Antoine Duplan remarks that the film "*remue la nostalgie des étés d'antan*" (2011), Peter Bradshaw calls it "a nostalgic period piece" (2013) and *The Hollywood Reporter* notes its "air of wistful nostalgia" (2011). Indeed, Tim Bergfelder writes:

> narratives of cherished childhood and teenage memories are part of a broader nostalgic tendency that pervades popular European cinema in the 2000s. A particular focus over the past decade has been the 1960s and 1970s, revived and worked through cinematically in a number of different ways. (2014: 37).

However, *Le Skylab* constitutes more than a simple nostalgia film and such a reading tends to gloss over the way a utopian vision of the past is continuously disrupted in the film by frequent foregrounding of the socio-political climate, its mores and values, conflict, and disappointment. While close attention is paid to periodisation at the level of *mise en scène* and dialogue, including fashion, technology, and cultural references, Delpy's use of a framing device in particular pushes the film beyond mere periodisation to navigate a negotiation of the past, time, memory and nostalgia.

Visually, Delpy's film can best be described as an impression (in the sense given the term in relation to painting) of a summer weekend spent in Brittany in which Delpy draws on a cultural storehouse of images and tropes to construct a milieu at once culturally specific and more broadly western; which captures a certain time and place, and also offers a more generalised and relatable representation through the specificity of its images and themes. Critical reception of the film noted this dual aspect. Lisa Nesselson reads Delpy's focus on countryside gatherings and summer holidays with their attendant feasting and drinking as quintessentially French:

> The French, after all, make films about summer holidays and weekends in the country the way Hollywood makes movies about losers overcoming obstacles to become winners. There is much greeting of aunts, uncles, cousins, grandmothers and near-endless eating and drinking. (2011)

Nesselson describes *Le Skylab* as "French-to-the-core" arguing that it "can take its place beside Louis Malle's *Milou en Mai* [...] as a time capsule of French life" while nonetheless conceding that the film is "marbled with universal touches" (2011). A simultaneous Frenchness and universality was also noted by Duplan: "*Tous les clichés du genre sont reconduits sans vergogne. Chacun est invité à reconnaître les siens dans cette famille stéréotypée jusqu'à la caricature, de regretter le bon vieux temps de la rengaine et des premiers baisers, et* L'Eté indien *de Joe Dassin*." (2011).

Le Skylab is not just a straightforward period film. It is, rather, ostensibly a series of recollections of Albertine (Karin Viard) who is taking a train trip to the site of her childhood summer vacation with her husband and young children. The film opens in a contemporary setting with the family boarding a train in Paris bound for Brittany and depicts the mundane problems of holiday train travel (finding a seat together, occupying the children, dealing with uncooperative fellow passengers). When Albertine finally settles into her seat, the soft light through the train window sets off a chain of associations in which a childhood memory of summer vacations is evoked. Thus, the frame narrative transitions from the present to the past by means of the Proustian device of involuntary memory. Over a mid-shot of Albertine, the following lines of dialogue are faintly heard: "Albertine, watch out for cold-water shock!"; "Albertine, keep the brown crabs" and "Titine, sing a song!" and the singing of *Joyeux Anniversaire*. This is followed by the superimposition of a shot of the face of the young Albertine onto the face of the adult Albertine. The camera then tracks out to show the young Albertine seated in a train compartment with her maternal grandmother, Mémé (Emmanuelle Riva), and her parents. This transition establishes the adult Albertine as the subject of the remembrance and her younger self as the object. The action of the remembrance is thus technically mediated through the eyes of the young Albertine; however, her absence from certain scenes often disrupts subjective remembrance. This shift between the subjective and the objective, between mediation and omniscience, allows Delpy to explore certain issues of the period in a more meaningful and nuanced way than may have been possible solely through the eyes of the child Albertine. Commenting on Delpy's reconstruction of the late 1970s, Regnier writes:

> *Loin de l'imagerie conservée dans le formol qui caractérise tant de films contemporains, la reconstitution qu'elle opère séduit pour le*

> *parfum personnel qui y flotte. Bourré de fantaisie, ce passé n'est visiblement pas sorti d'une consultation de revues d'époque mais de son esprit.* (2011)

While a tension or contradiction remains between the frame narrative and the film proper which is never wholly resolved, the viewer is encouraged to read the film as spontaneous remembrance: what follows as the film proper is, as Walter Benjamin remarked of Proust, "not a life as it actually was, but a life as it was remembered by the one who had lived it" (1968: 202).

Le Skylab is primarily an evocation of lost time structured around memories of summer vacations pieced together into a pastiche of images and tropes which transcend period detail. When considering the representation of the summer vacation in *Le Skylab*, it is important to consider both the meaning of the term 'vacation' as such and the specific site of Albertine's vacation: the summer place. For Tara K. Parmiter, vacations are "situated in a specific place for an extended period of time" as opposed to travel which involves "continued movement and often disconnection rather than connection." (2006: 15). We can consider Albertine and her parents as vacationers as in "people who vacate their homes during the summer months and retreat to a more pastoral or natural environment." (Parmiter, 2006: 17). Parmiter argues that while she considers vacations "more rooted" they are by no means motionless (2006: 16) and there is much movement in and around the summer house in *Le Skylab*, including a trip to the beach and the disco. In general terms, vacations are typically taken in the summer and thus carry with them a seasonal iconography conducive to cultural memory. Michael Kammen notes that writers tended to "ascribe distinctive sounds" to each season and that summer has typically been associated with "the racket made by droning cicadas, locusts, and crickets." (2004: 151). Kammen further points out that "since the Renaissance, at least, artists have associated certain colors with each season" and claims that the "most traditional associations have been green with late spring and early summer; golden yellow with mid- and late summer" (2004: 151). In terms of site, the summer house has a particular place in the recent cultural history of the West. While not strictly a summer house in the sense of a site reserved for vacations, the home of Tante Suzette (Michelle Goddet) located in the forest near Saint-Pierre in the Morbihan department of Brittany, functions as such for the young Albertine. Parmiter uses the term "summer place" to "to signify a place away from home that one visits for an extended period in the summer" (2006: 2). For Parmiter, the summer place

> combines a complicated set of associations: it is both a seasonal dwelling and a site of belonging; it offers both escape and relief from

> daily life and a heightened understanding of the everyday; it encourages leisure and frivolity but also deep introspection. This complex, liminal space mirrors the comforts of the domestic home but reflects back on its limitations; in a way, the summer place is the home's wilder double. (2006: 3)

The summer place can also offer the "possibilities of escape, romance [and] renewal" (Parmiter, 2006: 2). Orvar Lofgren claims that summer cottages constitute a utopia "shaped by several forms of longing" (1999: 114). Most importantly, these include, for Lofgren,

> the nostalgia for paradise lost, the idea of a golden age, when summer life was simple and affordable, and families took long vacations. Such longings feed on the many descriptions of 'traditional' summer life of wonderful picnics, sailing, straw hats, and white linen dresses. (1999: 114-115)

For Lofgren, summer houses are frequently sites of nostalgia and melancholy which are connected to summer as a season: "One of the main characteristics of summer vacations or summers on the whole is their hopeless brevity. Here is a utopia that we start to lose already at the beginning of our vacation. Summers are always drawing to a close" (1999: 115). Thus, for Lofgren, summer lends itself to memory precisely because its "bittersweet" passing "fuels the strong element of nostalgia for those seemingly endless school vacations in a distant past"; summer is not only a return to a simpler form of life, but also "a return to childhood" (1999: 115). Delpy depicts this return visually by having the adult Albertine travel backwards on the train.

The summer place

There are two key spaces in the summer vacation narrative of *Le Skylab*: the family home belonging to Tante Suzette where the extended family congregates (Albertine's summer place) and the beach. In addition, other action in the film is set in the train carriage, on the platform at the St Malo train station, in the car driving from the station and to the beach, at the local hall which hosts the youth disco, and the tent Albertine and her cousins sleep out in on the grounds of the summer place. All these spaces are liminal or impermanent.

Our introduction to the summer place is by way of an establishing shot. There is a cut from Albertine and her family arriving from the station by car to a wide shot of the house and grounds. Joe Dassin's wistful

'Été *Indien*' from 1975 (in which he evokes fond memories of a brief love affair) plays on the car radio. The composition is well-balanced, the shot divided in half horizontally with the bottom half occupied by the house and garden and the top half by treetops and sky. Delpy carefully stages the elements of the *mise en scène*: in the lower left-hand corner two women and a small child are setting the makeshift dining table; right of centre in the midground a plume of smoke rises gently from a firepit; in the right-hand corner in the midground a small child plays on a swing set; in the centre midground another child rides his bike across the frame, presaging the appearance of the car. The house and its grounds with its assemblage of objects (swing sets, tables, firepit, deckchairs, bicycles) and bodies in motion are set against a forest of tall and verdant trees against a pale blue summer sky with brilliant clouds. The shot functions in much the same way as Malcolm Andrews argues for Monet's *Meadow with Poplars* (1875): "The passage in to the landscape's space is simple and alluring. Whether or not this is a particular place, local features and forms are loosely generic rather than insistently specific. This is an experience of place that can be totalized." (1999: 18). If this outdoor establishing shot is more generic than specific, the interior of the summer place is an opportunity for Delpy to clearly establish the period of the film in visual terms. The interior features many 1970s design elements such as beige pebble stone pattern linoleum flooring, high-back brown vinyl and chrome or off-white vinyl and timber dining chairs, a carved dark-wood cabinet, indoor plants, gold, white and brown geometric print wallpaper, Duralex amber glassware, a sea-green velvet sofa, and a television set typical of the era on which is shown coverage of the Skylab threat and news of the upcoming French elections.

The scenes shot in the gardens of the summer place capture the pure delight of a lazy summer afternoon following a long lunch: a group of men, old and young, playing pétanque on the gravel driveway; the two grandmothers seated in folding aluminium deckchairs shaded by an outdoor umbrella chatting, knitting and doing word puzzles; a husband and wife sitting in the shade of a tree, smoking, reading and talking; four women sitting around the lunch table playing cards while a baby in a highchair at the head of the table looks on. Of her vision for her film, Delpy remarks:

> From the onset, I didn't want a classical narrative thread but very colorful and intriguing characters in order to tell the story with very few dramatic elements. For me, you can express very powerful things with simple moments from everyday life, when hardly anything happens. (2011)

The mosaic of captured moments is reminiscent of the approach of the French impressionists whose art consisted of capturing fleeting moments of everyday life:

> The bright and mobile style of these impressionist painters, the simple and trivial scenes from everyday life they depicted, [were] so distant from the lofty historical and romanticized mythical or romanticized rural scenes of academic painters (Célestin and Dalmolin, 2016: 109).

Nearly all the impressionists painted gardens; in particular, they often also depicted figures reading in their gardens or the outdoors, including Monet's *Adolphe Monet in the Garden of Le Coteau at Sainte-Adresse* (1867), Manet's *Young Woman in a Garden* (1880) and *Woman Reading* (1880-81). Describing impressionist subject choice, Russell Ash remarks that they pursued "subjects beyond simple landscapes, and their works record such everyday leisure activities as boating and bathing, the pleasures of dining in sun-dappled gardens, outings into the countryside, picnics and walks through flower-strewn meadows." (1995: 10-11). René Gimpel noted that the impressionists "show their particular talent and attain the summit of their art when they paint our French Sundays [...] kisses in the sun, picnics, complete rest, not a thought about work, unashamed relaxation." (qtd. Ash, 1995: 37). Moreover, for Roger Célestin and Eliane Dalmolin, "more than scenery itself, light was crucial to the impressionists" (2016: 109). Delpy too explains the importance of lighting for *Le Skylab*: "I wanted the light to be bright, cheerful, and solar, to reflect the joy emanating from the film shoot and the characters." (2011). As part of her impressionistic evocation of summer leisure, Delpy includes a shot of Anna and Jean on a picnic blanket, leaning against the trunk of a tree reading and smoking. The composition has a distinctly pictorial quality. It is divided in half vertically by the tree trunk with Jean facing the camera directly and Anna seated in profile. With their knees bent to rest their books on, the acute angle formed by their legs mirror the frame of a swing set in the midground. The subject matter is generic, but the specificity of the image comes from the costume and props: Anna's sleeveless blue and white gingham midi dress and Jean's drill cotton pants and Hawaiian shirt layered over a rust-coloured singlet. The colour of the clothing contrasts strongly with the various hues of green of their surroundings and recalls Monet's use of contrasting colour in *Springtime* (1872) to create a focal point. To this scene Delpy adds a playful and personal periodising reference: Jean is reading a play by Copi, *Les Quatre jumelles* (1973), which Delpy's father Albert staged in Paris at the Lucernaire-Forum, Théâtre Rouge in 1980.

The course of the outdoor luncheon is interrupted twice by a summer storm, driving the gathering inside, carrying food, plates, glasses and even at one point, Mémé chariot style asleep in her chair. Here Delpy draws on a common trope of summer in the arts: the summer storm. The most famous example in music is Vivaldi's 'Summer', but the motif also

commonly appears in poems, including 'Summer Storm' by James Russell Lowell, 'Summer Storm' by Sara Teasdale, and 'A Drop fell on the Apple Tree (794)' by Emily Dickinson. The most apposite reference for Delpy's film, however, is from Proust: "But what mattered rain or storm? In summer, bad weather is no more than a passing fit of superficial ill-temper expressed by the permanent, underlying fine weather" (1943: 208). Here Proust uses the summer storm as a metaphor for holiday familial dynamics in much the same way as Delpy uses the holiday mood to maintain equilibrium and harmony of the family unit even when disagreement or conflict threaten to tear it apart.

The beach

Perhaps the site most commonly associated with summer vacations in western iconography is the beach. The beach is a key motif in many depictions of summer in the visual and narrative arts. Beach scenes were a favourite subject of the French impressionists and post-impressionists. In French cinema, the beach is a popular locale in films set during summer vacations, such as *Les vacances de Monsieur Hulot* (Jacques Tati 1953), *La Baie des Anges* (Jacques Demy 1963), Éric Rohmer's *Pauline à la Plage* (1983) and *Conte d'*été (1996) – also filmed on the beaches of Brittany –, and Été *85* (François Ozon 2020). In *Le Skylab* the visit to the beach occurs approximately mid-way through the film and in this sense functions as the film's apex or culmination to which everything prior builds and after which slowly descends. Though it occupies only eight and a half minutes of screen time (in real time it covers several hours) the beach sequence contains some of the most memorable and finely wrought scenes in the film. Following a short repose after the long midday lunch, the beach trip is announced: "*La familia, on va se baigner* ?" Instead of cutting straight to the beach, Delpy builds the anticipation by filming the car ride to the beach through the countryside. Indeed, anticipation is key to the experience of summer vacations and Delpy achieves it by extending the temporal duration between expected events while at the same time maintaining the space for spontaneity which is also an important existential feature of the summer vacation. In the car ride to the beach, for example, the spontaneous telling of the fable of the sea bream and the mermaid both heightens and alleviates the anticipation of the arrival at the beach; a space for spontaneity is carved out from within the otherwise static and transitional space of the car. Delpy further delays the arrival at the beach with a cut to the family home, a shot of Mamie, Mémé, Tante Linette (Aure Atika) and Tante Suzette playing Belote in the garden. This brief interlude juxtaposes the cool green shades of the garden (a dark forest pine tree, vivid green belote board, chartreuse green umbrella and green-gold grass) and its

sounds (birds chirping, water lightly sprinkling as Tonton Hubert (Albert Delpy) hoses the rose bushes) with the pale sky, yellow sand and sounds of the beach of the following shot.

The beach sequence opens with a shot of a stretch of beach beneath a luminous pale blue sky dotted with wispy clouds. Figures are seated nearby but apart, reclining on beach towels or lounging under umbrellas, their straw beach bags and belongings scattered about them like the beige rocks on the golden sand. A group of beachgoers stream out from the dusty-green coastal tussock grasses of the dunes bordered by a weathered wooden picket fence. The harmony of the shot is achieved by the sunlight: bright in the clear and vivid sky and reflected upwards from the yellow sand. It is an illustration of the happy idleness of a French seaside summer. The apparent spontaneity of the composition is carefully balanced by Delpy's decorative *mise en scène*. The frame is divided horizontally – three-quarters sand and dunes, and one quarter sky – and diagonally by a cream beach umbrella in the mid-ground and the line of children as they emerge from the feathery coastal grasses of the dunes and run toward the sea. Touches of blue guide the eye, from Anna's dress to scattered towels to beach paraphernalia and a striped canvas foldout beach chair set in relief against the golden sand. Delpy builds the anticipation of the first view of the water through a series of shots of the sand and dunes: the first shot of the beach, a cut to a mid-shot of the children hurriedly stripping down to their bathers, a cut to a mid-shot of the adults and older children calmly yet purposefully strolling along the beach scouting a place to set up for the afternoon, a cut to a mid-shot of the young children sprinting towards the water framed against a background of sand and rock, a cut back to the adults laying out their beach towels and putting up their umbrellas and finally a cut back to the children arriving at the water's edge accompanied by the sound of breaking waves and squeals of delight. Through this series of seven shots (from the first shot of the beach to the first glimpse at the water) Delpy establishes not only a scene of idyllic leisure but also the youthful thrill of arriving at the beach and plunging into the water.

Following this opening sequence, Delpy goes on to construct a series of carefully staged scenes which draw on key works of art and popular culture to establish a recognisable – and at times self-referential or ironic – iconography of the beach in summer. In the first of these shots, Delpy references the beachscapes of the impressionists and post-impressionists, taking a broad, sweeping view of the sea from a higher vantage point. The composition is spare yet carefully balanced and closely resembles Paul Signac's *Port of Saint-Cast* (1890) painted on the Brittany coast. This shot of the beach has a softer, impressionistic palette when compared with the earlier, sharper shots. The colours are more muted and the pale sky and sea, washed out by the light, appear to merge at the horizon line, while

closer to shore, the delicate blue-green of the sea shimmers in the mid-afternoon light and the white caps of the waves and the sand are tinted a golden hue. The scattered figures, almost in silhouette, splashing in the water in the lower right hand of the frame, are as dark as the rocky cliff that juts out in the high midground of the right-hand of the frame. The arrangement of the elements of sea, sky, sand, gently lapping waves, and the distant rocky cliffs, gives the shot composition a balanced and timeless harmony while conveying all the spontaneity of a moment captured in time. If the seascape and the bathers at a distance and in silhouette seem timeless, the awareness that this is a point of view shot from Albertine's seventeen-year-old cousin Christian (Vincent Lacoste), reclining on the sand wearing only tight, red and black striped speedos and aviator sunglasses, anchors the action to the film's present. Another shot in which Delpy establishes clear iconographical connections with images of summer vacations is the staging of a shot of Tante Monique (Noémie Lvovsky) posing with hands on hips, wearing a black bathing suit, standing beside a large colourful striped beach umbrella, gazing out across to the water. This shot references the brightly coloured travel posters of the 1920s and 1930s promoting seaside resorts along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. In particular, it recalls the elegantly posed women in black swimsuits in Roger Broders' posters '*Le Soleil toute l'année sur la Côte d'Azur*' (c.1931), '*La Place de Calvi. Corse.*' (1928) and '*Antibes*' (c.1928). The strong design of Delpy's shot – the diagonal lines created by the umbrella's pole and stripes, and Monique's bended arm and the bold colour palette (the vibrant cherry red, marine blue, sunshine yellow and aqua blue of the beach umbrella) – mirrors the composition, colour, and style of these typical travel posters. Elsewhere Delpy's choreography of elements of her beachscape *mise en scène* – brightly coloured beach towels and discarded clothing in 1970s geometric and floral prints scattered haphazardly amongst beach umbrellas, straw beach bags, yellow and red floating devices and beach toys and bodies in equally bright swimsuits in 1970s palette and pattern lying and sitting on the beach – also recall the bathers in Agnès Varda's *Du côté de la côte* (1958). Moreover, Delpy's framing in certain shots of multiple bodies in fragmented form recalls Varda's documentary which creates "incongruous hybrids of bodies" (Álvarez López and Martin, 2018).

