

Therefore, the interwar period that we glimpse through Gusti's School is almost of an endless wealth: from the specific social reality revealed in monographists' investigations, to the very consistent discussions in method and philosophy of knowledge in their social sciences, from Gusti's attempt to impose a new way of governing, to the reality of current political relations and the challenges, betrayals and traps laid by the interwar history. A whole society is opened before our eyes, full of lessons, basically an inexhaustible resource to reveal the relevant aspects of our recent past. Ultimately, one way to get to know ourselves better.

About how we love while we read and how we read while we are in love¹

– Review –

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If Boccaccio prescribed to women in love the escape through fiction as a way of spending time and gaining knowledge, and in the eighteenth century there was a serious interdiction regarding romance novels in women's case because of the belief that these works could exacerbate the feminine hysterical nature, the author of the *Eroticon* writes for both kinds of lovers (whether men and women), for those critically initiated and for the novices, for all those who are willing to submit themselves to a playful and passionate logotherapy.

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¹ Mihaela Ursa, *Eroticon: tratat despre ficțiunea amoroasă* (Eroticon: a treatise on amorous fiction) (Bucharest: Editura Cartea Românească, 2012), 215, ISBN: 978-973-23-2962-7.

The multidisciplinary treatise, relying on literary, anthropological, historical and philosophical references, acts upon the reader both as a guide and as a prescription: on one side it positions critically the lecturer in what might be called a narrative history of love, and on the other side it gives him the chance to play with and escape within the fictional scenarios of love.

The works selected by the author as study cases belong to literature (*Lancelot and Guinevere*, *Don Quixote*, *The sorrows of young Werther*, *The taming of the shrew*, *Tristan and Iseult*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Justine*, *Pride and prejudice*, *The Decameron*, *Don Juan*, *The art of love*, *Death in Venice*, *Lolita*, *Daphnis and Chloe*, *Anna Karenina*, *Madame Bovary*, *The Red and the Black*, *Love in the time of cholera*), philosophy (*The symposium*) and religion (*The Bible*).

The work is an analysis of the impact of erotology on the way the individual relates to love, or in other words, on how “we never stop to be taught to love by the teachers who lack credibility the most: literary characters”.¹ But beyond being an initiation in the amorous discourse and an inventory of love types, this book is about the passion of reading, writing and arguing, about the relations between amorous literature and the reader or even the writer.

The dynamics of the structure and the rhetoric of the amorous discourse over time are highlighted by the author with the help of a few examples from universal literature through the focus on some detail elements (like the wall, the garden, the tower, the portrait, the masque, the dance, the love declaration, the gaze, the fight, the lie or the truth) whose function is related to the dynamics of love, to the fact that “love doesn’t stand any form of stasis”² and it needs the presence of an interior or exterior obstacle.

This book can and should be read in relation to the recent scientific theories about love, may them be of a biological nature (Michael Mills), a chemical one (Michael Liebowitz, Helen Fisher) or a psychological-behaviourist one (John Money, Dorothy Tennov), as an inventory of “configurative varieties”³ of love or a “picture of amorous possibilities”⁴ (may it be androgyny, platonic love, magnetic love, love as disease, doomed love, passionate love, idyllic love, love as psychology, marital love, mystic love, thanatic love, seductive love, love as struggle, love as metamorphosis, incestuous love, bovarism, resemblance love or sentimental love) that are all articulated around three coagulant terms – “amorous fiction”, “eroticon” and “erotology”.

The first of the concepts proposed by the book, the “amorous fiction”, circumscribes in a more generous and more precise way the area of the written works dedicated to love, overcoming what is usually called “romance novels”⁵.

The second concept, the “eroticon”, is defined as “a concentrated visual image accessed through the literary discourse [...], but in the understanding of which the verbal speech disappears [...] in order to allow a reading more likely appropriate to visual poetics”⁶ (it is important to mention here the fact that the “eroticon is not just an image,

¹ Ibid., 8.

² Ibid., 105–106.

³ Ibid., 106.

⁴ Ibid., 211.

⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁶ Ibid., 17–18.

but an image that implies its observer, highlighting it to him often through the presence of a frame”¹, for example the balcony, the window or the theatre of seduction).

These two concepts articulate themselves around an “erotology”, or in other words, “a pseudo-explanation, a pseudo-theory or even an ideology of eros, an identification code of the “true” love or of the “nature” of love”², which acts as a crystallization element for the fictional world.

