

## NARRATIVES OF LOVE IN POSTMODERN SOCIETY

During my stay at Harvard University (July – December 2014), I have been conducting a comparative research of Argentine and Serbian literature of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, devoting particular attention to the famous Argentine writer Julio Cortázar and world-renowned Serbian author Milorad Pavić. In my thesis I want to emphasize the less explored literary and cultural aspects of work that reinterpret the possibility of love in the postmodern world. As the reality of human touch became more and more replaced by fiction and (literary) illusion, Pavić and Cortázar have struggled to preserve and nurture the fragile and yet necessary ideal of love. Postmodern literature is conceived as a twofold deception, regarding both reality and the authenticity of a work of fiction. The analysis of this twofold literary deception and outcome allows us to reach important conclusions about the very nature of literature and imagination, but it also demands a deeper insight into marginalized areas of human intimacy and somewhat forgotten heritage of idealism.

The main focus of my research is set on major novels by Julio Cortázar and Milorad Pavić: *Hopscotch* (1963), *62: A Model Kit* (1968) and *Manual for Manuel* (1973) by Julio Cortázar and *Dictionary of the Khazars: a lexicon-novel in 100.000 words* (1984), *Landscape Painted with Tea* (1988) and *The Inner Side of the Wind, or the Novel of Hero and Leander* (1991) by Milorad Pavić. Literary experiments concerning narration unite the novels of these two authors: intertextual games, self-referentiality, playing with the role of author, non-linear reading, repetitions and multiplications of motifs, special significance of interaction between reader and author, reestablishing boundaries of genre of novel by transforming it into a children's game of hopscotch, a jigsaw puzzle-novel or an almanac-novel which is the case with Cortázar, that is to say a lexicon-novel, a crossword-novel or a clepsydra-novel written by Pavić, and by doing so they interlink elements of reality and fiction (pseudoscientific approach, factualism) and create an illusion of metafictionality.

Although shaping of love themes in the novels of Julio Cortázar and Milorad Pavić affects their narration and determines their structure, my research isn't focused solely on the questions of construction or deconstruction of literary form. I am concerned with questions such as: is there a particular way of narrating love? How does literary narrative leave its mark on the empirical concept of love? Could narratives of love help us understand the very *form of love*? I try to follow

transformations of the narrative of love and love imagination that surge amidst the crisis of modernity, postmodernity and contemporaneity, at the same time trying to cope with centuries long tradition of interpreting love through philosophical discourse.

From Plato to Badiou, love has managed to find its own way out of the collision with historical and personal time constraints and challenges as well as to evade the pressure of authoritarian regimes. Hope that a similar vitalistic response can still be formulated drives my research. On the other hand, establishing connections between two very different and yet compatible cultures, Argentine and Serbian, proved that more can often be gained from a dialogue between various authors than by conducting separate literary studies.

A visit to the Department of Comparative Literature at Harvard University has contributed to the fullest extent to my exploration of this topic. Unparalleled libraries and an impressive variety of comparative literature courses that Harvard University offers, along with its leading role in the field of World Literature, made it a perfect choice. Bearing in mind that the aforementioned writers equally belong to the World Literature, attending World Literature courses and investigating into this theoretical field has been most beneficial. Special courses such as “Grounds for Comparison” taught by an esteemed expert in the field of World Literature Prof. David Damrosch, “The Borges Machine” taught by Prof. Mariano Siskind, one of the leading specialists for Argentine literature and “Urban Imaginary and Visual Culture” taught by Prof. Svetlana Boym, a connoisseur of various Slavic literatures dedicated, among other things, to love narratives in contemporary fiction, have proven to be most helpful for my research. Special lectures by Étienne Balibar on extreme violence and Jonathan Culler on lyric evidence have inspired me to pursue new trains of thought and connect my research to contemporary trends in the humanities.

I would especially like to point out stimulative and productive conversations with my host, David Damrosch, Ernest Bernbaum Professor of Comparative Literature, which has guided me through contemporary approaches to World Literature and has inspired me to take into consideration other narrative genres apart from novels. Lively cultural and intellectual exchange with colleagues from various parts of world, represented an irreplaceable step towards achieving a better, up-to-date approach to my topic. Participating in friendly discussions and gatherings with fellow students and researchers has motivated me to reconsider many of my conclusions, to enrich my methodology and broaden the scope of my research.

Being a Sylff fellow and receiving the Sylff Research Abroad award have made an important impact on me both personally and professionally: it allowed me to conduct my research in an exceptional academic environment that only strengthened my drive to prove that love and intimacy deserve a place in scholarship and literary criticism. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to be a Visiting Researcher at Harvard University for one semester, explore its unique library funds and exchange ideas with some of the most prominent experts in the field of Comparative Literature.

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