Fiona Handyside argues that the beach is "a transitional space between nature and culture, a liminal space that accrues its own liberties and constraints" (2011: 92). It is at the beach that the young Albertine is permitted to explore themes of love and death: she reflects on the immanent death of the crabs they will eat that night and of the threat of destruction which hangs over them all in the image of the Skylab space station; passes over the barrier between culture and nature depicted as the barrier between the public beach and the naturist beach; and finds a love object in the son of a family friend. Indeed, an integral part of many summer

vacation narratives is the encounter with a crush or adolescent love object. The association of summer with both youth and romance has a long history in western art and culture. Kammen writes that from "antiquity through to the nineteenth century" summer has "commonly meant courtship for young couples." (2004:1). Kammen cites the "immensely popular lithographs" by Currier and Ives *The Four Seasons of Life* (1868). These lithographs depict the season-human life cycle thus: spring as childhood ("The Season of Joy"), summer as youth ("The Season of Love"), autumn as middle age ("The Season of Strength") and winter as old age ("The Season of Rest"). The summer print depicts a romantic scene: a young woman gazes yearningly at a young man as they stroll hand in hand along a country lane, shaded by the green leaves of the season, a field of wheat beside them. Two four-line stanzas of a verse are imprinted beneath the image, which begins with the line "Life's summer comes" and ends "more bright the sunshine in the skies above, /As hand in hand, and heart to heart, we share/the sweet mysterious power of youthful love." In his *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye divides the four traditional literary genres into four seasons: spring as comedy, summer as romance, autumn as tragedy, and winter as irony and satire. The summer romance trope is a feature of many films, from earlier films such as *Une partie de campagne* (Jean Renoir, 1936) to post-war Hollywood films such as *Roman Holiday* (William Wyler 1953) and *Gidget* (Paul Wendkos 1959) to more recent films such as *Moonrise Kingdom* (Wes Anderson 2012), *Call Me by Your Name* (Luca Guadagnino 2017) and Été *85* (Ozon 2020). Even in films which ostensibly stage all the seasons, such as François Ozon's *Jeune & Jolie* (2013), it is the beach which is the typical setting for the fleeting summer romance and sexual awakening of its protagonist Isabelle (Marine Vacth) while she is on vacation with her family; while the iconic film *Grease* (Randal Kleiser 1977) ostensibly follows an entire school year, it is the beach during summer in which Sandy (Olivia Newtown John) and Danny (John Travolta) first fall in love, recounted through the song 'Summer Nights'.

In *Le Skylab*, the first blossom of young romance takes place when Albertine and her father, Jean, stumble onto a nearby nudist beach while looking for crabs. They run into Jean's friend Chantal (Sandrine Bodenes). Albertine is visibly embarrassed and wants to leave until she sees Chantal's son Matthieu (Anthony Kimmerle) walking toward them from the shore. Delpy shoots the encounter as a series of shot reverse shots between Albertine and the newfound object of her desire, in a reversal of the male gaze usually associated with such shots. Indeed, this sequence is a reworking along gendered lines of the famous sequence from *Dr No* (1962) in which Bond (Sean Connery) watches a bikini-clad Ursula Andress emerge from the sea wearing goggles and carrying a conch shell. It also recalls the iconic image of Juliette (Brigitte Bardot) emerging from the sea in Roger

Vadim's *Et Dieu créa la femme* (1956). In this restaging of the birth of Venus, Matthieu emerges from the waves and shakes out his long, wavy, blonde locks. The shots are in slow motion, tinged with the golden hue of the late afternoon sun and accompanied by a non-diegetic reprise of Joe Dassin's 'Été Indien' in which a sultry saxophone solo builds to a crescendo of youthful desire. The song is a leitmotif for Albertine's summer romance narrative which appeared on the car radio earlier in the film when Albertine first focusses her romantic attention on her young uncle. The exchange on the beach lasts only twenty-five seconds and is as fleeting as the young couple's summer romance which will culminate in a slow dance at the disco that night to Gilbert O'Sullivan's 'Alone Again (Naturally)' from 1972 before quickly fading.

Conclusion

According to Lofgren, "one of the main characteristics of summer vacations or summers on the whole is their hopeless brevity. Here is a utopia that we start to lose already at the beginning of our vacations. Summers are always drawing to a close" (149). Like other films which deal with representations of summer vacations, *Le Skylab* depicts sites of brevity and impermanence such as the summer house and the beach with its attendant and fleeting romance. Delpy achieves this via the establishment of a recognisable iconography of summer vacations drawn primarily from France's cultural history but also extending beyond this to include more generally recognisable images and motifs. The film is, however, held together thematically by a central formalising image and periodising prop: the eponymous Skylab space station which threatens to crash to earth somewhere in France. Delpy puts it this way:

> I wanted to talk about a family reunion over which hangs a threat, the Skylab, which ends up falling very far from where they are but which is ever present throughout the film. It is important to Albertine because everything could be destroyed – her childhood, her family, her first pangs of love, etc. In a certain way she undergoes another cataclysm: she falls in love and leaves childhood behind. (2011)

The Skylab space station is not only a "*fantasme occidental de destruction collective*" (Duplan 2011), but is also, according to Regnier, a way of condensing an era into a single signifier which best captures the mood of the time (2011). Thus, to the impermanence of summer vacations is added a more general existential sense of impermanence, tempered only by the enduring images of summer Delpy draws on to construct her film.

Felicity Chaplin is Lecturer in European Languages (French) at Monash University. She is the author of *Charlotte Gainsbourg* (2020) and *La Parisienne in Cinema* (2017) and a contributor to *Refocus: The Films of François Ozon* (2021) and *Remembering Paris in Text and Film* (2021). Her work appears in *Australian Journal of French Studies*, *Celebrity Studies*, *French Screen Studies*, and *Screening the Past*. She is currently writing a book on actor-screenwriter-director Julie Delpy.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9063-0502

Bibliography

Alloway, Lawrence, "Lawrence Alloway on the Iconography of the Movies", *Movie Reader*, ed. Ian Cameron, New York, Praeger, 1972, 16–18.

Álvarez Lopez, Cristina, MARTIN, Adrian, "Du côté de la côte", *Film Critic*, May 2018 (http://www.filmcritic.com.au/reviews/d/du_cote_de_la_cote.html).

Andrews, Malcolm, *Landscape and Western Art*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 1999.

Ash, Russell, *Impressionists' Seasons*, London, Pavilion, 1995.

Benjamin, Walter, *Illuminations*, tr. Harry Zohn, New York, Schocken, 1968.

Bergfelder, Tim, "Changing the image of Europe?", in Mary Harrod, Mariana Liz and Alissa Timoshkina (ed.), *The Europeanness of European Cinema: Identity, Meaning and Globalization*, London, I.B. Tauris, 2015, 33–58.

Bourget, Jean-Loup, "En relisant Panofsky", *Positif*, 259, 1982, 38–43.

Célestin, Roger, Dalmolin, Éliane Françoise, *France from 1851 to the Present: Universalism in Crisis*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

Delpy, Julie, "Interview", *Skylab Presskit* (https://medias.unifrance.org/medias/186/16/69818/presse/the-skylab-presskit-french.pdf).

Duplan, Antoine. "Le Bon vieux temps de la famille nombreuse: 'Le Skylab' remue la nostalgie des étés d'antan", *Le Temps*, October 5 2011.

Handyside, Fiona, *Cinema at the Shore: The Beach in French Film*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2014.

Kammen, Michael G, *A Time to Every Purpose: the Four Seasons in American Culture*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina UP, 2004.

Löfgren, Orvar, *On Holiday: A History of Vacationing*, Berkeley, California UP, 1999.

Neale, Steve, *Genre and Hollywood*, London, Routledge, 2000.

Nesselson, Lisa, "Skylab", *Screen International*, 2011.

Panofsky, Erwin, *Studies in Iconology: Humanistic Themes in the Art of the Renaissance*, Oxford, Westview, 1972.

Parmiter, Tara K, *Home Away from Home: The Summer Place in Turn-of-the-Twentieth Century American Women's Literature*, (PhD dissertation), New York University, May 2006.

Proust, Marcel, *Remembrance of Things Past: Swann's way*, tr. C. K. Scott Moncrieff, London, Chatto & Windus, 1943.

Regnier, Isabelle, "Sous le Skylab exactement: Julie Delpy et la nostalgie de la fin des années 1970, avant que le ciel ne nous tombe sur la tête", *Le Monde*, October 5 2011, 26.

Rewald, John, *The History of Impressionism*, London, Secker and Warburg, 1973.

Weissberg, Jay, "Le Skylab", *Variety*, 424, no. 9, 2011, 30.

Whiteley, Nigel, *Art and Pluralism: Lawrence Alloway's Cultural Criticism*, Liverpool, Liverpool UP, 2012

L'apparition du tourisme dans l'espace alpin helvétique : récits de voyage francophones (1760-1850)

Hélder Mendes Baião
Université de Berne

Résumé : De la fin du XVIII^e^ siècle à la première moitié du XIX^e^ siècle, l'aire helvétique est toujours plus visitée par les voyageurs européens. À l'époque des Lumières, on s'intéresse aux montagnes suisses, à leurs qualités géologiques, botaniques et aux particularités morales et politiques des Helvètes. À partir de ces observations se met en place une idée-image de la Suisse comme pays républicain aux mœurs austères. Dans la première moitié du XIX^e^ siècle, cette représentation devenue mythique en Europe intrigue et attire les voyageurs toujours plus nombreux qui s'aventurent en Suisse. Alors que les voyages sont de plus en plus entrepris par la classe bourgeoise qui grossit et qui imite les coutumes de l'aristocratie, l'horizon politique de la Suisse ne s'efface pas des écrits. Au contraire, grâce au système politique des différents cantons la Suisse est parcourue comme une terre de liberté ouverte aux aventures. Nombreux sont les voyageurs à nous avoir laissé d'intrigants comptes rendus : Ramond de Carbonnières, William Coxe, Désiré Raoul-Rochette, Téobald Walsh, Victor Hugo, Stendhal, ne sont que quelques-uns parmi les plus célèbres à avoir été enthousiasmés par les paysages, mais aussi par les traditions républicaines et industrielles de la Suisse. Suivant les traces des travaux de Claude Reichler, François Rosset, Roland Ruffieux, etc., cet article analyse comment le tourisme a fait évoluer la Suisse et ses paysages, mais aussi comment le mythe d'une Suisse rurale et républicaine a profondément structuré les attentes des voyageurs, y compris lorsque ceux-ci allaient chercher en Helvétie un air pur et des bains pour revigorer leur santé.

Mots-clés : Suisse, voyage, Alpes, républiques, traditions.

CET article explore la naissance d'un imaginaire ludique rattaché à l'espace alpin à partir de la deuxième partie du XVIII^e^ siècle. Cet imaginaire qui repose sur une série de représentations que nous analyserons se diffuse d'abord en Angleterre grâce au récit de voyage

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

de William Windham (né vers 1718), qui en 1741 découvre la vallée de Chamonix avec un groupe d'amis. Bien que ces voyageurs s'y soient rendus solidement armés, comme s'ils entraient dans un monde inconnu et dangereux, les charmes alpestres qu'ils ont décrits laissèrent chez les lecteurs une impression durable et encouragèrent également quelques voyageurs suisses ou genevois à reproduire leurs exploits.

L'espace géographique que nous découvrirons dépasse parfois politiquement la Suisse historique, pour englober de manière structurelle l'espace alpin. Autour de celui-ci se développe en effet une imagerie qui ne tient pas compte des cadres nationaux que nous connaissons et qui d'ailleurs au XVIII^e siècle ne sont pas encore en place (Boyer, 2004 : 24). Aucun des voyageurs que nous analysons ne part en vacances au sens où nous l'entendons aujourd'hui, à savoir prendre congé d'une activité professionnelle ou harassante comme les études, pour une période plus ou moins longue.

Afin de répondre au sujet de la revue *Imaginaires*, l'objectif du présent article est de cerner les activités d'un certain nombre « d'oisifs » – terme péjoratif déjà employé à l'époque – dans leurs voyages d'agrément, ou de savants dans leurs voyages « scientifiques ». Afin de respecter le thème du numéro de la revue, nous avons privilégié l'analyse des moments de prélassement, tels que les bains ou les séjours en auberge.

Les auteurs abordés ici explorent l'espace helvétique et ses marges à l'aide de guides *hommes* pris sur le terrain, les guides *livres*, encore rares, permettent cependant déjà de choisir les étapes à parcourir et les lieux à visiter[1]. De ce fait, bien que leurs parcours se répètent, ceux-ci ne sont pas totalement balisés, ce qui permet à chacun un certain nombre de réflexions originales. Les observations et idées ici présentées sont également dépendantes des sources utilisées, d'origine essentiellement francophone. De même, nous avons privilégié une source particulière : *Le Voyage en Suisse. Anthologie des voyageurs français et européens de la Renaissance au XX^e siècle*, somme admirable réunie par Claude Reichler et Roland Ruffieux. C'est dans cette édition savante que nous avons puisé l'essentiel de nos textes, et grâce à laquelle nous avons pu les comparer entre eux.

Notre approche se distingue des recherches qui ont déjà été menées sur les récits viatiques, les itinéraires du Grand Tour ou le développement de l'industrie du tourisme par une étude plus précise des diverses dimensions de l'imaginaire alpestre. Les questions de recherche que nous avons suivies cherchent à découvrir comment l'espace helvétique devint un objet

1. Par exemple le livre du lausannois Abraham Ruchat pour la collection des « Délices de l'Europe » : *Les Délices de la Suisse*, Leyde, Pieter van der Aa, 1714, 4 vol.

de fascination pour les Européens du XVIIIe siècle. Car ces régions étaient initialement perçues comme frustes, pauvres, difficiles d'accès, escarpées, dangereuses depuis l'Antiquité – on connaît le récit que donne Tite-Live de la traversée des Alpes par Hannibal, certes reconstruit pour les besoins de la propagande romaine, mais néanmoins angoissant. Alors comment ont-elles fini par incarner un « produit helvétique », analysé par Laurent Tissot, et condensant les « Alpes romantiques, mais aussi les Alpes spectaculaires, les Alpes sportives [et] les Alpes thérapeutiques » (Tissot, 2000 : 6-7) ? Dans cet article, nous souhaitons comprendre comment les voyageurs européens, entre la fin du XVIIIe siècle et la première partie du XIXe siècle, ont interagi avec l'imaginaire d'un espace helvétique idéalisé. Comment l'interprètent-ils et comment l'utilisent-ils pour rechercher dans les Alpes une expérience qui se rapprocherait de notre notion de « vacances », comprise comme un phénomène d'évasion de nos habitudes quotidiennes, d'exploration du monde, de détente, mais aussi de découvertes. Ainsi, il nous faut comprendre comment émerge le désir des Alpes au XVIIIe siècle, quelles sont les premières expériences ludiques qui l'encadrent et ébaucher comment les Alpes deviennent un espace de détente, au plein sens de ce terme.

« L'idée d'un monde nouveau » : l'invention d'un espace désirable

Dans l'Antiquité, la montagne connaît au moins deux registres de représentation. La moyenne montagne, associée à un jardin ou à un verger, est décrite, par exemple chez Théocrite, en tant que *locus amoenus* ; un lieu de délices où séjournent des pâtres généreux et accueillants. En revanche, la haute montagne est appréhendée comme une terre sauvage de neiges éternelles et de conditions climatiques extrêmes, inhabitable, territoire de créatures dangereuses, voire méconnues : c'est le *locus terribilis* (Reichler, 2002 : 5).

Ces représentations de la montagne et des Alpes – dont la diffusion s'accélère à la Renaissance grâce aux écrits des humanistes – sont encore largement actives jusqu'à la première partie du XVIIIe siècle, lorsque le jeune Albrecht von Haller (1708-1777) – il a alors vingt ans – se lance dans une course de Bâle à Lausanne par le Jura, s'arrêtant à Genève ; il poursuit son trajet en passant par le Valais et l'Oberland bernois pour se rendre finalement à Lucerne et Zurich. Le jeune médecin bernois perçoit encore la moyenne montagne, animée de vallées et de pâturages, comme un jardin et la haute montagne comme un lieu inquiétant dans lequel il ne faut pas séjourner. Le poème didactique et patriotique qu'il publie en 1732, *Les Alpes* [*Die Alpen*], résonne de cette vision classique de la montagne. Cependant, le voyage entrepris par Haller en 1728,

et qui lui offrira les premiers matériaux pour son poème, illustre déjà un changement d'attitude à l'égard du massif alpin. Haller voyage en botaniste et en « géologue » : il s'intéresse à étudier et à répertorier les plantes qu'il découvre, analysant aussi les terrains géologiques ; il accorde ainsi son attention à la composition minérale des Alpes, en scrutant la présence de sel dans les sédiments. Mais, surtout, il ne voyage plus uniquement de ville en ville – ce qui était le cas jusqu'alors. La montagne cesse d'être un arrière-décor ou un objet de curiosité pour un voyageur pressé. Avec Haller, le Jura et les massifs alpins acquièrent un intérêt propre. Le poème *Les Alpes*, mais aussi les lettres manuscrites que Haller rédige pour expliquer son expédition, concourent ensemble à générer une série de représentations qui guideront, dans les années qui suivront, les voyageurs suisses et européens. L'attrait que les Alpes exercent sur Haller est essentiellement d'origine savante ; le jeune patricien bernois utilise son temps libre pour explorer des paysages quasi inconnus et afin de recueillir des échantillons, mais aussi pour rendre visite à des personnages de renom comme Béat Louis de Muralt (1665-1749) – Bernois d'origine également – qui faisait alors office d'observateur avisé des mœurs suisses, françaises et anglaises[2]. À la splendeur et frivolité françaises, Muralt opposait la simplicité et les vertus républicaines suisses.

Le récit des explorations de Haller sera bientôt suivi par d'autres. Des Genevois[3], mais aussi des « touristes » anglais coucheront sur le papier leurs impressions[4]. Ces relations de voyage convoquent toutes un changement de perception à l'égard du monde de la montagne : les textes insistent sur « l'idée d'un monde nouveau », inexploré. Un lien particulier est alors tissé entre le paysage – on croit déceler un âge d'or –, l'environnement – on prend conscience que l'air de la montagne et ses eaux pourraient avoir un effet positif sur la santé – et ses habitants, qui rappellent les pâtres antiques et les vertus républicaines des premiers habitants de Rome. Cet entrelacs d'images de nature poétique et pastorale – dans lesquelles le spécialiste Claude Reichler a vu les origines d'un *mythe suisse* (Reichler, 2002 : 10) – constituent à n'en point douter un idéal-type (au sens wébérien) ou une idée-image (au sens de Bronislaw Baczko) qui fascine et attire les visiteurs[5]. Par la voix de Saint-Preux, Jean-Jacques Rousseau consigne

2. Béat Louis de Muralt, *Lettres sur les Anglois et les François, et sur les voiages*, [s.l.], [s.n.], 1725.
3. En français, les textes genevois sont pionniers : Marc Théodore Bourrit, *Description des glacières, glaciers et amas de glace du duché de Savoye*, Genève, Bonnant, 1773 ; *Description des aspects du Mont-Blanc*, Lausanne, Société typographique, 1776. Voir également : Horace Bénédict de Saussure, *Voyages dans les Alpes, précédés d'un essai sur l'histoire naturelle des environs de Genève*, t. I et II, Neuchâtel, 1779 ; t. III et IV, Genève, 1796.
4. L'un des premiers récits anglais à avoir circulé sous forme manuscrite est celui de William Windham, « Relation d'un voyage aux Glacières en 1741 par M. Windham », copie manuscrite, in *Lettres de Windham et de Martel. Premiers voyages à Chamouni*, Lyon, A. Geneste, 1912 [Extrait de la *Revue alpine*, février-mars, 1912].
5. La notion d'*idées-images* associe une représentation mentale avec un ou plusieurs concepts abstraits. Par exemple le fait de lier ensemble l'image d'un panorama alpin avec l'idée d'air pur, de santé et de dépassement de soi. Roland Barthes, à sa manière, synthétisait le « mythe

dans le roman *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (publié en 1761) les caractéristiques sentimentales de l'idéal-type d'un monde alpin inexploré. La diffusion du roman en Allemagne, en Angleterre et en France – véritable *best-seller* des Lumières –, présente au public un nouvel idéal de la montagne et met à la mode les voyages en Suisse. Or, il n'est pas anodin pour le propos de cet article que Saint-Preux découvre le Valais lorsqu'il est obligé de prendre des vacances forcées après la découverte de son amour compromettant pour Julie. Émotionnellement dévasté, Saint-Preux se rétablit en explorant les Alpes valaisannes. Il devient dès lors l'exemple livresque que suivront de nombreux voyageurs romantiques, chérissant un amour absent, et se livrant simultanément aux beautés et aux horreurs de la montagne.

Explorant les régions périphériques de Clarens, Saint-Preux prend un guide de montagne – dans lequel il trouve « plutôt un ami qu'un mercenaire » (Rousseau, 1961 : 77) –, nouant ainsi dans son cœur et à travers la montagne l'apaisement qu'il ressent à l'égard de son environnement : « Ce fut là que je démêlai dans la pureté de l'air où je me trouvais, la véritable cause du changement de mon humeur […] » (Rousseau, 1961 : 78)[6]. Son ascension géographique est aussi une ascension spirituelle. Plus haut, ses pensées deviennent plus légères et sa tristesse se dissipe. Il contemple autour de lui un monde inconnu rempli de plantes, d'oiseaux et d'objets inédits. Les yeux de Saint-Preux donnent vie à un jardin paradisiaque où les éléments se présentent plus purs, plus proches de leur origine immaculée. Ce pays est aussi le séjour d'autres hommes, préservés des maux de la civilisation par leur isolement, ils respectent les rythmes de la nature. Ainsi, ils n'exploitent pas leurs mines d'or pour que l'avidité ne déchire pas leur simplicité de mœurs. Grâce à leur hospitalité désintéressée, Saint-Preux sent son cœur blessé se rétablir : l'air éthéré de la montagne et l'effet des mœurs douces des montagnards du Valais le réconcilient avec sa nature humaine et les hommes. Ces impressions reçues au cœur des Alpes font écho aux notes de Haller rédigées trente ans plus tôt :

> Ce vallon solitaire, ces lacs sur une hauteur très considérable, ces rivières souterraines, tout cela forme quelque chose de singulier, et qui paraît étranger aux Suisses même. Aussi les mœurs des habitants se ressentent-elles de la particularité de leur pays natal. Un vieillard a assuré d'avoir vu, l'aïeul, le grand-père, le père, et le fils loger dans une même cabane, et ce peuple antique ignorer jusqu'aux couteaux et

alpestre » de la sorte : « […] ce vieux mythe alpestre (il date du XIX^e siècle) que Gide associait justement à la morale helvético-protestante et qui a toujours fonctionné comme un mixte bâtard de naturisme et de puritanisme (régénération par l'air pur, idées morales devant les sommets, l'ascension comme civisme, etc.). » Cf. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, Paris, Le Seuil, 1957, p. 113-114.