The key attraction of this type of discourse organized around the three strong concepts (amorous fiction, eroticon and erotology) lies in the fact that it gives the reader “the promise of life-within-literature”³, that these “textual refuges”⁴ offer “with a minimum of interpretative effort – hedonist immersions, the satisfaction of some expectations related to our own emotional and existential fulfilment”⁵. In spite of all those promises the function of these works is a misleading one because “amorous fictions do not shed light on love, but [...] on those who projected them and their relation with love, but also with imagination or with literature”⁶.

The chronology of love types developed by the author can be paralleled with the older chronology of representative diseases for different centuries, as it appears for example in Susan Sontag’s work.⁷ In this case we can observe how beyond the dependence on the historical, the scientific and the cultural context of the way we love and we are ill there are certain points of intersection between the two states in which disease and love become synonyms, or in other words, the styles and the love trends merge with something that was defined by Marcel Sendrail as “pathological styles”, referring to the distinct sense given by each civilization to disease.⁸ This is the case for example when Ficino calls love as “the worst of all plagues”⁹.

The strong point of the book is the fact that it was written, as the author states it, in order to satisfy both her “theoretical-scientific demon”¹⁰ and her “woman’s soul”.¹¹ This double orientation, on the one hand into a rigorous critical inquiry, and on the other hand into an “interior library”¹² and a series of personal experiences defined as “providential meetings”,¹³ give a special life to the book that becomes a story about how we love while we read and how we read while we are in love.

¹ Ibid., 18.

² Ibid., 107.

³ Ibid., 206.

⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 14.

⁷ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); Susan Sontag, *AIDS and its metaphors* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1989).

⁸ Marcel Sendrail et al., *Histoire culturelle de la maladie* (Toulouse: Éditions Privat, 1980), XIII, “style pathologique”.

⁹ Marsilio Ficino, *Asupra iubirii sau Banchetul lui Platon* (On love or Plato’s Symposium) trans. and ed. Sorin Ionescu, 2nd ed. (Timișoara: Editura Vest, 1992), 94, apud Mihaela Ursa, *Eroticon*, 134.

¹⁰ Mihaela Ursa, *Eroticon*, 15.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 14.

¹³ Ibid., 15.



Serban Savu, *Narcissus*, 2010, 40 x 30 cm, oil on canvas

Despite the double orientation this book wants to be first of all “a reconnection to the primordial meanings of literature [...] leaving on the second place the structural, the aesthetical or the axiological comment”.¹ And from this point of view the mechanisms of love and bibliophilism merge perfectly creating complex drawings, a type of an argumentative “lace” in which we can read: the subtleness, the beauty and the resistance of the ideas, the attention for details, the passion and the patience necessary for the crystallization of the forms.

¹ Ibid., 206.

The results of a recent online survey on 400 women aged between 25 and 50 are going beyond “the pleasure of reading”: strikingly “44 per cent of women preferred reading about the (often fictional) erotic adventures of others over taking part in their own sex lives”.¹ The main reasons invoked by the women readers for consuming erotic literature rather than sex are: “ease, a lack of energy and lack of imagination”.²

The dangers of a busy and stressful life are reflected in the poor interactions with the Other: left with no time we engage in a new type of feuilletonic relations. These are easy to access, manage and end. A type of simulacrum, the “fast-love” (like in fast-food) offered by literature is characterized by ready-to-use tempting images, having a powerful force that functions with the help of imagination, but leave the consumer only half satisfied and only for a short period of time. We can only ask ourselves if this is the debut of a new era of a “promiscuous” reader ready to engage in all sorts of “fast-reading” trying to satisfy his appetite.

Ethical Expertise and Social Action*

– Review –

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The necessity of ethical expertise is increasingly felt in our days, not so much as an academic field, but as an instrument indispensable for the functioning of the society. Starting from this remark, Mihaela Frunză continues, in *Expertiză etică și acțiune socială* (*Ethical expertise and social action*), published by Triton in 2011, the analysis of the ethical expertise area started with the volume *Ethical Expertise and Bioethics. Case Studies* (2011).

¹ Lucy Waterlow, “Not tonight dear, I’m reading: Almost half of women say they would rather read about sex than have it”, in *Mail Online*, 18 June, 2012, available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-2161015/Fifty-Shades-Grey-effect-Almost-half-women-read-sex-it.html>, last consulted on 25 June 2012.

² Ibid.

* Mihaela Frunză, *Expertiză etică și acțiune socială* (Ethical expertise and social action) (Bucharest: Tritonic, 2011), ISBN 978-606-8320-30-4