6. Dans les citations insérées dans le texte, l'orthographe a été modernisée et la ponctuation respectée.

> aux cuillères. Heureux peuple que l'ignorance préservait de tant de maux, qui suivent la politesse des villes (Haller, 2008 : 44)[7].

Haller et Rousseau, en tant qu'observateurs extérieurs, valorisent, sans fausses notes, un tableau structuré par différents thèmes ; ceux-ci, assemblés, forment une idée-image idéale : la nature éthérée, la communauté non corrompue, l'éloignement d'une civilisation douteuse, la douceur et la simplicité. Ces marqueurs linguistiques, qui empruntent au vocabulaire de l'utopie, génèrent l'image d'une Helvétie heureuse qui captive le lecteur. La métaphore utopique ne délaisse pas la dimension politique, ou plutôt républicaine, car Saint-Preux constate chez les Valaisans : « […] les enfants en âge de raison sont les égaux de leurs pères, les domestiques s'asseyent à la table avec leurs maîtres ; la même liberté règne dans les maisons et dans la république, et la famille est l'image de l'État » (Rousseau, 1961 : 81). Le poème *Les Alpes* de Haller, publié en 1732, fait également éloge du courage, de l'abnégation et de la fraternité des montagnards qui se distinguèrent au XVI^e^ siècle lors des guerres d'Italie.

Lorsque Claude Reichler se penche sur ce phénomène d'idéalisation, il le scrute à travers un concept emprunté au philosophe Augustin Berque et parle de « médiance » :

> La médiance est un rapport – que le paysage manifeste – entre l'homme et l'espace naturel, l'homme comme sujet et comme appartenant à une collectivité. […] Elle est « le sens d'un milieu » dit Berque, une dimension où le subjectif (le ressentir et la signification) et l'objectif (le milieu) se rencontrent et dans laquelle leur antinomie est levée. En d'autres termes, le paysage relève en même temps de trois dimensions : l'une biophysique (c'est une réalité déterminée par des conditions naturelles), la seconde culturelle (c'est un « lieu de mémoire »), et la troisième subjective (perspective phénoménologique). La notion de médiance permet de comprendre comment et pourquoi ces trois « échelles du paysage » doivent être saisies solidairement (Reichler, 2002 : 18-19).

Pour le spécialiste helvétique des récits viatiques, les tableaux idéaux que décrit A. von Haller et qui inspirent J.-J. Rousseau forment les caractéristiques d'un *mythe helvétique* qui exerce une fascination sur les autochtones, mais aussi sur les voyageurs et touristes européens qui parcourent les Alpes et la Suisse en quête de ces images.

L'augmentation du nombre de voyages et de séjours en Suisse de l'élite européenne s'explique par la circulation de ces images diffusées

7. Les notes de voyage que Haller a consignées ont été publiées pour la première fois à la fin du XIX^e^ siècle.

grâce aux récits viatiques et aux estampes des « petits maîtres » helvétiques qui alimentent et font entrer dans tous les foyers l'horizon d'attente suisse. Alors l'Helvétie, envisagée en tant qu'espace géographique qui guérit et contexte d'une expérience intérieure, devient sublime.

L'évolution européenne de l'image des Alpes au tournant des Lumières

Dès le XVIII[e] siècle, on perçoit dans les écrits une tension entre la « bonne nature » des montagnards et celle, compromise, des hommes des villes. Lorsque Saint-Preux découvre les populations féminines du Haut-Valais, il note avec provocation pour sa maîtresse « le teint éblouissant de ces jeunes beautés timides, qu'un mot faisait rougir, et ne rendait que plus agréables » (Rousseau, 1961 : 82). Il constate également leur serviabilité puisque, pendant le déjeuner, elles font le service dans la maison de leurs pères. Cette particularité dénote pour Saint-Preux la générosité et l'accueil des Haut-Valaisans, qui n'acceptent pas d'argent de la part d'un « étranger »[8]. Chez Rousseau, les montagnards bénéficient de la même sympathie et aura que le « bon sauvage ». Les Valaisans sont l'incarnation d'un mode de vie original qui n'a pas encore été altéré par les néfastes rapports d'argent qui dominent les échanges marchands et l'économie des grandes villes. Un authentique explorateur et savant helvétique, Horace Bénédict de Saussure (1740-1799), va faire usage des mêmes images pour décrire le sens de l'hospitalité, l'accueil désintéressé, la solidarité et le sens de la vertu des populations habitant la vallée de Chamonix. À partir des années 1760 et jusqu'à son ascension réussie du mont Blanc en 1787, Saussure s'y rend régulièrement, afin d'effectuer des prélèvements et étudier les massifs alpins, dont celui du Mont-Blanc. Saussure observe donc avec inquiétude l'apparition du tourisme dans la vallée de Chamonix, la disparition de l'accueil désintéressé chez l'habitant, l'érection des premières auberges, dont l'ampleur vite impressionnante permet d'accueillir toujours plus de touristes : anglais, allemands, français, etc. Ce déferlement de nouveaux venus et la manne financière inattendue qui l'accompagne altèrent le comportement des habitants des vallées. Alors que la vie traditionnelle et ses rigueurs sont bouleversées, de petites mesquineries font leur apparition. Le tourisme, qui devient un phénomène croissant dès la belle saison, corrompt les mœurs simples et heureuses des montagnards.

Quelle est donc la nature de ce tourisme ? Pour répondre à cette question, les sources manquent. S'il n'existe pas encore d'itinéraires « tout tracés » pour partir en vacances, la découverte de la Suisse s'inscrit

8. Ils savent cependant que Saint-Preux est Suisse et le considèrent comme un « frère ».

dans une démarche d'agrément qui vise à la fois à trouver l'air pur, à découvrir un spectacle qui se rapproche du fantastique et à prendre les eaux. Si ces expériences se « démocratisent » en s'ouvrant à la bourgeoisie, la première partie du XIXe siècle voit cependant défiler les voyageurs aristocratiques dont l'origine est d'abord anglaise.

Dès la fin du XVIIIe siècle, deux récits de voyage viennent enrichir l'image de la Suisse en Europe et préparer le terrain pour les voyageurs futurs qui s'y aventureront : le récit du prêtre anglican William Coxe (1747-1828) – traduit par Ramond de Carbonnières qui le critique et le complète[9] – et le *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse* (titre de la traduction française de 1810) du savant d'origine prussienne Johann Gottfried Ebel (1764-1830)[10]. William Coxe renforce l'idée, prégnante dans la société anglaise depuis le livre d'Abraham Stanyan – *L'État de la Suisse* (1714) –, que la Suisse est un environnement de vertueux républicains, comme les anciens Grecs, dont le caractère essentiel est la simplicité[11]. L'auteur met en garde contre l'introduction du luxe. Coxe décrit consciencieusement les différents itinéraires helvétiques et encourage le lecteur à les parcourir à pied pour ne rien manquer.

Avec Ebel, le genre du récit de voyage évolue pour la première fois en guide touristique. Profondément touché par la beauté de la Suisse, ses paysages, sa population, il avertit les aristocrates qui, d'ordinaire, empruntent les chemins helvétiques, de respecter ce peuple libre, chez qui l'ordre nobiliaire ne possède pas de prérogatives importantes. Son *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse* offre à ses lecteurs une myriade d'informations concernant les guides (hommes) de montagne, où se loger, combien payer dans les auberges, lesquelles choisir, etc. Surtout, Ebel encourage le voyageur à se libérer de son ego pour s'oublier dans la contemplation des montagnes. Expérience que l'écrivain français Étienne Pivert de Senancour (1770-1846) transcrit de sa belle plume dans *Oberman* (1804) :

> Mais là, sur ces monts déserts, où le ciel est plus immense ; où l'air est plus fixe, et les temps moins rapides, et la vie plus permanente : là, la nature entière exprime éloquemment un ordre plus grand, une harmonie plus visible, un ensemble éternel : là, l'homme retrouve sa

9. William Coxe, *Lettres de M. William Coxe à M. W. Melmoth, sur l'état politique, civil et naturel de la Suisse*, traduites de l'anglais et augmentées des observations faites dans le même pays par le traducteur, Paris, 1782, 2 vol. (1re éd. anglaise 1779).
10. Véritable chantre des débuts du tourisme en Suisse, Johann Gottfried Ebel a publié différents ouvrages qui expliquent ses conceptions et qui guident les voyageurs à travers le labyrinthe des vallées alpines : *Schilderung der Gebirgsvölker der Schweiz* (*Description des peuples montagnards de la Suisse*, publié en allemand en deux parties en 1798 et 1802) ; les *Instructions pour un voyageur qui se propose de parcourir la Suisse* (1805) et le *Manuel du voyageur en Suisse* (1810). Ebel devient citoyen de la République helvétique en 1801 et bourgeois de Zurich en 1805.
11. Abraham Stanyan, *L'État de la Suisse : écrit en 1714*, traduit de l'anglais [par Lucas Schaub], Amsterdam, les Frères Wetstein, 1714.

> forme altérable, mais indestructible ; il respire l'air sauvage loin des émanations sociales ; son être est à lui comme à l'univers : il vit d'une vie réelle dans l'unité sublime (Senancour, 2003 : 92).

À l'aube du XIX^e^ siècle transparaît ainsi un des motifs les plus prégnants de l'imagerie helvétique : la permanence sous les changements, l'inaltérable face à l'écume des jours. Cinquante ans plus tard, l'historien français Jules Michelet inscrit encore dans la permanence des grandes structures géographiques la réalité des conditions humaines : « Le Rhin, qui ne s'use pas, fait entendre au pied la douce et grande voix qui murmure : *Toujours, toujours*. » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 889). Le poète Gérard de Nerval en quittant Lausanne – cette avant-garde de la Suisse historique – insiste également sur le rôle moral de « cette petite France mystique et rêveuse qui nous a doués de toute une littérature et de toute une politique » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 722). De son côté, Ebel consacre le voyage en Suisse comme une expérience intérieure face à une nature sublime, mais il brode également autour du *topos* du peuple singulier dont les mœurs républicaines interrogent une Europe livrée au chaos des mouvements révolutionnaires. Dès lors, les écrits des voyageurs glissent subrepticement de la perspective rationaliste et universelle des Lumières – l'homme de l'état de nature – vers les singularités du romantisme, sensibles au fantastique, à l'histoire, mais aussi aux affres d'une nature indomptable comme l'interprète le peintre anglais Joseph Turner avec sa représentation d'Hannibal et de son armée traversant les Alpes (1812).

À la Restauration, les régions précédemment délaissées attirent l'attention des voyageurs. Ceux-ci, suivant l'exemple de J.-J. Rousseau, cherchent à oublier les transformations irréversibles de l'industrialisation naissante. Comme Désiré Raoul Rochette qui s'enfonce dans les vallées grisonnes pour rechercher des hommes que les étrangers et l'argent n'ont pas encore corrompus. Ce faisant, il cherche également à échapper aux lieux déjà trop célèbres qui, surchargés de visiteurs, perdent leur aspect symbolique. Au pied de la « pyramide de Kunkelsberg », il rêve de tomber nez à nez avec une « race de géants » seule digne, selon lui, d'habiter le flanc noir de ces montagnes (D. R. Rochette cité dans cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 698). Un autre voyageur rêve de retrouver « la terre […] à son premier jour !! Je vais pénétrer les mystères de la Création » (Astolphe de Custine cité dans cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 680).

Le canton d'Appenzell attire également les regards, mais ici pas de pics vertigineux pour évoquer le chaos des débuts du monde. Les voyageurs sont en quête de dispositifs politiques, comme les assemblées populaires (*Landsgemeinde*), que, dans *Le Contrat social*, J.-J. Rousseau a associées à l'esprit suisse. En Suisse centrale, dans le canton de Glaris et les

régions appenzelloises, se dessine une analogie entre une nature préservée et l'authenticité primitive d'un peuple qui a conservé ses traditions. L'imaginaire s'enflamme à la vue de ces populations, témoins primitifs d'une humanité qui aurait pu échapper aux accidents de l'histoire et être heureuse.

Le canton d'Appenzell, qui compte, vers 1800, 55 000 habitants, incarne alors la réminiscence des républiques antiques. Ebel insiste sur la liberté et le bonheur des Appenzellois, la campagne de ce petit canton évoque l'âge d'or et les voyageurs-poètes rêvent à leur tour de revenir en Arcadie. Et c'est l'ensemble des régions suisses qui finissent par bénéficier de cette aura politique. Grâce à Ebel, dont les ouvrages marqueront durablement plusieurs générations jusqu'au mitan du XIX^e^ siècle, la bourgeoisie en vacances en Suisse évoluera spirituellement dans le cadre de cet horizon d'attente. Le voyage « bourgeois » qui remplace les aventures du siècle des Lumières perpétue le souvenir de ce lien poétique entre nature primitive et humanité préservée.

Les dimensions ludiques du voyage : bains et auberges

Depuis le Moyen Âge, la Suisse est connue et recherchée pour l'effet bénéfique de ses eaux. Albrecht von Haller, durant sa course autour de Berne, indique à plusieurs reprises la qualité des eaux, leur teneur minérale et leur effet sur la santé. Il observe aussi que les populations locales, ou européennes, se rencontrent auprès des sources pour en expérimenter les bienfaits. La nature curative des bains, des eaux de la montagne, deviendra progressivement un des éléments clés du tourisme suisse, ceci jusqu'à l'apothéose que représente le roman *La Montagne magique* (1924) de Thomas Mann, où le sanatorium apparaît comme suspendu hors du temps et du monde, symbole par excellence des vertus de la montagne.

Les bains et les auberges sont des lieux de passage presque obligatoires pour les voyageurs qui traversent la Suisse pour le Grand Tour ou qui explorent le pays. Les bains sont un espace où se retrouvent l'aristocratie et la bourgeoisie argentée d'Europe ; c'est aussi un lieu qui est dédié aux cures et au délassement[12]. Lorsque les voyageurs consignent leurs remarques sur ces lieux, ils entrent en dialogue avec les images idéales de la Suisse ; c'est une manière pour eux d'évaluer leur séjour et de discuter

12. D'ailleurs cet aspect est déjà ancien. Sebastian Münster note dans la *Cosmographia Universalis* (1544) au sujet de la ville de Baden (qui alors était surnommée « Oberbaden », c'est-à-dire les Hauts Bains) : « On y rencontre, venus des pays lointains un grand nombre de gens, tant gentilshommes qu'artisans ou bourgeois, et plus pour y prendre leurs plaisirs, que pour chercher médecine ou guérison de quelque maladie » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 64).

les représentations helvétiques. Ces espaces de détente et de séjour permettent d'analyser les attentes et les interrogations des premiers touristes en Suisse. Les bains incarnent aux yeux du voyageur la synthèse des vertus médicinales suisses, les eaux charrient la force primitive des montagnes et l'air pur revigore les corps fatigués. Quant aux auberges et hôtels, ces lieux permettent de côtoyer les peuples d'Europe ou de découvrir la Suisse sous un angle moins rude, approche vacancière dont le grand tourisme tirera profit.

Casanova, voyageur vénitien, rapporte dans son journal que, visitant l'espace helvétique, il s'arrêta aux bains de Berne, aux bords de la rivière Aar :

> Un homme à la mine honnête me demanda si je voulais me baigner, et lui ayant répondu que oui, il m'ouvrit une loge, et voilà une quantité de servantes qui courent à moi. L'homme me dit que chacune aspire à l'honneur de me servir dans le bain, et que c'était à moi à choisir celle que je voulais. Il me dit que moyennant un petit écu je payerais le bain, la fille et mon déjeuner aussi. Je jette le mouchoir, comme le grand Turc, à celle qui me revenait le mieux, et j'entre (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 396).

Comme souvent chez Casanova ses assertions sont difficiles à évaluer : existait-il réellement un tel lieu à Berne ? Le narrateur avoue son indifférence pour cette « Suissesse de dix-huit ans ». Au physique agréable, mais trop sérieuse et sans charmes, la jouvencelle laisse son client de marbre : « Nous n'aimons donc que l'artifice et le faux, et le vrai ne nous séduit plus lorsqu'un vain appareil n'en est pas l'avant-coureur » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 397). Casanova conteste donc le rôle social de la transparence et de l'authenticité dans les choses de l'amour. La vapeur des bains doit permettre de fantasmer l'objet désiré, or ici rien de tel. Le voyageur demeure aussi insensible aux effets thérapeutiques de la Suisse.

À la fin du XVIII^e siècle, les témoignages laissés par les voyageurs européens qui découvrent les agréments des bains soulignent le dépouillement des installations. Le lecteur perçoit l'agacement des voyageurs déjà en quête de confort, néanmoins ces remarques trouvent un écho évident avec la simplicité des populations environnantes et le primitivisme des paysages. Elles soulignent le dénouement des Alpes mais aussi l'austérité de l'environnement montagnard.

Désiré Raoul Rochette (ou Raoul-Rochette) visite la Suisse dès 1819. Fils d'un médecin de campagne, il fait carrière comme archéologue. À 29 ans, il obtient la place de conservateur des médailles et des antiques à la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris. Conservateur et royaliste,

Raoul-Rochette recherche dans la Suisse de la Restauration les poncifs du XVIIIe siècle[13] : un peuple de bergers, simple et heureux, évoluant dans une nature sauvage et préservée.

Dans les Grisons, alors qu'il explore les abîmes d'un « gouffre affreux » qui lui donne le vertige, Raoul-Rochette arrive aux bains de la rivière Tamina (sans doute aujourd'hui les bains de Bad Ragaz). Ces bains étant situés dans une gorge profonde, le narrateur est très impressionné par la descente, il lui semble rejoindre des dieux infernaux et « les entrailles de la Terre ». Les bains sont décevants, deux bâtiments lugubres, disposant d'une petite terrasse pour la promenade des « trois à quatre cents » malades qui y séjournent. Le soleil ne pénètre dans ce « vestibule naturel » que quatre heures par jour au plus beau de l'été, ce qui offre au narrateur l'occasion de filer la métaphore en se basant sur des réminiscences du Tartare ou de l'enfer de Dante. Cependant il insiste sur l'aspect vertueux que possèdent ces eaux sombres, repérées dès le Moyen Âge. « Grâces au ciel, je vais quitter ce gouffre, où il me semble que j'ai peine à respirer » (D. R. Rochette cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 698).

Cette expérience « infernale » ne décourage pas notre intrépide voyageur, nous le retrouvons à Loèche-les-Bains. N'étant pas cette fois subjugué par la « nudité » des parois rocheuses, il n'oublie pas de confier à son journal quelques observations sociales.

À Loèche-les-Bains, notre voyageur peut respirer à l'intérieur de « vastes bâtiments ». Si la proximité des montagnes n'est plus un problème, la promiscuité des corps, simplement recouverts par de « longues chemises de flanelle », le gêne et le trouble. Il n'est pas le seul à critiquer ce *manque de décence* dans les bains suisses : différents témoignages attestent que les sexes s'y entremêlent trop facilement. Le narrateur s'étonne cependant « chez ces républicains » de trouver une séparation entre les conditions sociales : « le *bain des pauvres* et celui des *messieurs* sont aux deux extrémités du village. » (D. R. Rochette cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 824).

S'agit-il déjà d'une mesure prise en faveur des visiteurs étrangers ? Ce n'est pas certain, tant la Suisse, du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle, demeure

13. Grâce à la réussite de l'invasion française de 1798, l'occupant cherche à créer une république sœur du Directoire. Les cantons disparaissent, laissant la place à un pouvoir centralisé et à des départements. Ce modèle, détesté par la plupart des Suisses, ne dure que jusqu'en 1803. Bonaparte, par l'Acte de Médiation, transfère aux cantons une partie de leurs anciennes prérogatives ; pourtant la Suisse dispose toujours d'un gouvernement relativement centralisé. La Restauration redonne cependant aux cantons la plupart de leurs anciens pouvoirs et reforme la Confédération. Seule l'armée est alors nationale. De 1815 à 1848, date de la création de l'État fédéral, la Confédération connaît de nombreuses tensions à la fois religieuses – entre catholiques et protestants – mais aussi économiques entre cantons campagnards et cantons industriels. Les libéraux se trouvent principalement dans les rangs des protestants, leur victoire lors de la guerre du Sonderbund (1847) intègre la Suisse comme république parlementaire dans le concert des nations européennes. Le pays se modernise et évolue dès lors rapidement.

inégalitaire. Ce n'est pas un hasard si le terme de « simplicité » se substitue à celui d'égalité dans la bouche des élites : la simplicité implique une vertu apparente, des modes d'être, tandis que l'égalité juridique réclame des lois ad hoc. Or les élites patriciennes d'Ancien Régime résistent à l'instauration de telles lois.

À Loèche-les-Bains, la plus sûre carte de visite est la maladie. Quand un étranger arrive, « on s'y dispute l'honneur de la première confidence avec autant d'empressement qu'on en met ailleurs à l'éviter » (D. R. Rochette cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 825). Le narrateur et sa compagne, attirés seulement par la curiosité et sans infirmités à soigner, sont rapidement mis au ban de cette étrange société de malades : « on nous traitait en étrangers et presque en ennemis » (826).

Comme aux gorges de la Tamina, le mobilier est rudimentaire, les appartements petits et suffocants, séparés de simples cloisons. La promiscuité est totale et bienheureux le visiteur qui ne gagne pas de nouvelles infirmités. Comparée aux lugubres bains des Grisons, la situation est bien plus « riante » et la petite station possède déjà l'atmosphère de « détente » qui fera sa renommée :

> Les uns lisent, d'autres chantent. L'heure des repas, qui surprend aussi cette folâtre assemblée de malades, fait cesser les jeux et les entretiens particuliers ; on s'y mêle, on mange, on boit en commun ; les bons mots, les vives saillies volent d'un carré à l'autre ; on oublie ses maux, quelquefois même sa raison ; et l'on ne s'aperçoit pas que les séances se prolongent à mesure que la guérison avance (D. R. Rochette cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 825).

Certains sommets des Alpes, par leur position, leurs particularités géologiques, ou parce qu'ils offrent un point de vue recherché par les « touristes », comme le note Victor Hugo dans son journal, deviennent souvent des étapes incontournables pour un périple réussi en Suisse. C'est le cas du Rigi : cette montagne, proche de la ville de Lucerne, attira de nombreux promeneurs et « touristes » dès le début du XIX^e^ siècle. Aujourd'hui, pour les moins téméraires, il existe une route, des transports publics et un téléphérique qui les emportent sans encombre à son point culminant, mais ces installations ne sont apparues qu'au début du XX^e^ siècle. Avant, il fallait faire l'ascension, cinq heures durant, pour y arriver. Quels étaient alors les réconforts de cette marche harassante ?

Au cours de la montée, Victor Hugo (1802-1885) découvre d'abord des « bains froids » : il n'y a là encore rien de très prestigieux, une maison qui n'a « rien de remarquable […] revêtue de petites planchettes » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 806). Le promeneur laisse errer son regard dans

cette immensité sauvage. Au détour d'un ravin, il croise, jambes au-dessus du gouffre, assis à contempler l'immensité, un « crétin des Alpes ». Victor Hugo énonce alors une de ces antinomies dont sa plume abonde : « la nature dans son attitude la plus superbe, l'homme dans sa posture la plus misérable » (807).

Parvenant sur le Rigi Kulm (le sommet du Rigi), il souligne les aménagements :

> Au sommet du Rigi, il n'y a que trois choses : une auberge, un observatoire fait de quelques planches clouées sur quelques solives, et une croix. C'est tout ce qu'il faut ; l'estomac, l'œil et l'âme ont un triple besoin. Il est satisfait (808).

Absorbé dans la contemplation des sommets environnants, Victor Hugo se remémore ses lectures des voyages de Saussure : « Le géologue y peut scruter la formation d'une chaîne de montagnes, le philosophe y peut étudier la formation d'une de ces chaînes d'hommes, de races et d'idées qu'on appelle des nations » (809). Jusqu'à la fin du XIX^e^ siècle, le *topos*, inspiré par Montesquieu, qui suppose que le climat et la nature fabriquent un type d'homme spécifique demeure vivace chez tous les voyageurs, ceci malgré des conditions sociales et des idéologies différentes. Plus qu'ailleurs, on constate en Suisse la fabrication par la nature d'une race belle et noble, d'hommes courageux, intrépides : de fiers républicains. Alors, pour les touristes français, les éléments qui déforment ce tableau helvétique sont notés avec aigreur, et la présence britannique en fait partie. Victor Hugo rencontre ainsi des Anglais dans son ascension du Rigi : il s'agit parfois d'une figure solitaire, une autre fois de gamins que leur bonne s'efforce d'occuper.

Lors de son passage à Lausanne, en 1839, contemplant le paysage offert par le lac Léman depuis un belvédère, Gérard de Nerval (1808-1855) note, dépité, dans son *Voyage d'Orient* : « Voilà, comme dirait un artiste, le *poncif* de la nature suisse […] il n'y manque que des naturels en costumes ; mais ces derniers ne s'habillent que dans la saison des Anglais […] » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 722). Plus terre-à-terre, Jules Michelet écrit dans le journal de voyage dédié à son tour des Grisons en 1867 :

> Bonne auberge, mais force Anglais. Leur petite littérature sotte qu'on trouve partout sur la route (exemple à l'hôtel de Splügen). En voyant que c'est le peuple voyageur, on en prendrait grande idée. Mais cette pauvre littérature donne la réalité morale de leurs classes riches. Pas un de leurs bons voyages, de leurs beaux livres d'histoire naturelle (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 895).

Le lecteur constate ici la rancune du voyageur confronté à la trivialité du tourisme. Les Anglais se déplacent déjà en grand nombre pour se divertir ; leur aristocratie, leur bourgeoisie, parcourent la Suisse en tous sens et les « naturels » s'adaptent à leurs attentes. On se situe peut-être là à une croisée historique des chemins : l'industrie des vacances est déjà présente, mais elle attend les grandes révolutions techniques de la fin du XIXe et du début du XXe siècle pour prendre son envol.

En attendant, les auberges, improvisées ou déjà confortables et luxueuses, ponctuent la vie du voyageur, qui aime à rapporter à un lecteur complice les scènes les plus cocasses.

Le comte Théobald Walsh (1792- ?), au sujet duquel on dispose de peu d'informations biographiques, a voyagé en Suisse autour de 1820. Il nous a laissé des *Notes sur la Suisse et une partie de l'Italie* (1823) et une version rééditée et augmentée qui paraît en 1825 : *Notes sur la Suisse, la Lombardie et le Piémont*. Walsh développe, au fil de ses *Notes*, un regard aiguisé sur le monde du voyage en Suisse. Comme il est conscient des attentes des lecteurs, il joue avec les poncifs du voyage. Arrivant au sommet du Rigi sous la pluie, il ne se laisse pas décourager : « Assez d'autres ont dépeint le Rigi et son admirable vue par un beau temps ; la description de ce qu'il est par la pluie aura du moins le piquant de la nouveauté. » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 819).

Désœuvré, au milieu du brouillard au Rigi Kulm, Théodore Walsh s'arrête sur les physionomies de ses compagnons d'infortune qui partagent avec lui de longues heures et une nuit dans l'auberge de bois au sommet. Le gîte en soi n'est pas à déplorer :

> Il y a quelques années qu'il n'existait ici qu'un misérable chalet, et c'est au moyen d'une cotisation volontaire, à laquelle ont surtout contribué Zurich et Lucerne, qu'on a construit cette maison, dont les moindres matériaux ont été apportés de la vallée, à dos d'homme (822).

Seule la grande salle commune est chauffée, mais elle est livrée à « l'épaisse fumée » d'une « douzaine de pipes ». Soit c'est cette attente commune qu'il faut supporter, soit il faut se « claquemurer solitairement dans d'étroits taudis, sans feu, et où il n'y a pas de place, entre les lits et la cloison, que pour une table et deux chaises » (821). Tous les occupants de cette modeste demeure attendent le lever du brouillard pour contempler à la ronde la sublime chaîne des Alpes. Mais le mauvais temps les oblige à l'arrêt, alors ils mangent, parlent, jouent aux cartes, s'observent : les Lucernois se moquent des Bernois qui ne veulent parler que français, et un Anglais, impatient, redescend aussitôt après être arrivé, malgré les récriminations

de son guide. Chacun cherche à tuer le temps : un peintre dessine, une demoiselle parcourt un récit de voyage, d'autres s'impatientent, les guides jouent aux cartes et jurent. Walsh nous expose la galerie des admirateurs et explorateurs des Alpes. Parmi ceux-ci – essentiellement des hommes – les Anglais sont indéniablement ceux qui provoquent la plus grande curiosité dans les rangs des voyageurs français et suisses. Souvent mélancoliques, comme les avait décrits Béat Louis de Muralt, les Anglais voyageurs se confondent parfois avec les « Lovelace » de roman par leur curiosité, leur esprit libre, leur fortune, mais aussi l'impétuosité de leurs sentiments amoureux. Théodore Walsh décrit ainsi un voyageur qui s'ennuyant dans une « auberge de village » eut la bonne idée de mettre à profit le *kiltgang* à son usage. Le procédé est mystérieux, le voyageur le décrit ainsi : « On connaît l'usage un peu trop patriarcal de ces échelles, qui, plantées contre la fenêtre de l'objet préféré, favorisent les entretiens nocturnes des amants. » Est-ce les parents qui encouragent ainsi les jeunes hommes à faire la cour à leurs filles ? D'un point de vue ethnographique, l'usage mérite d'être relevé. Qu'arriva-t-il à ce jeune intrépide ? Il découvre une jeune fille, qui d'un air impatient, attend depuis trop longtemps son amant. Il s'élance vers l'échelle, mais las, la fenêtre se referme brusquement et « trois grands gaillards » font leur apparition. C'était un piège qu'on lui avait tendu :

> Il fait d'inutiles efforts pour échapper au sort qui lui est réservé ; saisi par des bras vigoureux, il est traîné vers la fontaine publique ; on l'y plonge à plusieurs reprises, et on ne l'en retire, à demi noyé, que pour l'envelopper d'un de ces grands filets dans lesquels les gens du pays transportent leurs fourrages, et le suspendre, dans ce hamac d'un nouveau genre, à l'un des arbres de la route. […] Le jour venu, il se vit l'objet de la risée des passants, jusqu'à ce que l'un d'eux, plus charitable, vînt le décrocher […] (819).

Ce jeune voyageur n'est guère le seul à éprouver ce genre de mésaventures, par suite d'un séjour en auberge. Nicolaï Karamzine (1766-1826)[14] rapporte qu'un de ses compagnons de voyage, qu'il dénomme Becker, après s'être enamouré d'une jeune demoiselle lors d'un repas dans un hôtel à Bâle tenta de la retrouver à Yverdon. Il se rendit d'abord à Lausanne où il loua un cheval. Malheureusement, il découvrit bien vite que la belle Julie était déjà engagée ailleurs et ne montra qu'un visage froid et distant à son jeune amant. Celui-ci, afin d'oublier son chagrin, passa la soirée dans son hôtel en compagnie de quatre Anglais où ils burent ensemble force bouteilles de vin. Passablement enivré, mais souhaitant toujours rentrer à Lausanne, Becker éperonne son cheval malgré la neige et la nuit bien

14. Voyageur et historien russe. Entre 1789 et 1792, il voyage en Allemagne, en Angleterre, en Suisse et en France. Dès 1797, il publie en volume son récit de voyages préalablement paru dans le *Journal de Moscou*.

avancée. Il se perd en chemin ; près de défaillir, il est recueilli par des paysans qui accordent asile au voyageur et à sa monture. Remis de ses mésaventures, mais avec un fort rhume, il écrit à son ami qu'il a bien cru voir sa dernière heure arriver, et avec elle tous ses rêves s'envoler : « Hélas ! je disais adieu à ma patrie, à mes amis, à mon cours de chimie[15], à toutes mes espérances !... » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 818).

L'exemple de Becker et celui du jeune homme pris dans les mailles du filet illustrent le type d'aventures qui pouvaient survenir à ceux qui cessaient leurs activités quotidiennes afin de voyager et de se former au contact du monde. Dès le tournant du siècle, les aubergistes sont de plus en plus conscients de cette clientèle qui cherche à découvrir, mais qui n'a plus pour objectif de se mettre en danger comme l'avait fait un explorateur tel que Horace-Bénédict de Saussure au siècle précédent.

Lors de son voyage en 1811, le marquis Astolphe de Custine (1790-1857)[16] rapporte ainsi comment un aubergiste s'est ingénié à leur procurer une « partie de plaisir » grâce à une barque voguant avec son orchestre sur le lac de Zurich[17] : « Figurez-vous un conte de fées, un rêve, tout ce qu'il y a de plus invraisemblable […] » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 677). Déjà chez Custine, la Suisse est essentiellement représentation ; si les émotions semblent sincères, le paysage est absorbé et interprété grâce à des lectures préalables. Or, l'aubergiste qui organise les divertissements auxquels participe le narrateur en fait de même :

> Voulez-vous savoir quel est le génie ordonnateur de cette fête magique ? Ce n'est point un enchanteur, c'est un aubergiste, homme à moitié fou, qui ne rêve que parties de plaisir, surprises, musique, chanteurs ; à dîner même, il écorche les oreilles de ses hôtes par des concerts qui perdent beaucoup à n'être pas répétés par les échos du lac. M. Peter est un roi d'auberge […] : il a une marine, il a des canons, il a des tabatières qui chantent, des portes qui s'ouvrent toutes seules, des légions de serviteurs, des saltimbanques, des transparents […] (677).

15. Originaire de Copenhague, Becker souhaitait donner un cours au public de cette ville, selon son correspondant.
16. Astolphe de Custine découvre la Suisse et l'Italie avec sa mère Delphine de Sabran en 1811. Custine côtoie le grand monde littéraire de son époque (sa mère entretient une relation avec Chateaubriand dès 1802). À sa mort, Baudelaire le considérera comme l'exemple même du dandy mais aussi comme un des rénovateurs du roman français. Ses *Mémoires et Voyages* sont publiés en 1830.
17. Réaliser des fêtes sur les lacs suisses était déjà une tradition bien établie au XVIII^e siècle, comme l'atteste une lettre du jeune Charles-Victor de Bonstetten à son père, à propos d'une fête donnée ou reçue par la duchesse de la Rochefoucauld d'Enville en août 1765 sur le lac Léman. Cf. Michèle Crogiez Labarthe, *Savoir et pouvoir à la fin de l'Ancien Régime (1762-1792) : la duchesse d'Enville et son fils, Louis-Alexandre duc de la Rochefoucauld* (à paraître).

Ces transparents offrent sans doute à quelque lanterne magique, à quelque dispositif de projection, la latitude de la représentation. Ainsi avant même que le mot « tourisme » ne soit popularisé dans la deuxième partie du XIXe siècle ou que le mot « vacances »[18] ne devienne populaire, voyageurs et aubergistes avaient conscience d'un phénomène d'idéalisation géographique, culturelle et politique pour nouer des liens d'affinités et de fascination entre Suisses et étrangers. Cette imagologie à la fois naturelle, sublime et républicaine servira de base à la création des premiers guides standardisés dans la deuxième partie du XIXe siècle[19]. Ces représentations connaissent un tel succès que, dès la fin du XVIIIe siècle, elles trouvent leurs détracteurs.

Touristes déçus : les détracteurs des représentations idéales helvétiques

Les détracteurs de la « simplicité heureuse » helvétique[20] trouvèrent rapidement à s'exprimer face à l'évolution des relations entre les autochtones et la foule des étrangers toujours plus nombreuse qui défilait en Suisse à la belle saison. Ainsi, dès le XVIIIe siècle, certains lecteurs – essentiellement des voyageurs français – montraient qu'ils n'étaient pas dupes de l'idéalisation projetée sur le monde de la montagne. Néanmoins, ce mouvement critique demeure marginal : à l'époque de la Révolution française, on ne compte plus les références à la liberté et aux républiques suisses au sein des textes révolutionnaires ou dans l'intrigue des pièces de théâtre comme, en Allemagne, le *Guillaume Tell* de Schiller, présenté en 1804.

En 1771, le marquis français Alexandre Frédéric Jacques Masson de Pezay (1741-1777) publie *Les Soirées helvétiennes, alsaciennes et franc-comtoises* : il s'y montre un détracteur convaincu de l'imagerie idéale helvétique, critiquant à la fois la supposée beauté des femmes et pointant le ridicule des costumes. D'ailleurs, son expérience dans une auberge (un hôtel, dirions-nous aujourd'hui) paraît étrangement contemporaine :

> Je pris le papier pour jeter les yeux sur le total et payer, trouvant plus que malhonnête de compter auprès d'aussi bonnes gens. Au premier coup d'œil, je crus que je ne savais pas bien lire les chiffres suisses. Je m'instruisis et fus un peu étonné d'apprendre, en me confirmant que

18. On trouve l'une des premières occurrences du mot dans le sens de temps laissé vacant, temps libre, chez Senancour dans *Oberman* (1804). Je remercie Michèle Crogiez Labarthe pour cette précieuse indication.
19. Voir les analyses d'Ariane Devanthéry sur le guide de John Murray : *Hand-book for Travellers in Switzerland* (Devanthéry, 2016 : 164-185).
20. Les discours et représentations concernant d'abord les populations de montagne (aussi bien en Suisse qu'en Savoie d'ailleurs) finirent par englober l'ensemble de la Suisse urbaine ou montagnarde.

> l'arithmétique des deux nations était la même [entre la France et la Suisse], que si l'avidité était différente, c'était en ce que nous étions moins avides ; qu'enfin j'avais dépensé en un jour, dans la sobre Helvétie, ce qu'il m'en eût coûté en une semaine dans mon avare et splendide patrie. Je tombai de mon haut et crus entendre mon ami tomber aussi du ciel sur mes épaules et me rire encore au nez. Plein de confusion, et plus encore de regret, je payai, et continuai ma marche, voyant bien que je n'avais pas encore frappé à la cabane de Philémon (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 580).

Cette mésaventure, dont rien n'indique l'exagération, illustre très bien comment les commerçants des villes ont très tôt tiré parti de la fascination exercée par la Suisse sur les étrangers voyageurs.

Pour Marie-Henri Beyle, ou Stendhal (1783-1842), la Suisse représente surtout un lieu de passage entre la France et sa patrie de cœur, l'Italie. La Suisse est présente dans nombre de ses œuvres à caractère autobiographique : *Voyages en Italie*, la *Vie de Henry Brulard*, les *Souvenirs d'égotisme*, mais surtout dans les *Mémoires d'un touriste*, qui retracent son long voyage de 1838, où Stendhal consigne son expérience de la Genève post-napoléonienne, désormais rattachée à la Suisse, et jouant tant bien que mal sa partition dans le concert d'une Confédération divisée entre cantons conservateurs et libéraux ; on y lit la déception d'une ville trop bourgeoise, trop sérieuse, à l'image du pays dont elle dépend : « On y calcule et jamais on n'y rit » (cité dans Reichler & Ruffieux, 1998 : 833).

Ce mot de Voltaire dont on connaît les intrigues pour installer un théâtre permanent dans la ville de l'austère Calvin inspire encore à Stendhal cette remarque railleuse : « J'aurais cru que les gens qui ont reçu de leur père une grande fortune auraient pu se dispenser de calculer ; ils sont tombés dans *un autre inconvénient bien pire : le méthodisme anglais* et toutes ses *momeries* » (833).

La vertu genevoise – un peuple industrieux et sage – dont tant de commentateurs font état n'est que l'expression d'une tristesse et d'une radinerie mal contenue. D'autres commentateurs critiquent les valeurs traditionnelles rattachées aux Suisses. Ainsi Helen Maria Williams – la seule autrice citée ici – souligne en 1797 que la gestion du Tessin par Berne et les cantons centraux est un scandale de cupidité et d'oppression. Dès la fin du XVIII^e^ siècle, les observateurs attentifs critiquent le mirage suisse : la simplicité cache un caractère mesquin, jaloux et intéressé. Tandis que la liberté dissimule un aristocratisme patriarcal qui opprime les familles et confisque, à son profit, les fonctions gouvernementales. Dès le XVIII^e^ siècle, l'idéal helvétique d'une société de pâtres libres et heureux ne dissimulait donc pas les réalités du terrain. Cependant, pour les visiteurs enthousiastes

– et ils étaient nombreux ! – ces représentations littéraires et iconographiques remplirent pleinement leur rôle publicitaire.

Conclusion : l'hôtel de l'Europe

Albrecht von Haller et William Windham préparent le regard pour l'émergence de nouvelles sensibilités autour de la montagne : esthétiques, anthropologiques et savantes, simultanément, alors qu'au début du siècle, le savant zurichois Johann Scheuchzer (1672-1733) peuplait encore les Alpes de dragons et insistait sur leurs dangers.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau et les voyageurs anglais popularisent les vertus géographiques et thermales de la Suisse, tout en insistant sur la nature vertueuse des populations suisses et sur l'aspect exceptionnel de leur organisation politique. Ces éléments assemblés génèrent une utopie de l'espace alpin dont le mot « Suisse » devient synonyme. À la fin du XVIII^e^ siècle, la Suisse, c'est l'espace alpin, y compris dans ses débordements : la Savoie, le massif de Chamonix, les Grisons, voire le Piémont.

Cet espace géographique est exploré à la saison estivale. Les charmes du voyage sont ses bains, ses auberges, les parties de plaisir organisées par les aubergistes, les courses proposées et encadrées par des montagnards qui complètent de cette manière leur subsistance – Saussure et Ebel indiquent combien il convient de payer les guides. Il faut ajouter à la liste des « choses à voir » les cérémonies officielles (*Landsgemeinde*, exercices militaires ou défilés folkloriques) ou les forgeries nouvelles telles que la fête d'Unspunnen, décrite par M^me^ de Staël en 1808, et qui célébrait la concorde d'une nation de bergers. Exemple de ces nouveaux folklores nationaux qui naissent avec la Révolution française.

Ce seront encore les Anglais qui inventeront et populariseront les plaisirs des activités hivernales : le patinage, l'introduction du ski (imité des Scandinaves), la création de stations hivernales pour recevoir les adeptes de ces activités. Ce sont aussi les Anglais qui popularisent l'alpinisme. Six jours après Saussure, le colonel britannique Mark Beaufroy escalade le mont Blanc avec comme seul objectif son plaisir individuel : « L'alpinisme était né » (Boyer, 2004 : 23).

Progressivement se mettent en place un certain nombre d'activités qui inspireront au Genevois Rodolphe Töpffer, à la tête d'un pensionnat de jeunes garçons, l'organisation de sorties scolaires dans les Alpes. La préface de Sainte-Beuve aux *Nouveaux voyages en zig-zag* (posthume, 1854) de Töpffer souligne le phénomène : « C'est l'heure des vacances, c'est le

moment de faire son tour de Suisse, sa visite aux Alpes » (Boyer, 2004 : 25). Quant au mot « tourisme », il est imposé par Stendhal à partir de 1838 pour décrire notamment le tour des Alpes helvétiques. La notion de « vacances », utilisée pour la première fois chez Senancour dans le sens que nous donnons au mot, reprise par Sainte-Beuve et associée au tourisme stendhalien, inscrit l'espace alpin dans la genèse du phénomène. Au long du XX^e siècle, avec l'apparition des techniques et institutions qui permettent un tourisme de masse, les vacances se délesteront de toute perspective savante, anthropologique, romantique pour ne recouvrir qu'une approche ludique et une esthétique éphémère.

Hélder Mendes Baião studied history, art history and French literature at the University of Lausanne. In 2015, he completed a PhD at this university on utopian and republican thought in eighteenth-century Swiss literature. At the University of Durham, he then collaborated on the publication of the complete works of Voltaire. At the University of Bern, he is engaged in research in literature and history of ideas on the national imaginaries of the 18th century.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2319-8449

Bibliographie

Bertrand, Gilles, « Parcours alpins sur le chemin de l'Italie : les transformations de l'image de la montagne dans les guides et récits de voyage en langue française des dernières décennies du XVIII^e siècle et du début du XIX^e siècle », *Histoire des Alpes*, 9, 2004, 109-130 (hal-01708300).

Boyer, Marc, « Les Alpes et le tourisme », *Histoire des Alpes*, 9, 2004, 19-30 (doi:10.5169/seals-10109).

Coxe, William, *Lettres sur l'état politique, civil et naturel de la Suisse* [1781], tr. L. Ramond de Carbonnières, [Pau], PyréMonde, 2003.

Devanthéry, Ariane, *Itinéraires. Guides de voyage et tourisme alpin 1780-1920*, Paris, PUPS, 2016.

Haller, Albrecht von, *Premier voyage dans les Alpes et autres textes, 1728-1732*, éd. Aurélie Luther, Genève, Slatkine, 2008.

Reichler, Claude, *La découverte des Alpes et la question du paysage*, Genève, Georg, 2002.

Reichler, Claude, Ruffieux, Roland, *Le voyage en Suisse. Anthologie des voyageurs français et européens de la Renaissance au XX^e siècle*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1998.

Rosset, François, *L'Enclos des Lumières. Essai sur la culture littéraire en Suisse romande au XVIII^e siècle*, Genève, Georg, 2017.

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, éd. Bernard Gagnebin *et al.*, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris, Gallimard, 1961, vol. 2.

Saussure, Horace-Bénédict de, *Voyages dans les Alpes* [1834[21]], Genève, Georg, 2002.

Senancour, Étienne Pivert de, *Oberman* [1804], Paris, GF Flammarion, 2003.

Stendhal, *Mémoires d'un touriste* [1838], Paris, Gallimard, 2014.

Tissot, Laurent, *Naissance d'une industrie touristique. Les Anglais et la Suisse au XIX^e siècle*, Lausanne, Payot, 2000.

Vincent, Patrick H. « Enchanted Ground? Rousseau, Republicanism and Switzerland », *in* Russell Goulbourne & David Higgins (dir.), *Jean-Jacques Rousseau and British Romanticism: Gender and Selfhood, Politics and Nation*, Londres, New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 91-112.

21. Pour la version abrégée sans les dissertations scientifiques, sinon les réflexions de Saussure avaient été éditées dès la fin du XVIII^e siècle en différents volumes.

The phenomenon of the Russian / Soviet *dacha* and the image of the *izba* in Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *Mirror*

Polina Pavlikova
Université du Luxembourg

Abstract: The meaning of *dacha* developed, and even radically changed over time, in the Russian Empire, then in the Soviet Union, and continues to evolve in contemporary Russia, as well as in the post-Soviet countries and other parts of Eastern Europe. The first *dachas* appeared at the time of Peter I, who presented lands to his nobles. In the Soviet Union, *dachas* were used mainly as vegetable gardens and became an essential resource for survival. During World War II, *dachas*, or country houses, were used for evacuations. In this article, the phenomenon of the Russian *dacha* with its recreational and salvatory functions is explored in the light of Michele Foucault's heterotopia theory and Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of chronotope. The analysis of the *dacha* space as an ambivalent site of leisure, and a necessity for survival is supported by the example of Andrei Tarkovsky's film *Mirror*. In this autobiographical movie, the director shows how Alexei (his hero and alter-ego) and his family escaped to the countryside during the war and used the *izba*, a traditional Slavic house, as a shelter. However, physical salvation turns into spiritual trial. The powerful opposition between mind and body, emptiness (starvation) and fullness (wellbeing) is explicated in the poem "Eurydice" by Arseny Tarkovsky, which the director artistically appropriates in the movie to reinforce the semantic message of the visual text.

Keywords: *dacha*, *izba*, Russian countryside, heterotopia, chronotope.

Résumé : La signification de la datcha s'est développée et a radicalement changé au fil du temps, d'abord dans l'Empire russe, puis en Union soviétique, et elle continue d'évoluer dans la Russie contemporaine, ainsi que dans les pays post-soviétiques et autres régions de l'Europe de l'Est. Les premières datchas sont apparues à l'époque de Pierre Ier le Grand, qui offrait des terres à ses nobles. En Union soviétique, les datchas

 ISSN : 2780-1896. https://imaginaires.univ-reims.fr

étaient principalement utilisées comme potagers et sont devenues une ressource essentielle pour la survie des populations. Pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale, ces maisons de campagne servaient aux évacuations des villes. Dans cet article, le phénomène de la datcha russe, avec ses fonctions récréatives et salvatrices, est exploré à la lumière de la théorie de l'hétérotopie de Michel Foucault et du concept de chronotope de Mikhaïl Bakhtine. L'analyse de l'espace de la datcha en tant que site ambivalent, alternativement lieu de loisirs et nécessaire espace de survie, est illustrée par l'exemple du film *Miroir* d'Andreï Tarkovski (1975). Dans ce film autobiographique, le réalisateur montre comment Alexeï (son héros et alter ego) et sa famille ont fui à la campagne pendant la guerre et comment ils ont utilisé l'*izba*, maison traditionnelle slave, comme abri. Cependant, le salut physique se transforme en épreuve spirituelle. L'opposition entre l'esprit et le corps, le vide (avoir faim) et la plénitude (être rassasié) est expliquée dans le poème « Eurydice » d'Arséni Tarkovski, que le réalisateur s'approprie artistiquement dans le film pour renforcer le message sémantique du texte visuel.

Mots-clés : datcha, *izba*, campagne russe, hétérotopie, chronotope.

> "Mirror is also the story of the old house
> where the narrator spent his childhood […]
> This building, which over the years had fallen into ruins,
> was reconstructed, 'resurrected'
> from photographs just as it had been,
> and on the foundations which had survived"
> Andrei Tarkovsky, *Sculpting in Time* (Tarkovsky, 1989: 132)

The Russian / Soviet *dacha* and its functions as a socio-cultural space

The meaning of the concept "*dacha*" developed, and even radically changed in the Russian Empire, then in the Soviet Union, and continues to evolve in contemporary Russia, as well as in the other post-Soviet countries and some Eastern European countries.[1]

In the morphological sense, the root of the word *dacha* (дача) is "to give" (давать). The mass spread of *dachas* appeared in the time of Peter I, who gave lands to his nobles.[2] Owning a *dacha* as a place to spend holidays became popular among wealthy Russian citizens. Stephen Lovell describes the emergence of this mass social phenomenon:

1. To know more about *dachas* in comparison to second homes in the West: Treivish, 2014.
2. To know more about the history of *dacha*: Stephen Lovell, 2016.

> The "modern" dacha may be said to have originated in the early eighteenth century, when Peter the Great handed out plots of land ("dachas") on the south shore of the Gulf of Finland to his courtiers and insisted that they build themselves imposing exurban residences. Here, suddenly, was a new type of dwelling, one with no precise analogue in pre-Petrine Russia: a house intended for intermittent (mainly summer) occupancy, located within easy reach of a major city, and lacking a pronounced economic (i.e., agricultural) function (Lovell, 2002: 255).

Dacha culture reached its peak before the Russian Revolution. The *dacha* phenomenon found its reflection in Russian literature and visual art. Moreover, it is a fair assumption that the *dacha* itself (understood as a Bakhtinian chronotope, defined by the unity of time and space) or the *dacha* lifestyle influenced and stimulated the creative activity of writers and painters. This can also be compared with the special *dacha* places for the Soviet intelligentsia, such as Peredelkino, where famous poets like Boris Pasternak or Arseny Tarkovsky lived and created. The specific function of stimulating creative processes that some *dacha* places used to have is also one of the reasons why the phenomenon of *dacha* could be considered an essential element of Russian / Soviet culture.

The Revolution, the civil war, and of course, communist ideology broke the flourishing *dacha* culture, resulting in the destruction or confiscation of many *dachas*. The concept of leisure had not yet been fully established. Sanatoriums were strongly supported by the Soviet government, with an emphasis on their therapeutic function,[3] meaning that access to them became one of the most desirable holiday options. The Soviet government also tried to create their own *dacha* culture based on a new ideology. *Dachas* were treated as a place to relax after the working week. At the same time, the perception of *dachas* as a place of leisure place changed significantly due to the increasing importance of farming. The *dacha* was still an option to spend a holiday, but it accumulated an essential function of supporting the provision of life's necessities.

The *dacha* became a space where the Soviet citizens could relax, but also work. The physical labor gave the *dachnik (dacha* user*)* an extra means of livelihood and, as Stephen Lovell notes, "ideology was never separate from economics" (Lovell, 2002: 283). It is also important to mention that these summer houses could not be privatized, and a *dacha* was something quite ambivalent in a country where there was no private property. As described by William E. Butler, the *dacha* is "perhaps the most

3. In the current work we are not going to explore the phenomenon of sanatoriums. However, I would like to recommend the article where this phenomenon is analyzed in detail: Koenker, 2009.

popular, and certainly from the legal point of view the most ambiguous, object of personal ownership" (Butler, 1988: 185). As in the time of Peter I, the *dacha* was again defined by its instability: "In the 1930s it reclaimed something of its medieval and Petrine meanings: a piece of property that was bestowed at the discretion of the leader and that could just as easily be taken away" (Lovell, 2002: 287).

At a certain point in the Soviet period, a *dacha* became essential as a means of subsistence for more than just its gardening possibilities.[4] During World War II *dachas*, or country houses, acquired another function: they were places for evacuation. Some people were able to leave the city in order to settle in the countryside. In modern times, as the market situation has changed, the *dacha* is seen more as a place of relaxation than somewhere to grow food.[5] In addition, the meaning of the *dacha* can be reconsidered in the light of a pandemic situation, when many people saw it as a chance to escape from a virus, – this hypothesis could be developed in future research.

A brief review of the socio-cultural context of the *dacha* is necessary to identify the main functions of this specific type of country home. In the Russian / Soviet tradition, the *dacha* accumulates various and sometimes opposing functions. The *dacha* had / has leisure and alternative activity functions (especially interesting its role as a creative space for the Soviet intelligentsia and the nobles of the Russian Empire). Moreover, a *dacha* was / is seen as providing access to additional nourishment. The latter function took on greater significance as the *dacha* acquired the function of shelter. In this work, two functions of the *dacha*, holiday and salvatory, are analyzed. Using the example of one family's story of both happiness and fear at their country home, we will examine how the *dacha* space could radically change and be endowed with various functions.

It is also important to note that it would not be accurate to identify all countryside places where people could temporarily reside as *dachas*. First, in Russian, the word *dacha* has positive connotations, as it conjures up the idea of leisure. *Dacha* also means an additional place to stay during the summer period / holidays. But it would be difficult to characterize someone's shelter from war as a holiday home (even if it used to have this function). Second, during World War II, the Soviet Union was still an agricultural country. Despite rapid industrialization, many people continued to live in traditional houses in the country that were their main and

4. Apart from *dachas*, a Soviet citizen could get a plot in garden partnerships: "tiny plots for vegetable gardens […] were especially popular in the starving war and postwar years." (Nefedova, Savchuk, 2014: 171).
5. An interesting article about the post-Soviet *dacha* using the example of Ukraine: Hormel, 2017.

only residences, so we cannot treat their property as *dachas*, which were originally secondary homes.

In this article, we will analyze the image of a country house in Andrei Tarkovsky's movie *Mirror*, and various terms will be applied to it. The world *izba* can only be used for a house, while the world *dacha* can describe a house, the space around it, and a function of the place. The country house in Andrei Tarkovsky's movie definitely accumulates similar functions to the listed functions of a *dacha*. Moreover, there are certain scenes of a pre-war time in the movie, where the family used the house as a holiday place and a secondary home, so it could be identified as a *dacha*. However, the visual look of the house in *Mirror* is traditional, so it could be treated as an *izba* according to its building type. As mentioned above, it would be strange to use the world *dacha* when it is used as a shelter, so in this part of the analysis, we will use terms such as *izba* or simply, a country house. Furthermore, it should be noted that neither the heroes of the movie, nor Andrei Tarkovsky himself in his reflections, intended to specify the type of this place. In reality, it was a place of temporary dislocation, and for the director personally, it was a very special place where he was evacuated and where he was growing up as a child.

The *izba* in the film *Mirror* by Andrei Tarkovsky

In the autobiographical movie *Mirror*, Andrei Tarkovsky shows how he, his mother Maria, and his little sister leave Moscow and try to survive in a village. The famous Russian director shares his memories with his audience through the eyes of Alexei, who is his hero and alter-ego. Alexei appears at two ages: as a child of two or three and as a twelve-year-old boy. When viewers see a little child on the screen, it means that the scene is taking place before the war and the family is spending time in peace at the *dacha* space. On the contrary, the sequences with Alexei at twelve years old are set in wartime, when the family was evacuated.

In the current article, the image of *izba* is analyzed in the context of the artistic transformation of Andrei Tarkovsky's memories. To choose specific moments from the past is a certain form of self-knowledge. Proposed by Boris Averin in his analysis of Russian autobiographical prose, the concept that the personality is recreated or reconstructed by the act of remembering is applicable to the study of *Mirror*. According to Boris Averin, a man accurately remembers secondary events and details of his life. The same happens with Andrei Tarkovsky's hero who recalls seemingly insignificant details of his childhood at a critical point in his life. The main object of his recollections is the ambiance of the countryside and the

izba as a house itself, which could actually be considered a protagonist of the movie on its own.

There is one example that gives us an understanding of how serious Andrei Tarkovsky's fixation on his family home was, and how strong his intention to recreate the chronotope of a *dacha*, the place and the time where and when he was with his family in pre-war time or in the evacuation. For the shooting of the film, the director built a new house on the foundations of his old family home based on photographs. It was important for him to completely rebuild the *izba* and not use artificial sets. Moreover, Andrei Tarkovsky even wanted to "recreate" the natural environment exactly how it was in his childhood memories. The director described his emotional intention to recreate the space in his book "Sculpting the Time":

> A field lay in front of the house; I remember buckwheat growing between the house and the road leading to the next village. It is very pretty when it is in blossom. The white flowers, which give the effect of a snow-covered field, have stayed in my memory as one of the distinctive and essential details of my childhood. But when we arrived to decide where we would shoot, there was no buckwheat in sight – for years the kolkhoz had been sowing the field with clover and oats. When we asked them to sow it for us with buckwheat, they made a great point of assuring us that buckwheat wouldn't grow there, because it was quite the wrong soil. Despite that, we rented the field and sowed it with buckwheat at our own risk. The people in the kolkhoz couldn't conceal their amazement when they saw it come up. And we took that success as a good omen. It seemed to tell us something about the special quality of our memory – about its capacity for penetrating beyond the veils drawn by time… (Tarkovsky, 1989: 132).

Andrei Tarkovsky's comment supports the point that the film set was established as the space of his very reality, because it was the director's principle and the artistic prerequisite for the successful realization of the movie *Mirror*. However, the example of the *izba* in the film of Andrei Tarkovsky is a visual image of an artistic product. The *izba* from the director's memories is as real as it is not real, so the object of our research cannot be considered as a purely social-cultural space, but it should be analyzed as a social-cultural space through the artistic vision of an individual. That is why we are going to focus on the *izba* house and *dacha* space as a part of Andrei Tarkovsky's memories, as a place or a chronotope, where his alter ego Alexei managed to get a specific survival experience.

The heterotopia / heterochrony features of the *dacha* space in *Mirror*

The narrator in his real age is physically absent in the movie, so the viewer sees two-three and twelve-year-old Alexei as a part of the memories of adult Alexei. Andrei Tarkovsky does not show his main hero in his actual age, but gives us the opportunity to perceive the events as Alexei saw / dreamt / remembered them. In *Mirror*, the country house absorbs memories of various periods of Alexei and his family's life. As Michel Foucault explains, one of the principles defining a heterotopia, understood as a space that is somehow contradictory and "other" to its context, is a break from traditional time. The philosopher laid great stress on the time aspect and coined a symmetrical term to heterotopia, heterochrony. The conceptual frame of a heterotopia / a heterochrony as a parallel space that accumulates time could explain the specificity of a *dacha* space in the analyzed movie.

For example, Andrei Tarkovsky shows the country house as a zone that contains Alexei and Maria at various ages. The movie ends with a mysterious scene where young Maria is pregnant. She is talking with her husband about their future child. Being in an ambivalent mood, lightly smiling and shedding tears at the same time, she suddenly turns her eyes directly to the camera and looks at the viewer for a second, which is unusual for Andrei Tarkovsky's cinematographic language. After a moment, Maria turns back and it seems that she is watching her own future.

In the same space, the director shows Maria as an old woman with two or three-year-old Alexei, so it seems that Andrei Tarkovsky's heroine as a young woman sees herself in old age. According to the storyline logic of the movie, Maria as an old woman (played by Andrei Tarkovsky's mother, Maria Vishnyakova) is the grandmother of Ignat, but not the mother of Alexei. So, the appearance of Maria and Alexei in these particular ages could not occur in a realistic scene. Moreover, in one of the last shots of the scene Maria (played by Margarita Terekhova) is standing in the background and looking at herself, old Maria, crossing the field. Andrei Tarkovsky is not only confusing the viewer with the age of the heroine and her connection to Alexei, but he decided to place the same character in different periods of her life physically in a single space: essentially, we see three Marias in one and the same place. The *dacha* space became a magical heterotopia / heterochrony zone *that* absorbs past, present, and future. A similar meeting of the young and old heroine takes place in the

mysterious scene when Maria's husband is washing her hair and old Maria appears in the reflection in the mirror (1:41:26 – 1:45:00).[6]

The final scene gives the impression that everything that the viewer saw was exactly what young Maria saw herself when she looked back. Margarita Terekhova's heroine turns to her future and accepts it: she sees her older self, as well as her future children, who will remain small for her forever. The director shows how intense Maria's desire to know the future is, so he makes Margarita Terekhova turn back one more time. Once again, the viewer sees small children crossing the field together with old Maria. The illogical difference in their ages could be made by the director to illustrate disharmonious relationships between children and parents, who often perceive each other in an unrealistic way. As Alexei always sees his mother as an old woman in his childhood memories, for Maria her son will be always "little" regardless of his real age.

Another explanation of this scene could be more mystical than psychological. The specific countryside space can be seen as a transitional zone from life to death. As in the previous scene, we see adult Alexei surrounded by doctors and strange visitors who have also a touch of belonging to another century, as they had appeared in one of the mysterious scenes when Ignat reads Alexander Pushkin's letter. Both these scenes are also obvious examples of heterochrony, a place that saves the pieces from various time periods.

In addition, the heterotopia / heterochrony nature of the *dacha* space in *Mirror* emerges when Andrei Tarkovsky shows some old objects on the ground in the final scene. The well seems to be full of broken things that look like dishes. It seems like the place has been abandoned and it contradicts the logical storyline of the film as the young couple obviously spends time in this country house. Perhaps the director wanted to show the future of this place when it would be left by the family. Another hypothesis is that Andrei Tarkovsky intended to show what time has done to the domestic items that have been there for years. The attention that the director paid to the abandoned objects also reminds us of the black-and-white forest scenes, where the dishes fall from the table under the force of the wind. These images will be analyzed below in the context of the poem "Eurydice" as a visual representation of the fullness-emptiness opposition.

6. The film is available online: *The Mirror*, directed by Andrey Tarkovsky, YouTube (https://youtu.be/NrMINC5xjMs).

Andrei Tarkovsky's experience as a part of the collective memories of Soviet / Russian people

Even though the movie *Mirror* is definitely autobiographical, Andrei Tarkovsky combines his personal memories with collective memories. In the highest degree of this term, those collective memories are presented by the director when he shows the historical chronicle of war events (for example, the Soviet soldiers of the Red Army crossing the Sivash). Even when recreating the place of his personal childhood memories, Andrei Tarkovsky manages to make it recognizable to a wider group of people. In his autobiographical book *Sculpting in Time*, the director noted that he had received many letters from the audience indicating that in *Mirror* they found something similar to their own experience. One reaction was as follows:

> Thank you for *Mirror.* My childhood was like that… Only how did you know about it? There was that wind, and the thunderstorm… "Galka, put the cat out," cried my Grandmother… It was dark in the room… And the paraffin lamp went out, too, and the feeling of waiting for my mother to come back filled my entire soul… And how beautifully your film shows the awakening of a child's consciousness, of this thought!.. And Lord, how true… we really don't know our mothers' faces… And how simple… You know, in that dark cinema, looking at a piece of canvas lit up by your talent, I felt for the first time in my life that I was not alone… (Tarkovsky, 1989: 10).

Analyzing this comment, we can conclude that Andrei Tarkovsky has succeeded in allowing the viewer to connect with his personal experience gained in the evacuation and to be emotionally affected by it. That became possible because the director managed to artistically explore the place of his childhood memories as a chronotope where time and space are united. The *dacha* as a chronotope intakes all connotations, negative or positive, that it acquired over time. So, the main focus of the analyses of the *dacha* space in *Mirror* is on what Andrei Tarkovsky / Alexei and especially his mother do, see, feel in this place. Following the conflict that is developed narratively on the main character, Maria, is the key to understanding the specificity of the *dacha* chronotope.

The *dacha* space as a trial place in *Mirror*

Maria and her children who have probably never fully experienced the country lifestyle have to adapt to the new conditions. Andrei Tarkovsky shows how his mother Maria tries to find some money or food for her family. The heroine decided to visit the doctor's wife, Nadezhda, and to sell her earrings. In this scene, the oscillation between fullness and emptiness, physical starvation and mental suffering, the need of the body and the desire of the soul will be represented, and as we will see further, these oppositions are actualized in the image-text relation between the movie scene and the voice-over of the poem "Eurydice" by Arseny Tarkovsky. Taking into consideration certain details of this scene is essential to analyze the meanings that unfolds at the visual-verbal boundary of the movie.

Maria explains to Nadezhda why she and her children came to the countryside: they had to be evacuated to Yuryevets because of the bombings in Moscow. The confrontation between two women, non-local and local, or a person living in city and a person living in village, slowly intensifies. Nadezhda shows Maria her son sleeping in a beautiful cradle. The rich decoration sharply contrasts with the look of the clothes of the guests. Maria becomes embarrassed, as it is difficult for her to accept that she cannot provide the same stable conditions to her son. Moreover, Nadezhda talks about her husband, and the contrast between the married neighbor and single, lonely Maria becomes even more obvious. Andrei Tarkovsky highlights that conflict when showing Nadezhda's child waking up happily laughing at the exact moment Maria is finding it hard to breathe. The mysterious noise that the director often uses in the movie can then be heard, and Maria runs out of the room.

Apparently, Maria came to sell her jewelry in order to buy food for her hungry child.[7] She had to walk hours to the doctor's house, and she feels physically weak and sick from the starvation and fatigue. Furthermore, it is painful for Maria to watch Nadezhda's overprotected son while her own son is barefoot. Understanding all of these nuances is necessary in order to analyze the poem "Eurydice" that follows this scene where the soul is also exhausted by physical hardships and suffers like Maria.

Nadezhda appears to be pregnant, and because she feels unwell, she asks Maria to help her to slaughter a rooster. The strongest contrast between the two women is shown, as the vitality of Nadezhda reaches its peak. Being a city person and having moved from Moscow to a village

7. The memoirs of Marina Tarkovskaya (a sister of Andrei Tarkovsky) describe how their mother, Maria Vishnyakova, tried to sell earrings made of turquoise during the war. In *Mirror*, earrings with blue stones are also shown (*Тарковская*, 2006: 172-174).

during the war, Maria is scared to kill the bird, but she agrees, so Alexei does not need to do it. Andrei Tarkovsky is trying to emphasize that his heroine is not part of this countryside world, she is out of this community. For example, another scene of the *Mirror*, shows Maria watching the neighbor's country house burning. Because of her personal reasons, she perceives it in a detached way. We see the same estrangement in the scene with Nadezhda: even if Maria is involved, it is also a form of suffering for her as she cannot adapt to this life. As we are going to see in the following scene (1:21:00 – 1:37:00), the director enforces this feeling of being an alien or an outsider by using his father's poetic text where the soul cannot survive in a physical world.

The moment when the rooster is killed takes place off-camera, and the viewer sees only Maria's face in a slow motion. The symbol of a bird is extremely important, as in "Eurydice," it is a variant of a soul. Another detail of the scene is that Maria and Alexei leave Nadezhda's house without waiting for the doctor who was supposed to give them money for the jewelry. Being tired and hungry, Maria and Alexei return home. Simultaneously, the voice-over of Arseny Tarkovsky[8] is reading "Eurydice."

"Eurydice," and the dichotomy between mind and body as the core element in the image of the *izba* in Andrei Tarkovsky's *Mirror*

The poetic text that is quoted in the film is centered on the problem of the relationship between the physical and the spiritual. As we will see further, the relationship between text and image is quite specific: "Eurydice" is some sort of a comment supporting the scene. Arseny Tarkovsky describes the fatigue of a person's soul in his or her body:

> A person has one body,
> Singleton, all on its own,
> The soul has had more than enough
> Of being cooped up inside
> A casing with ears and eyes
> The size of a five-penny piece
> And skin – just scar after scar –
> Covering a structure of bone (Tarkovsky, 1987: 157).[9]

8. Arseny Tarkovsky is a famous Russian poet and father of Andrei Tarkovsky. The director often used his poetic texts in many movies such as "Stalker" ("Сталкер," 1979) and "Nostalghia" ("Ностальгия," 1983).
9. The original Russian text of "Eurydice" (Тарковский, 1991, 1: 221): "У человека тело / Одно, как одиночка. / Душе осточертела / Сплошная оболочка / С ушами и глазами / Величиной в пятак / И кожей – шрам на шраме, / Надетой на костяк."

The difference between the physical and the spiritual is revealed using very physiological descriptions. The representation of the body is schematic, caricatural even. Especially in the original text, the reader can feel that the presentation of an image is somewhat grotesquely simplified, as in the paintings of the Russian avant-garde artists. The eyes and the ears are symbolized by circles, and the skin and the skeleton are represented with lines. In the second stanza of the poem, the body is considered as a prison for the soul, "its living prison-cell" (Tarkovsky, 1987: 157). However, in the third stanza, a strange contradiction appears: the main idea of the poem changes radically, and it seems that the author refutes himself. The concept of the necessity of freedom is deconstructed:

> A bodyless soul is sinful
> Like a body without a shirt –
> No intention, nothing gets done,
> No inspiration, never a line (Tarkovsky, 1987: 157).[10]

In other words, separating the soul from the body is a sin. The author stresses that the soul should be active, and the body helps it to gain experience. The idea of a "sin" in its religious meaning is extremely important for the poem. According to Arseny Tarkovsky, a soul cannot have any intention or inspiration without a body. To consider, to be outside the experience (that means to be outside the body) is "sinful" for the soul. In the last stanza of the poem, the soul is humanized by comparing it to a child:

> Run along then, child, don't fret
> Over poor Eurydice… (Tarkovsky, 1987: 157).[11]

The logical question arises: why does Arseny Tarkovsky mention Eurydice only at the end of the text? Even though the poem is named after a dryad from Greek mythology, it seems that the text is not really about Eurydice. How is her image connected to the main conflict between physical and spiritual, body and soul in that case? Probably, the answer is in the fourth stanza, where the author describes how the lyric hero is dreaming about "a different soul":

> And I dream of a different soul
> Dressed in other clothes […]
> Spiritous and shadowless
> Like fire it travels the earth... (Tarkovsky, 1987: 157).[12]

10. Original Russian text (Тарковский, 1991, 1: 221): "Душе грешно без тела, / Как телу без сорочки, – / Ни помысла, ни дела, / Ни замысла, ни строчки."
11. Original Russian text (Тарковский, 1991, 1: 222): "Дитя, беги, не сетуй / Над Эвридикой бедной…"
12. Original Russian text (Тарковский, 1991, 1: 222): "И снится мне другая / Душа, в другой одежде: […] / Огнем, как спирт, без тени / Уходит по земле…"

The conflict of the poem is that the soul cannot be absolutely free and cannot be outside the body. The lyric hero wishes to identify the soul with fire. Now it is liberated, it can therefore leave the earth without a shadow of the physical body that contains it. As a compromise, in the last stanza, the author offers the reader the image of a child as guardian of a pure soul[13]. Paradoxically, in a poem named after a heroine of Greek mythology, the important postulate of Christianity is incorporated: the recognition of the inseparability of mind and body. While Cartesian dualism manifests the dichotomy of immaterial and material, ancient Greek philosophers insist on the dualism of human nature, in the Christian understanding flesh and spirit are united in a man, so the concept of the body as a "prison" of the soul is illogical. In the beginning of Arseny Tarkovsky's poem, the separation of the physical and the spiritual is celebrated, but in the third stanza the author states that "A bodyless soul is sinful / Like a body without a shirt."

Relying on some of the conclusions stemming from our analysis of "Eurydice" can help us comprehend the various images developed in the movie. More specifically, it will enable us to analyze how the image of the *izba* was constructed. The *dacha* space is not just a setting for Andrei Tarkovsky, it is a full-fledged object of study for the filmmaker. As already mentioned, Arseny Tarkovsky's poem is introduced at the very moment when mother and son leave Nadezhda's house, but most of the poetic text is heard when a black and white shot of the forest can be seen onscreen. As in some previous mystical scenes, a flying bird and a strange gust of wind appear. The camera shows a wooden table in the forest: various objects fall under the force of the wind. It seems to be a table that the viewer has already seen several times in the movie. However, the place previously looked alive: there were children, a kitten was sitting on the table, milk was flowing from a jug. The house is personified as the body of the family, and the family was its soul. Now the family is gone, and the *izba* is empty. Moreover, the empty containers on the screen are left without anything inside. This is once again reminiscent of the idea of Arseny Tarkovsky's poem: the body is only a form, a vessel the soul is trying to leave.

The small child, Alexei, enters a house: by the age of the actor, it is possible to understand that this scene is a memory or a dream about pre-war time spent in the *dacha* space. That decision to change the timeline once again reminds us of the dichotomy of the functions that an *izba* has as both a holiday house and shelter. In the next shot of the analyzed scene, the pattern of absence and emptiness rises to even a higher level than seconds before. In the abandoned room, the mysterious wind blows through the curtains. Presumably, it is the same mysterious wind

13. To know more about it: Поляк, 2013.

that Andrei Tarkovsky uses at the beginning of the movie when he made the doctor turn back to Maria several times. That also reminds us of the even more obvious connection between Andrei Tarkovsky's heroine and Eurydice: Orpheus turns back to his lover just as the doctor turns to Maria. Paradoxically the wind in *Mirror* simultaneously resonates with the divine breath, the Spirit of God, and antiquity: once again Christian and mythological traditions are reflected in the aesthetics of both visual and verbal texts.

The *izba* as a holiday house that symbolizes fullness suddenly became a place associated with emptiness and brokenness during the war. Only the empty shell of the house remains and as in the poem "Eurydice," its soul seems to be lost. In the next shot the child, with a large jug of milk in his hands, is reflected in the mirror. This image contrasts sharply with the falling and broken jugs that we saw a few minutes earlier. Thus, the director plays with the images of emptiness and fullness and visualizes them in various proportions and forms. "Hungry" vs "full" is also a version of this opposition, but in the jewelry selling scene it is just more obviously presented than in the shots of broken dishes around the *dacha* space.

The act of killing a rooster in order to feed a child is a physical, corporeal, fleshly manifestation of the value system of both movie and poem. However, as concluded, Maria could not really accomplish her mission, as she fled Nadezhda's house without money. Maria is almost like the soul from "Eurydice", which is exhausted from being in a prison of the body and refuses to experience the human world.[14] The confrontation between mind and body, mental and physical that took place in a specific *dacha* zone founds its culmination in the analyzed scene. Fragile hungry Marie could not be as Nadezhda whose fullness was brought to its peak by the pregnancy. As the soul in Arseny Tarkovsky's poem leaves the world of people, Maria leaves the wealthy house, which is the absolute embodiment of the physical side of life.[15]

As shown, in *Mirror*, we mainly see the narrator's childhood memories or dreams. Therefore, the image of the *izba* is shown through the eyes of a child, so the poetic atmosphere of a place is partly romanticized in the vision of a small hero. At the same time, this perceived image is partly broken, as the director constantly reminds us about the starvation and the despair that Alexei's family experience being evacuated. On the visual and verbal levels, Andrei Tarkovsky explicates the tension between people and the environment that becomes a place that both saves and tests its guests.

14. In the Russian original, it says "уходит по земле." That could be translated literally as "leaves the earth by foot."
15. To learn more about Arseny Tarkovsky's poems in *Mirror*, and particularly about the poem "Eurydice": Павликова, 2021.

In the beginning of the article the various functions of the *dacha* were proposed. Analyzing the example of Andrei Tarkovsky's movie was an attempt to reconsider the conceptual meaning of how the *dacha* space turned from a space of physical salvation into the space of a mental trial for Maria and her family. The place that used to have a function of leisure and give happiness occurred to be something that gave a chance for the director's and many other families in the Soviet Union to persist during World War II. The *dacha* space as a usual holiday space acquired its twin, or more precisely, its antonym, as a space with a function of shelter.

Polina Pavlikova is currently working on a PhD thesis entitled *A Twin Texts Phenomenon: The Act of Self-correction* at the University of Luxembourg. She holds a BA and an MA in Philology from Saint-Petersburg State University, and specialises in the poetry of prose-writers such as Andrei Bitov and Vladimir Nabokov; the relationship between the verbal and the visual in Andrei Tarkovsky's films; and the problems of post-colonialism in the context of the post-Soviet space.

https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5737-2102

Bibliography

Bakhtin, Mikhail, "Forms of time and of the chronotope in the novel," in *The Dialogic Imagination*, tr. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, Texas UP, 1981, 84–258.

Butler, William E., *Soviet Law*, London, Butterworths, 1988, 2nd ed.

Foucault, Michel, "Of Other Spaces", tr. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16(1), 1986, 22–27 (doi:10.2307/464648).

Hormel, Leontina M., "Food or Flowers? Dacha Gardening and Gendered Class Relations in Post-Soviet Ukraine", *Rural Sociology*, 82(1), 2017, 75–100 (doi:10.1111/ruso.12110).

Koenker, Diane P., "Whose Right to Rest? Contesting the Family Vacation in the Postwar Soviet Union", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 51(2), April 2009, 401–425 (doi:10.1017/S0010417509000176).

Lovell, Stephen, "The Making of the Stalin-Era Dacha", *The Journal of Modern History*, 74(2), June 2002, 253–288 (doi:10.1086/343408).

–––, *Summerfolk: A History of the Dacha, 1710-2000*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell UP, 2016.

Nefedova, T. G, Savchuk, I. G., "Second Exurban Residences of Citizens in Russia and Ukraine: Evolution of Dachas and Trends of Their Post-Soviet Changes", *Regional Research of Russia*, 4(3), 2014, 165–173 (doi:10.1134/S2079970514030071).

Павликова, Полина, "Фильм Андрея Тарковского 'Зеркало' в контексте поэзии Арсения Тарковского", *Аксиологические ракурсы русской литературы*, Saint-Petersburg, РХГА, 2021, 125–133 (https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=46523174).

Tarkovsky, Andrey, *Mirror*, 1975, 108 minutes (https://youtu.be/NrMINC5xjMs).

–––, *Sculpting in Time: Reflections on the Cinema*, tr. Kitty Hunter-Blair, New York, Kopf, 1987.

Trevish, Andrey, "'Dacha Studies' as the Science on Second Homes in the West and in Russia", *Regional Research of Russia*, 4(3), 2014, 179–188 (doi:10.1134/S2079970514030095).

Аверин, Борис, *Дар Мнемозины: романы Набокова в контексте русской автобиографической традиции*, Ленинград, Амфора, 2003.

Поляк, Зинаида, "Спор 'души' и 'тела': современное прочтение стихотворения А. Тарковского", *Вестник Карагандинского университета*, 69(1), 2013, 84–90 (https://philology-vestnik.ksu.kz/apart/srch/2013_philology_1_69_2013.pdf).

Тарковская, Марина, *Тарковские: Осколки зеркала*, Москва, Вагриус, 2006.

Тарковский, Арсений, *Собрание сочинений*, Москва, Художественная литература, 3 тома, 1991-1993.

"Possibilities of a Pleasant Outing": doing the don'ts in and about Florence in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*

Cláudia Coimbra
University of Porto

Abstract: On the threshold of adulthood young Lucy Honeychurch is a product of the upper-middle class Edwardian society, a puppet on a string of stifling conventions. Hers is an "undeveloped heart", trapped by proprieties of the Victorian type that somewhat define her penchant for spontaneity as dangerous. Will a mini-Grand Tour to Italy, in the company of the typical morose and uptight chaperone, be just as uneventful as expected or will the Tuscan sun exert its summer magic? More than the portrait of a prospective lady, *A Room with a View* (1908) mirrors E. M. Forster's take on a very particular topic, that of the English abroad. Both tourists and expatriates converge during the holiday season to test their moral stiffness while tempted by the appreciation of beauty, nature and passion. Disruptive characters, like the liberal Emersons, or turbulent events, like the furtive kiss on the hillside, thus become tools for an awakening of sorts on the part of the female self, as Lucy transposes and transcends a strict code of behaviour, and emancipates herself not only from the Baedeker (the famous portable travel guide) but also, and most importantly, from "the surface of things". If one comes to Italy "for life" and not for anything else, if the room and the view are metaphors for contrasting worlds, what impact does the act of travelling produce in the traveller, and one inexperienced or ill prepared at that? And what are the domestic consequences of what one sees and feels in a country other than one's own when a return is inevitable? The scope of this article is to assess not only the way(s) in which Forster privileges the search for individuality and feminine agency within the social-comedic plot of the novel, but also to confirm the sense of imbalance that holidays inevitably bring to the holiday-seeker, as hopes are dashed, expectations thwarted or new sensations embraced.

Keywords: holidays, decorum, disruption, individuality, coming of age.

Résumé : Au seuil de l'âge adulte, la jeune Lucy Honeychurch est un produit de la classe moyenne supérieure édouardienne, une poupée étouffée par les conventions. Considérée comme « *an undeveloped heart* », Lucy est piégée par un décorum de type victorien qui qualifie sa nature spontanée de dangereuse. Le mini-Grand Tour qu'elle effectue en Italie, accompagnée de la typique et ennuyeuse chaperonne, sera-t-il sans histoire, ou bien, au contraire, le soleil de la Toscane exercera-t-il sa magie sur la jeune femme ? Plus qu'un portrait de femme, *A Room with a View* (1908) exprime le point de vue de E. M. Forster sur la question des Anglais en voyage. Les touristes et les expatriés convergent pendant les vacances pour mettre à l'épreuve leur force morale en même temps qu'ils sont tentés par la contemplation de la beauté, de la nature et de la passion. Des personnages perturbateurs, comme les progressistes Emerson, ou des évènements troublants, comme le baiser furtif échangé sur la colline, peuvent être alors des instruments de l'éveil de l'être féminin. Lucy transpose et transcende un code de conduite très rigoureux, en s'émancipant non seulement du Baedeker (le fameux guide touristique de poche) mais surtout de la « *surface of things* ». Si l'on visite l'Italie « *for life* » et non pour d'autre motifs, si la chambre et sa vue sur l'Arno sont des métaphores de deux mondes opposés, quel est alors l'impact de l'acte de voyager sur le voyageur, surtout lorsqu'il s'agit d'une jeune femme sans aucune expérience ? Et quelles sont les conséquences domestiques de ce qu'on voit et (res-)sent dans un pays étranger lorsque le retour à la maison est inévitable ? L'ambition de cet article est donc d'étudier la façon dont E. M. Forster privilégie la recherche de l'individualité et de l' « *agency* » des personnages féminins dans l'intrigue socio-comique du roman. Il s'agit ainsi de confirmer la force de rupture que les vacances offrent nécessairement aux vacanciers, qu'elle se manifeste dans les espoirs brisés, les attentes frustrées, ou dans l'expérience de nouvelles sensations.

Mots-clés : vacances, décorum, rupture, individualité, initiation.

> If our poor little Cockney lives must have a *background*, let it be Italian.

A FAMOUS piece of criticism regarding one of E. M. Forster's novels is ascribed to Katherine Mansfield, who condemns *Howards End* (1910) as substance producing hardly any effect: "He never gets any further than warming the teapot […] He's a rare fine hand at that. Feel this teapot. Is it not beautifully warm? Yes, but there ain't going to be no tea" (Mansfield *apud* Scott 1997: 93). Both the adverb – "beautifully" – and the adjective – "warm" – concur to place Forster's perspective within the highly marked tradition of the novel concerned with themes of Englishness, sensibility and aestheticism. It also draws attention to the function of the author: he puts the kettle on, he diligently warms the teapot and we the readers hope the tea will be exquisite. That it tastes sour or smokier than usual, well then, that may be more a problem of perception

rather than conception. And so it is that when it comes to his third published novel, *A Room with a View* (1908), one has to give Forster the benefit of the doubt and see beyond the niceties of the bourgeois background of his characters,[1] or the light comedic stance of the plot. There are far darker forces at work here – and temperature does unexpectedly rise.

In theory, *A Room with a View* would probably have been the first novel to be published: having started the writing of what constitutes the first part of the novel (the Italian section) around 1903, following his ramblings through Italy with his mother in 1900-1901, the author decided to halt its production and concentrate his efforts instead on presenting the public with *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *The Longest Journey* (1907). He then resumed *A Room with a View* with a focus on the second part of the novel (the English section), set on the outskirts of London, a few months after the momentous journey of the two women protagonists to the Continental south. As we will see, both the Italian and the English sections are inextricably dependent on one another and the "fissures and fractures" (Bradshaw, 2007: 5) suggested in Italy will become fully apparent in the not so comforting home of the Honeychurches.

A room with a view can be found anywhere; but one could argue that the intention is not so much to emphasize the physical spaces involved in the expression (one *within*, the other *without*) but rather to translate them into symbols of a higher nature, in which case, at least for the purpose that matters in these initial pages, the room corresponds to Italy and the view to the enlightenment obtained with the travelling experience. The word 'enlightenment' is not here by chance, since it was precisely during the long eighteenth-century that the great Grand Tour itineraries were immortalized in letters, travelogues and even fiction. If it is true that it had long been regarded as a man's privilege, one that would foster self-improvement, better education and an artistic disposition, during the Georgian era English women cater for adventure and become particularly adept in leaving their own country. Continental travel provided a chance to escape the strait-laced mores at home, but only if one belonged to the aristocracy or to the liberal world, having time, curiosity and idleness to spare. As the feminist Mary Wollstonecraft put it in a letter to her sister, "I am not born to tread in the beaten track" (Wollstonecraft *apud* Dolan, 2001: 57). And like her, many other women who expected their travels not only to lead to "maturity, self-reflection, and the rational analysis of foreign cultures", but also to "broaden the mind" (Dolan, 2001: 27).

1. David Bradshaw, in his Introduction to *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster* (2007), is right to declare that it is no use to pigeonhole Forster "as an old-maidish chronicler of Edwardian England's endless summer" (Bradshaw, 2007: 4).

The dangers to which women were exposed (some even travelled across the Channel at the height of the French Revolution or, like Mary Shelley, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars) varied from country to country, but were exacerbated if one was to go further south. Sentimental education was a pre-requisite of the Grand Tour for men, should they wish to indulge in it, but not for women who, when not travelling with a male relative (father, brother, husband, lover) had to rely on their own will to remain chaste. Decorum comes a long way. When not fending off the Other in the shape of a suitor, the English female traveller could also observe and confirm the proverbial levity of conduct of foreign women – mostly French and Italian. Furthermore, as it potentially altered one's perception of daily experience and routines regarding matters of sociability, religion and culture, travel stood for instability. Before you knew it, one's behaviour could be twisted and subverted; in short: translated into another language, closer to the senses than to the intellect.

The challenge of new landscapes

Forster picks up the theme of the *voyage out* (to paraphrase Woolf) to write an account of a *voyage within*. His was a time when travelling for leisure was already a democratic endeavour. The Continental tour had become much more accessible in the nineteenth century and the traveller type was a much broader concept: by the early twentieth-century it was the English middle-class who, armed with their Baedekers[2], invaded foreign territory, with Italian and Greek landscapes as favourite destinations for their architecture, their picturesque and, dare we say it, their inherent vices. The choice of Italy is not arbitrary. As Ann Ardis discusses in "Hellenism and the lure of Italy", "its monuments and artefacts were a staple of the Grand Tour" in the past (Ardis, 2007: 62); most importantly, by the turn of the century there were already "contact zones" that anglicized Italy just enough for it being a safe place to visit, especially when it came to young women and their chaperones (Ardis, 2007: 63).[3]

The circumstances in which Lucy Honeychurch finds herself is such a one. In the company – or, tolerating the company of her spinster cousin Charlotte Bartlett, the appointed guarantor of propriety, she embarks on a journey of Florentine discovery. Being a woman, and a young and unexperienced one at that, she is prone to attract all sorts of comments, looks

2. A travel guidebook, published by the firm founded by Karl Baedeker (1801-1859), that was all the rage among European travellers in the period prior to and during which the novel is set. Its English competitor was John Murray's guidebook.
3. As most novels by Henry James attest, the trope of the young woman adrift in a foreign country, prone to all sorts of influence, is recognizably one that sold quite well in the late nineteenth century. See, for instance, *Daisy Miller* (1878) and *Portrait of a Lady* (1881).

and misconceptions; Charlotte sees to it that none are addressed to her charge by building an invisible wall that Forster will be most glad to tear down. The Bertolini pensione where the two women are staying is the perfect example of a contact zone: behind the façade of an Italian family surname lies the very site of Englishness abroad. This is, however, a contact zone that fails to fulfil the great ideal of the traveller: that of mingling with the native sort. It confirms the pervasiveness of English characters that "carry their cultural baggage with them – in their physical appearance, gestures, use of language, their intellectual (or anti-intellectual) and moral confrontations with each other" (Landy, 2007: 236).

An early description of the pensione and its guests gives us "two rows of *English people* who were sitting at the table"; "the portraits of the late *Queen*[4] and the late *Poet Laureate*[5] that hung behind the English people"; and "the notice of the *English Church*" (my italics). The immediacy with which the alert Lucy notes the ubiquity of representations of England is apparent in her asking: "Charlotte, don't you feel that we might be in London? I can hardly believe that all kinds of other things are just outside" (Forster: 23). It is all very Victorian in essence, and even the owner of the pensione has a Cockney accent. To complete the picture of national familiarity, when, after dinner, the ladies retire to the drawing-room, one "which attempted to rival the solid comfort of a Bloomsbury boarding-house" (Forster: 28), they stumble upon Mr Beebe, "a clergyman, stout but attractive" (Forster: 26) whom they have met on a previous occasion in Tunbridge Wells. In short, these are people living in a bubble, acting as if at home, oblivious to the pernicious effects of their own institutional insularity: they are therefore bound to see Florence through the eyes of their fellow expatriates (the resident community) or through the pages of their English-sanctioned guidebooks.

It may as well strike as adequate that our northern European ladies are given north rooms, looking into a courtyard, instead of south rooms overlooking the Arno. This is, however, the instance in which the author gives the reader a glimmer of hope: feeling most vexed at the nature of the rooms assigned to them, they claim a view, and one facing south! If one had to consider a first moment of disruption in these holidays this would be it: the moment they crave for a southern view[6] and place themselves at the mercy both of the generosity of the ill-bred, Socialist Emersons (father and son) and of Forster's own version of the Grand Tour, that is: "an opportunity for exposure to entirely unanticipated dimensions and categories of experience" (Ardis, 2007: 71). By being, albeit formally, in the Emersons'

4. Queen Victoria (1819-1901).
5. Alfred, Lord Tennyson (1809-1892).
6. "Lucy's affront at being deprived of the room with a view for which she paid suggests that she remains invested, at least for the moment, in the tourist's spectatorial stance" (Barnaby, 2018: 65).

debt for having accepted to exchange rooms, both women embark on a road of subtle negotiation: Lucy struggles in adhering to social convention; Charlotte does her best to shield Lucy, "who had not yet acquired decency" (Forster: 26), from the perils of inappropriateness – "One could not be too careful with a young girl" (Forster: 31). And yet, it seems inevitable that Charlotte, who considers herself to be "a woman of the world, in my small way" (Forster: 34) will fail the enterprise of knowing "where things lead to" (Forster: 34) and that her cousin shall gather, however belatedly, the fruits of that failure.

That Lucy is a character with a tendency to welcome disruption we are told as soon as she flings wide the windows of her room, breathing the clean night air, as opposed to Charlotte, who immediately fastens the window-shutters and locks the door. As the former invites whatever sensory experience the holiday has to offer her, the latter, longing to be "as safe as in England" (Forster: 31) recoils into her shell. The fear of the unknown and of the foreign – even of the prospective foreignness of their attitudes and feelings – is best illustrated in the sign '?', the interrogation mark scrawled on a sheet of paper that George Emerson leaves behind, appended on the wall. As if, in a proto-modernist way, he asked himself, and others, the question: "Do I dare disturb the universe?" ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"[7]). To Charlotte, "meaningless at first, it gradually became menacing, obnoxious, portentous with evil" (Forster: 34). For her part, Lucy accordingly responds: she leaves her door unlocked and, to Charlotte's consternation, leans out of the window in the morning before she is fully dressed. Unbeknownst to her, the workings of a new landscape awake her sensibility into welcoming whatever chance may bring. In being sheltered from the world outside, she slowly walks towards it. There is "a rebellious spirit in her" (Forster: 33) already, longing to explore the otherness of things.

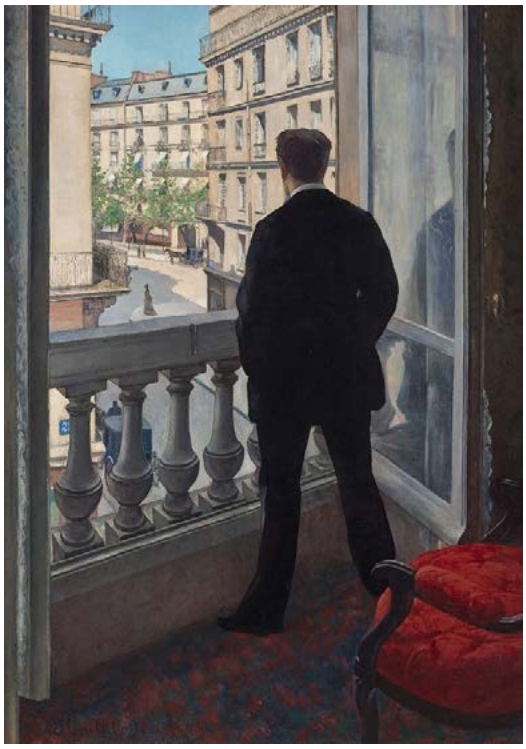

Fig. 1: Gustave Caillebotte, *Jeune homme à sa fenêtre*, 1876 (Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

On her first outing she heads to Santa Croce with Miss Lavish, a liberated novel writer who reputes herself as an expert in "shaking off the trammels of respectability" (Forster: 27). That Charlotte allows her to do so is yet another instance of the former's own incuriousness. Lucy is told that what awaits them is a "dear dirty back way" and "an adventure" (Forster: 35), provided the young girl manages to emancipate from the Baedeker; for,

7. Published by the modernist poet T.S. Eliot (1888-1965), it appeared in the June 1915 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*.

in truth, "he does but touch the surface of things" (Forster: 37).[8] In her unconventional way, the character of Miss Lavish brings Lucy to a state of dislocation, first by theorizing about the absolute need to sever ties with the guidebook – "We will simply drift!" – (Forster: 39); later, by actually leaving Lucy to her own devices of escape, having lost sight of her. Miss Lavish stands as the very blueprint of a *flâneuse*, one who wonders aimlessly, taking in the urban spectacle. Considering that by 1900 she must be in her fifties, she could be the mirror-image, or at least an English version of the mysterious lady passer-by in Gustave Caillebotte's *Jeune Homme à sa Fenêtre* (1876), a painting where the female figure in the background seems to summon more curiosity than the male one in the foreground.

Disorientation is key to understand how Lucy, upon entering Santa Croce alone, is at pains at recognizing herself as part of a group. Without the cultural crutches represented both by her lost companion and the Baedeker, Lucy "walked about disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship or date" (Forster: 40). As uncertainty is attributed to monuments and dates so it is to Lucy's state of mind: with no references to guide her, the only thing she is sure of is that she should not be loitering in a public space. And yet, the pull of adventure is there. Instead of joining the tour that the local Reverend Eager is giving to his flock, praising Giotto's frescoes through the words of art critic John Ruskin,[9] she welcomes the unexpected company of the eccentric Emersons, people who somehow seem to have cast "a spell over her" (Forster: 44) in spite of their being outsiders within the Bertolini sphere. By (un)consciously rejecting the late Victorian doctrines contained in Reverend Eager's discourse of visual consumption, she steps away from an identification with that mass of English tourists abroad who know things without actually *knowing*.

This scene is perfectly delivered in its comic potential in the film adaptation, when we see Mr Eager solemnly interpreting the frescoes while the group of visitors assembles in the Bardi chapel and move their heads left and right, all in uniform accordance, as their local guide points to this or that Ruskin-approved symbolic features. Lucy does not follow them when they move into another chapel. By staying behind she also lays bare the evidence that her "state of spiritual starvation" (Forster: 26)

8. "The inevitable mark of the tourist, the guidebook had, by Forster's time, already come to stigmatize its bearer in contrast to all that was indigenous, authentic, and spontaneous" (Buzard, 1988: 155).
9. Ruskin's *Mornings in Florence: Being Simple Studies of Christian Art for English Travellers*, published in 1881, acted as a filter through which the English tourist must view Italian art and architecture. He hoped that his essays "may be found of use if read in the places they describe, or before the pictures to which they refer" (Ruskin *apud* Buzard, 1988: 157). James Buzard aptly notes that in Forster's novels, "Ruskin's reformist text is no better than the established Murrays and Baedekers – as Lucy witnesses, all are instruments of illusion and participate in the manufacturing of *artificial tourist response*" (Buzard, 1988: 158, my italics).

is incompatible with the *status quo* that still informs Edwardian codes of behaviour. She wants more and she wants different.

When old Mr Emerson asks her to "try to understand" his boy, and to "let yourself go", he is echoing the advice of Miss Lavish to simply drift. The only difference being that her advice applies to the realm of physical space, his to the realm of emotions: "By understanding George you may learn to understand yourself". The boy worries too much over things that "won't fit" whereas Lucy worries too much about fitting in a world she is bound to defy. Somehow, Mr Emerson's liberal plea to "let us love one another" instead of sinking in "world-sorrow" (Forster: 47) triggers in her anxieties towards the new.

Eros, Thanatos and too much Beethoven

> Pull out from the depths those thoughts that you do not understand, and spread them out in the sunlight and know the meaning of them.

A good example of this apprehension is the moment Lucy plays the piano. Back at the pensione, in the stuffy, gloomy drawing-room made darker by the heavy curtains that protect her from daylight, she embraces a *Sturm und Drang* disposition by brooding over Beethoven's *Opus 111*. As Forster makes us note, "passion was there, but it could not be easily labelled" (Forster: 50). Simultaneously, we perceive in her romantic choice, one that underscores a narrowing of distances between her and melancholic George, a sexual awakening of sorts: "Like every true performer, she was *intoxicated* by the mere *feel* of the notes: they were *fingers* caressing her own; and by *touch*, not by sound alone, did she come to her *desire*" (Forster: 51, my italics). In the film, Lucy's character is filmed from behind, with the piano against a wall – to overemphasise stifleness and absence of landscape – and the effect of her exuberant, turbulent musical outpour is achieved by a frame of her long dark abundant hair and her greyish-blue linen-wrapped waist. She has nowhere to go except to music, and it is through music that she reveals "untapped depths" (Langland, 2007: 96). Mr Beebe, who lurks and listens unseen, avows that "If Miss Honeychurch ever takes to live as she plays, it will be very exciting – both for us and for her" (Forster: 52).

A sign that her impulsiveness and tempestuousness strike a chord yet unknown lies in the fact that, after Mr Beebe's comment, Lucy goes for a

second walk about town. If the first foray into Santa Croce had turned her, unexpectedly, into a solitary walker, this time her solitariness is self-solicited and welcomed. If "too much Beethoven" (Forster: 59) is to be blamed, so be it.

As it becomes apparent, Lucy unconsciously enacts a series of don'ts: she leaves the pensione on her own, flaunting her standing as a young foreign girl in need of an escort; she heads to Piazza della Signoria as dusk falls – "the hour of unreality – the hour, that is, when unfamiliar things are real" (Forster: 62); and she has unclaimed thoughts, like her craving for the beautiful things the world has to offer, "if only I could come across them" (Forster: 60). Thus, wanting to do "something of which her well-wishers disapproved" (Forster: 60) she places herself in the epicentre of a possible disruption, not just by walking around the piazza admiring the manly, disturbing and sensual statues of the Renaissance, but also by tellingly acquiring a reproduction of Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. As if to highlight her attuned sensibility to new desires of insubordination, James Ivory, the film's director, makes her defiantly take off her coat just before crossing the square, suggesting heated emotions.

Fearful that nothing ever happened to her, Lucy is confronted with a death scene that will shock her senses to an inevitable personal transformation.[10] The violence of the altercation she witnesses between two local men, followed by a stabbing, is the catalyst for a new apprehension of the real. Analogies have been drawn by most criticism between "the stream of red" that comes out of the dying man's lips and Lucy's symbolic loss of virginity, a sham penetration of sorts. As she swoons, George Emerson providentially catches her in the fall: "She had complained of dullness, and lo! one man was stabbed, and another held her in his arms" (Forster: 62).

Lucy's postcards and photographs, now stained with blood, are thrown into the Arno by George, who recognizes that "something tremendous has happened". Although she feels that "wings seemed to flutter inside her" and that "she, as well as the dying man, had crossed some spiritual boundary" (Forster: 64), it is George who cannot go back to the pleasantries of the everyday and who declares that life must bear a different meaning from then on:

> It was not exactly that a man had died; *something had happened to the living*: they had come to a situation where character tells, and where childhood enters upon the branching paths of youth. (Forster: 66, my italics)

10. This circumstance is in keeping with Ann Ardis' contention that "travelling distils and sharpens her [Lucy] sensory experiences only when she finds herself 'off the map' […], in situations for which she has no prior referent" (Ardis, 2007: 69).

The trauma instils in both characters a sense of innocence lost, and the stillness in which Lucy seems to be trapped by society must, according to George, evolve into an acceptance of the wild, subterranean currents that the world, beyond the barrier of the little that is known, has in store for them. Tainted, like her souvenirs, by a bodily fluid (blood), their souls must yearn for life.

The acknowledgment that Lucy's mind is capable of judging things and places differently after the incident in the Piazza[11] transpires in two moments. The first, a chance encounter with reverend Eager on the street, during which he mentions the inappropriateness of being acquainted with the Emersons. When he accuses Mr Emerson of having murdered his wife, of being a labourer's son and of writing for the Socialistic press, "for the first time Lucy's rebellious thoughts swept out in words – for the first time in her life" (Forster: 75). Opposing the vilifying words of Mr Eager,[12] Lucy defends the Emersons and asserts her own opinion, hitherto uncalled for.

> He gazed indignantly at the girl, who met him with equal indignation, she turned towards him from the shop counter; her breast heaved quickly. He observed her brow, and the sudden strength of her lips. (Forster: 75)

At the same time, she begins to realize how unappealing life in England is when compared to the new sensations Italy provides her with. Upon reading her brother Freddy's letter, she

> recalled the free, pleasant life of her home, where she was allowed to do everything, and where *nothing ever happened to her* […] The road up through the pine-woods, the clean drawing-room, the view over the Sussex Weald – all hung before her bright and distinct, but pathetic as the pictures in a gallery to which, after much experience, a traveller returns. (Forster: 77, my italics)

The English "free and pleasant" life she is used to thus becomes a *simulacrum* for the experience of the authentic; imbued with pictorial quality, it lies in stark opposition with the true-to-life landscapes that a foreign country like Italy confronts her with, landscapes which ultimately bring about her coming of age. Not incidentally, by gazing at the statues in the

11. Described as "a moment of recognition, quickly repressed, of life's 'undeniables': violence, death and sexuality", this scene is central to the theory that "the Italian male body plays a crucial role in an allegory of sexual/social emancipation" (Buzard, 1988: 164). See, for instance, Forster's "The Story of a Panic".
12. John Lucas develops this question further by stating that "the appointed guardians of middle-class values, governesses and clerics, are the dedicated representatives of a class-consciousness which, for all its apparent decency and tolerance, kills off all hope of a free individual life; and that they are opposed by individuals who are, therefore, social outcasts" (Lucas, 1998: 169).

square once more, Lucy notices how they now suggest "not the innocence of childhood, nor the bewilderment of youth, but the conscious achievements of maturity" (Forster: 78). A maturity she is to reach soon enough.

Miss Alan, one of the Bertolini lot, knows best what power lies within the Italian people:

> The Italians are a most unpleasant people. They pry everywhere, they see everything and *they know what we want before we know it ourselves*. We are at their mercy. They read our thoughts, they foretell our desires. From the cab-driver down to – to Giotto, they turn us inside out, and I resent it. (Forster: 54, my italics)

In the most pivotal sequence of the first part of the novel, Forster unites the conventional and the transgressive in a long, enchanting and overwrought episode. The setting is a hilltop in Fiesole, overlooking the Florentine cityscape. A small party is to enjoy a Tuscan picnic; under the pretence of following the steps of a Renaissance painter (Baldovinetti) who once immortalized the view from the promontory, each character anticipates either distress or delight, according to their whims or expectations. Lucy, in particular, is under a predicament: having avoided George since their violent encounter in the Piazza, she feels that something out of the ordinary, something akin to the *real* had happened that day – not in the Loggia, but by the river. Not knowing what to name it, she "suspected that *he did know*. And this frightened her" (Forster: 80, my italics). This fear is complicated by her equating affinity of feeling with sexual allure, something that runs against the grain of propriety and the ladylike behaviour she is expected to exhibit:

> There was really something *blameworthy* (she thought) in their *joint contemplation* of the shadowy stream, in the *common impulse* which had turned them to the house without the passing of a look or word. (Forster: 80, my italics)

It is this sympathy within silence that frightens her and she sets about the expedition intent on recoiling from any act of intimacy with the young man. Forster has other plans, though.

Classical intimations are present as the author aptly names the driver of one of the carriages Phaethon, "a youth all irresponsibility and fire", who is coincidentally – or not so much – accompanied by a girl whose name is Persephone. The girl allows Phaethon to drive with his arm round her waist – "She did not mind" (Forster: 79) – and further along the road "the two figures on the box were sporting with each other disgracefully" (Forster: 82). When, finally, they are caught kissing, reverend Eager calls

for decency and instructs the girl to leave the party, in spite of voices that urge him otherwise: Miss Lavish "felt bound to support the cause of bohemianism" (Forster: 83) and Mr Emerson "declared that the lovers must on no account be separated" (Forster: 82). Both claims betray Lucy's perception of love: at once menacing and (hypothetically) pleasant. Faced with its physical, affectionate display, she cannot help but have "a spasm of envy" (Forster: 82). Concomitantly, the defence of love that Mr Emerson undertakes is aligned with his liberal interpretation of emotions:

> Do you find happiness so often that we should turn if off the box when it happens to sit there? To be driven by lovers – a king might envy us, and if we part them it's more like sacrilege than anything I know. (Forster: 83)

Against Mr Eager's self-declared moral victory, he stands as the ultimate defender of nature in general and the language of the body in particular, exposing the denial of both as sacrilege, and stating that it is defeat when you part "two people who were happy". The intervention of the older Emerson is, therefore, essential in that it enhances what to Lucy seems undisclosed yet: that joint contemplation and common impulse help to welcome "spring in man" (Forster: 85), not fight it. It also sets the tone for the sense of abandonment to the natural scenery they are to undergo and to its powerful take on George and Lucy's conduct. In the film, this anticipation is beautifully captured when the camera lingers on the face of Persephone as she is left stranded. Her angelical yet sensual face, her ocean blue eyes, rose-button lips and fair hair, framed as they are against a backdrop of luscious vegetation, are quintessential Botticellian. If her tangible departure may strike as defeat, the goddess of love transcends her own absence by acting through the fulfilment of human desire.

"Italians are born knowing the way" (Forster: 88), we are reminded. It is through the action of the cab-driver, a common man[13] in whose company "the world was beautiful and direct" (Forster: 88), one that can "read our thoughts" (Forster: 54), that Lucy walks straight into the lion's mouth. Our Phaethon, as it turns out, plays also Cupid by directing Lucy, who is looking for Mr Beebe, towards a sunlit open terrace, "covered with violets from end to end" (Forster: 88). Blue violets may be taken here as symbol of danger, since they are associated with the progressive Emersons, who had, in a previous episode, filled the Miss Alans' room with them. However, far from the impending threat the flowers potentially represent, the terrace where she meets George is also described as "the well-head, the primal

13. "Charming and open, but with a tendency to cheat and unleash upheaval, the Italian Other has an aura of danger, steeped in British traditional notions of treacherous dark strangers" (Girelli, 2006: 32).

source whence beauty gushed out to water the earth" (Forster: 89). It resonates instead with nature's abundance and overflow.

Both youths, in contact with what James Buzard calls "the elemental forces of life" (Buzard, 1988: 164) are then attuned to each other's romantic yearnings: on her way to the promontory Lucy rejoices "in her escape from dullness. Not a step, not a twig, was unimportant to her" (Forster: 88), while George stands at the well-head/terrace, "like a swimmer who prepares" (Forster: 89).

> George had turned at the sound of her arrival. For a moment he contemplated her, as one who had fallen out of heaven. He saw radiant joy in her face, he saw the flowers beat against her dress in blue waves. The bushes above them closed. He stepped quickly forward and kissed her. (Forster: 89)

Their kiss represents chaos, out of frame in a world of things and people put in their places, codified as society commands. The touching of lips, a sexual transgression, foreshadowed by the Italian couple's loose behaviour and soon to be interrupted by a most inconvenient Charlotte, is the "plunge" Miss Lavish said a trip to Italy should be – a dive into physical awakening as well as an emotional and spiritual commitment. Short as it may have been, the intensity of feeling shown by George (here a mirror-image of the native cab-driver, "a youth all irresponsibility and fire" taking the matter into his own hands), and Lucy's languid acceptance of it, translate into a bigger, and deeper, bond. If the English "gain knowledge slowly, and perhaps too late" (Forster: 90); if, as Ann Ardis contends, the travel experience served to "expose rather than resolve a sense of emotional and sensual alienation" (Ardis, 2007: 62) this is, perhaps, Forster's way of begging to differ, conferring to both George and Lucy aspects of southern impulsiveness, lack of self-control and spontaneous amorous excess (their, as it were, temporary Italianness),[14] and distancing them, at least morally, from their repressed social milieu and its repressive social rules. For Venus, it is a triumph.

14. Food for thought: "When British characters infringe perceived rules of national conduct, they adopt Italian standards not to relinquish their identity, but to find it" (Girelli, 2006: 33).

> There was simply the sense that she had found wings, and meant to use them.

Confused as she is, "shaken by deep sighs", and overpowered by "silly thoughts" (Forster: 93) – in short, turned upside down but not quite inside out –, Lucy's return to the pensione and, later, to England, is marked by Charlotte's admonitions and her dread of being labelled a failed chaperone, one who has allowed drama to irrupt. Knowing that she cannot rely on her cousin to be verbal enough about the facts of life, Lucy fails equally in her intention of being troubled no more "by things that come out of nothing, and mean I don't know what" (Forster: 94). The "muddle" of life, as Mr Emerson calls it – the Edwardian/Forsterian equivalent to an existential angst – is to cast a long shadow in her subsequent deportment at Windy Corner, the house the Honeychurches inhabit, and is set to influence the remaining plot after a chance encounter takes place between the Emersons and Cecil Vyse, her fiancé, at the British Museum.

Lucy's predicament, that of repulsing George while not admitting to love him, leads her into a hasty acceptance of a marriage proposal[15] by snobbish Cecil. The young man, living off the family's fortune ("I have no profession, said Cecil, it is another example of my decadence" – Forster: 110) is, according to practical Mrs Honeychurch, "good", "clever", "rich" and "well connected" (Forster: 104). He is also, perhaps ironically, labelled by Mr Beebe as "an ideal bachelor". Ironically precisely because Cecil's view of the world, and of the people in it, comes wrapped in lofty idealizations that collide with the new century. He strikes as the most fastidious of characters, like the "saints who guard the portals of a French cathedral" (Forster: 106). As Jeffrey Heath rightfully contends, "in his fascination with the veiled secrets that Lucy adumbrates (he thinks a woman's vocation resides in charm and mystery) Cecil suffers from what Walter Pater calls 'the spiritual ambition of the middle ages'" (Heath, 1998: 207).[16] Heath's analysis compares Cecil to a courtly lover who looks *through* Lucy rather than *at* her. In her carefully studied propriety, Lucy validates the assertion that "repeatedly, Forster's characters try to own the unownable"

15. As Jeffrey Heath points out, "Forster's two-faced heroine appropriately plans her wedding for January, the month named for a figure [Janus] that looks two ways at once" (Heath, 1998: 193).
16. "In his courtship of Lucy, it is soon apparent that he cannot conceive of any relation other than 'the feudal', that he is incapable of understanding 'the comradeship after which the girl's soul yearned'" (Lucas, 1998: 171). Pater (1839-1894), the most revered art critic of Victorian times (after Ruskin), was a staunch advocate of Aestheticism, following the "art for art's sake" creed.

(Heath, 1988: 197): she is Cecil's property, his Leonardo painting; in short, a Mona Lisa-like figure "whom we love not so much for herself as for the things that she will not tell us" (Forster: 107). In conceding that Italy has brought a most wonderful development to Lucy, one which he does not quite know how to place, Cecil nevertheless indulges in the patriarchal assurance that the shadows applied to the feminine are worthier than the light. That his future wife will conform to society rules, all tight waist and tight corset, and become just another bourgeois lady (like his own dear mother) happy to entertain high-profile guests in the living-room of her well-appointed London flat.

The hints of disruption that Lucy wants to avoid upon her return to England are revived, indeed instigated by Cecil who, for the sake of the Comic Muse, inadvertently places the Emersons (who are looking for a house to let) on the very same street where the Honeychurches live. Soon, Lucy's brother Freddy, who calls Cecil his sister's *fiasco* instead of fiancé, befriends George; from then on, the comparison between both suitors is constantly in the back of the reader's mind. The trap being set by Forster for a series of accidental meetings between the two estranged youths, it is with utmost delight that we witness their gradual blending of souls as a result of Cecil's actions.

During a walk with Lucy, Cecil reproaches her for never wanting to be with him in the fields or the wood "since we were engaged" (Forster: 125). He fears it is because she feels more at ease with him in a room rather than in the open air. Lucy agrees: it becomes apparent that Cecil's demands upon her discourse and behaviour mirror the stifleness and restraint of pensione Bertolini (and to a larger extent, as we have seen, that of English society), whereas George represents the openness of passionate landscapes, especially Italian ones. The attempt at a first kiss – comically described in the book and brilliantly performed in the film – turns sour and bitter as it manifests all the awkwardness prognosticated by Cecil's own theatricals and contradicted by the seemingly idyllic setting. By a pond, under shade-providing trees, Lucy seems ripe for the taking. And yet, Cecil overthinks every step towards the uneventful touching of lips: he asks permission; he has trouble lifting Lucy's veil; he looks right and left to check no one is nearby; he kisses her fearful and ungracefully, causing his pince-nez to fall from his nose.

The experience is as stiff and rigid as Cecil himself. But really, considering that he always thinks of Lucy as a work of art, where to begin when you kiss a beautiful statue? If passion "should believe itself irresistible", if it "should forget civility and consideration and all the other curses of a refined nature" (Forster: 127), then, as he silently admits, it all had been a failure. Too civil and too refined, and not the least manly, Cecil

returns defeated from this bold pursuit. Cut to Lucy's timely reminiscence of her kiss with George, in its "immediate passionate fulfilment" (Gay, 1998: 164), and his fate as vanquished lover is sealed.

As if that was not enough, on a later occasion, while promenading, Cecil, Lucy and Mrs Honeychurch see Freddy, George and Mr. Beebe convivially swimming naked in said pond. Against the formality of Cecil's attire, in all its sartorial flawlessness, George's full bareness arises (pun intended): "barefoot, bare-chested, radiant and personable against the shadowy woods" (Forster: 152). In spite of locking her instincts "behind a selfish barrier of feigned indifference" (Heath, 1998: 196) Lucy's (re)awakening is under way, as she is, time and again, confronted with the vitality that her tryst with George has given her.

As their kiss represents an experience that she has trouble forgetting, a ghost that keeps coming back, "even usurping the places she had known as a child" (Forster: 160), Lucy finds herself facing the conspicuous notion that you can perhaps remove yourself from Italy but you cannot remove Italy from you. This furthermore attests, as Elisabetta Girelli infers, to Italy's "permanence as an unchangeable symbolic space" (Girelli, 2006: 26): that of unrestrained freedom of though and will, of vast expanses of sight and mind – not to say of perfectly sculpted statues of naked men, something the nude scene in this chapter seems to irrevocably evoke. Haunted thus by recollections of unbridled (sensual) liberation, Lucy, who "never gazed inwards" (Forster: 161) starts to let her defences fall, entertaining "an image that had physical beauty" (Forster: 162). Her mental collapse, though unnoticed, is one of wonder towards "nature", one in which the influence of her Tuscan memories is negotiated.

Again, Cecil must be thanked for being an instrument of reconnection that will set the last part of the novel in motion. By picking up the red book (no colour is innocent) which we know to have been lying upon the garden's gravel path at the start of the chapter aptly called *The Disaster Within*, he sentences his fiancée to an act of resistance she does not really want to perform. The novel-within-the-novel ploy appears as the ultimate disruptive agent, as Cecil mockingly reads an excerpt: its author is Eleanor Lavish and its title rings distant bells – *Under a Loggia*. Florence is there, the violets are there, the natural gesture of one lover enfolding another "in his manly arms" (Forster: 179) is there. Soon we learn – as Lucy and George, who sit by Cecil's side, do – that Miss Lavish has either seen their romantic exchange, filing it in her mind for future literary output, or, worse, had this information shared by cousin Charlotte. Unable to stave off the sexual tension between them, fired by each lusty description, Lucy runs towards the house; George follows her. "She thought a disaster was averted. But when they entered the shrubbery, it came" (Forster: 179).

The disaster, or "it", is yet another kiss, this time clandestine, and more forbidding. The shocking revelation of this embrace leads to another crisis for Lucy, one in which, at last, George makes her see herself as a living woman, "with mysteries and forces of her own, with qualities that even eluded art" (Forster: 191). Crucially, his speech as they part is imbued with feminist overtones: when he tells her that she can only speak through Cecil's voice and not her own, or when he declares he wants her to have her own thoughts, "even when I hold you in my arms" (Forster: 187). That same night, when she is breaking off her engagement, Lucy hears her own voice loudly claiming she "won't be protected" (Forster: 191) or "stifled" (Forster: 192). Later on, talking to Mr. Beebe, she announces that she "must get away, ever so far": "I must know my own mind and where I want to go" (Forster: 202). In her urgency to escape the realities that her condition as newly unattached young woman brings, she longs, by the novel's conclusion, for a sense of beginning – and not that of an ending. In wanting "more independence" (Forster: 214) Lucy wants more love, or love as she has never known it – something which George, in his constant pursuit of meaning, can gladly provide her with. Since, according to old Mr Emerson, "love is of the body" (Forster: 223) she is at last shown "the holiness of direct desire" (Forster: 225) and the novel presents us with "the most satisfactory transcendence of the muddle"[17] (Langland, 2007: 95).

Direct desire being attained through a series of last-minute fortunate events – including a *deus ex machina* intervention from cousin Charlotte and a moving conversation with Mr Emerson – the lion's share of the credits for Lucy's emancipation must go to the effects of Italy as both country and construct. It seems fitting that *A Room with a View* leads to a final view in a room where the newlyweds have well-deserved moments of *jouissance* (notice how, in the film, Lucy's hair is dishevelled, suggesting she has been dwelling in intimate languor), and from where they survey the landscape that brought them together in the first place.[18] Critics like Zohreh Sullivan apparently see in this scene the decline of the novel "from its early promise of emotional grandeur to a final arrival at an anti-climactic, middle-class marital stability" (Sullivan, 1998: 186). One could argue instead that there are no fixed developments for characters who dare think and act "outside the box", who are off the beaten track, even if fleetingly; that their individual liberation or "selfless plenitude" (Heath, 1988: 218) is testament to their will to experience existence otherwise (by doing the don'ts) and that we should not worry too much, in case the edifice of

17. "The 'muddle', already alluded to, is 'what results when people ignore their deepest promptings and respond dishonestly and indirectly to experience as they are expected or told to do'" (Heath, 1998: 190).
18. George, who earlier in the novel postulates that Italy is a euphemism for Fate, is eventually seen as the ultimate model for what an English abroad *is not*: "In leaving Cecil for George, Lucy swaps a pretentious intellectual, who fancies himself 'italianate', for someone capable of *blending in* with Italians" (Girelli, 2006: 28, my italics).

protest built by Forster subsides. After all, as James Buzard notes, "rather than the perfectly timed and studied tour, in which stimulus responses meet with resounding efficiency, Forster favours the surprises and disappointments along the way" (Buzard, 1988: 165).

Such surprises and disappointments, in their deliciously tangled nature, bring change upon the characters. All the disruptive elements unfurled as the plot thickens, from dubious acquaintances to dangerous *piazze*, from murders and stolen kisses to providential books out of the shelf, concur to bring the reader face to face with his/her own expectations when abroad; and with the effects of his/her own travel recollections in his/her life. The holiday experience is also an experiment that enables Lucy to go from "touchy" to "touched", to release her soul – more than the body – from the strictures of sex and class indoors, that is to say: in her own country, where the things that really matter (love, youth, and truth, according to the novelist), the things that ultimately dare disturb the universe, do not seem, alas, to matter at all.

Cláudia Coimbra is currently a PhD candidate in Literary, Cultural and Interartistic Studies at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto. She is a recipient of a CETAPS PhD grant funded by the FCT, and her thesis project aims at presenting war literature under a feminine and feminist light, both during the Napoleonic Wars and the Great War. Her research fields of interest include early modern drama, Romanticism, gender studies, Modernism, and cultural memory studies.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1115-4350

Bibliography

Ardis, Ann, "Hellenism and the lure of Italy", *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007, 62–76.

Barnaby, Edward, "'The true Italy is to be found by patient observation' – Tourism as Spectacle in E. M. Forster's *A Room with a View*", *Realist Critiques of Visual Culture: from Hardy to Barnes*, Cham, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, 2018, 57–79.

Bradshaw, David, "Introduction", *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007, 1–7.

Buzard, James, "Forster's Trespasses: Tourism and Cultural Politics", *Twentieth Century Literature*, 34(2), 1988, 155–179.

Dolan, Brian, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, London, Flamingo, 2001.

Forster, E. M., *A Room with a View* [1908], London, Penguin, 1990.

Gay, Penelope, "E. M. Forster and John Ruskin: The Ambivalent Connection", *E. M. Forster: Critical Assessments, Vol. IV – Relations and Aspects: The Modern Critical Response 1945-90*, The Banks, Helm Information, 1998, 160–173.

Girelli, Elisabetta, "Beauty and the Beast: The construction of Italianness in *A Room with a View* and *Where Angels Fear to Tread*", *Studies in European Cinema*, 3(1), 2006, 25–35.

Heath, Jeffrey, "Kissing and Telling: Turning Round in *A Room with a View*, *E. M. Forster: Critical Assessments, Vol. III – Relations and Aspects: The Modern Critical Response: Where Angels Fear to Tread to Maurice*, The Banks, Helm Information, 1998, 187–221.

Landy, Marcia, "Filmed Forster", *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007, 235–253.

Langland, Elizabeth, "Forster and the Novel", *The Cambridge Companion to E. M. Forster*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007, 92–103.

Lucas, John, "Wagner and Forster: Parsifal and *A Room with a View*", *E. M. Forster: Critical Assessments, Vol. III – Relations and Aspects: The Modern Critical Response: Where Angels Fear to Tread to Maurice*, The Banks, Helm Information, 1998, 159–180.

Sullivan, Zohreh, "Forster's Symbolism: *A Room with a View*, Fourth Chapter", *E. M. Forster: Critical Assessments, Vol. III – Relations and Aspects: The Modern Critical Response: Where Angels Fear to Tread to Maurice*, The Banks, Helm Information, 1998, 181–186.

Filmography

Ivory, James, *A Room with a View*, Merchant Ivory Productions, Goldcrest, 1985.