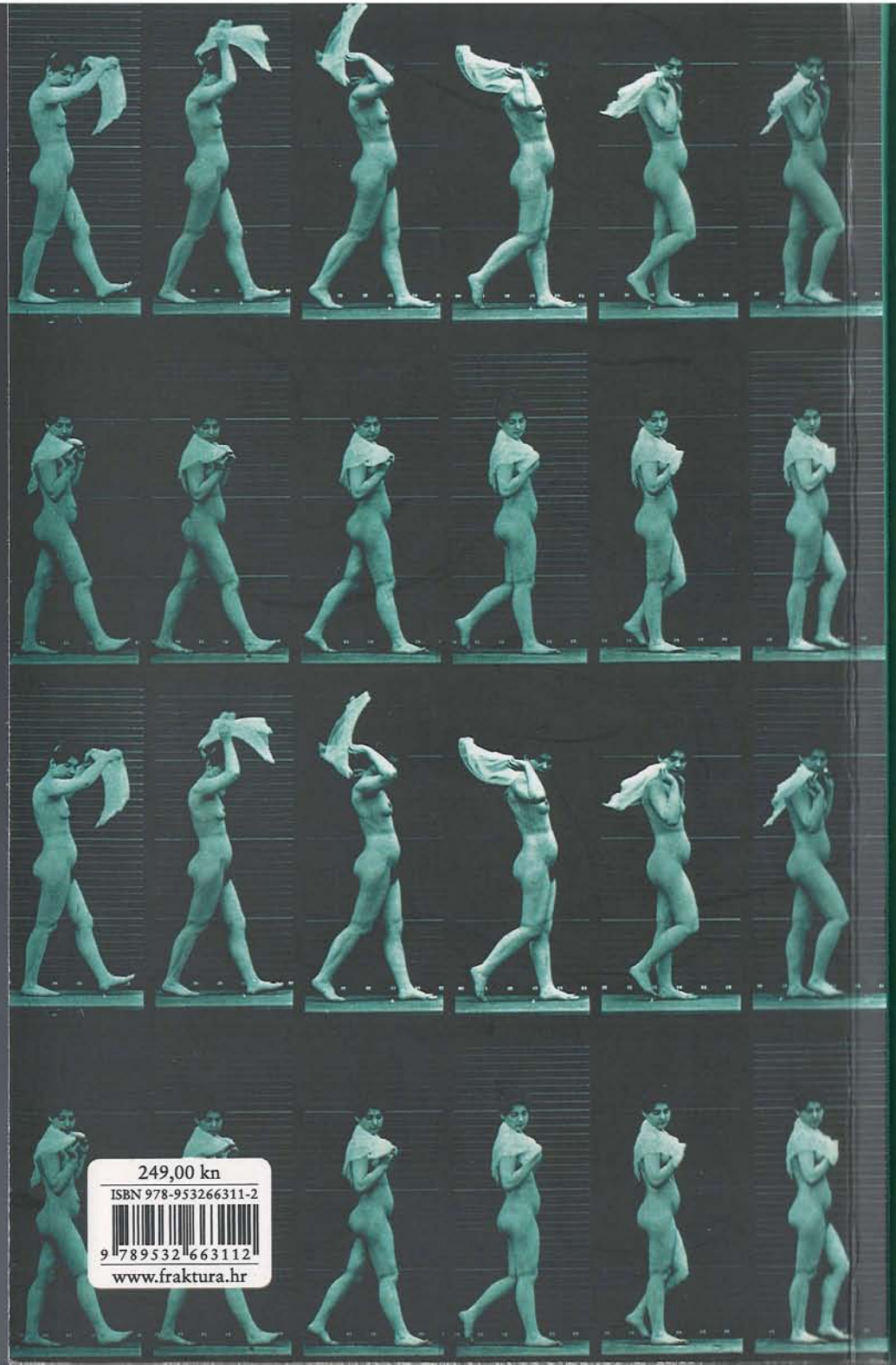

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Spaces of Identity in the Performing Sphere

SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU
AKADEMIJA DRAMSKE UMJETNOSTI

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edited by
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Preface

The conference "Spaces of Identity in the Performing Sphere" took place in Zagreb, 11th–14th February 2010, as the central stage of the multi-annual project "Discursive Identity in the Performing Arts: Bodies, Personae, Intersubjects". The project's main aim is to set the foundations of an interdisciplinary field of research that could grasp the phenomenon of discursive subjectivation in performing arts, and its final output–discursive identity in the performing sphere. Unlike the already existing approaches, predominantly focused on a single aspect of this multi-faceted problem, and with traditionally strict methodological procedures, a particular feature of our critical enterprise is its radical transdisciplinarity. It does not consist only in gathering various disciplines under the vague concept of interdisciplinarity; rather, it tries to conceptualize the so far insufficiently studied issues emerging from the field of performance theory as well as performing arts into a coherent and systematic approach. More precisely, the problems of subjectivation in the very process of creating a performing act tend to elude scrupulous and consistent theoretical account. There can be multiple reasons for such a situation, but we find that the structural one is the most important. When dealing with the problem of identity from the viewpoint of a particular discipline, or paradigm, one is methodologically forced to reflect upon the chosen matter within chosen discipline's boundaries. Performing identity essentially evades such attempts, since it appears on the very intersection of historical, social, cultural, spatial and physiological conditions (to name the most important ones). Constituted in such a way, it can't be fully comprehended from particular perspectives. In order to achieve such a task, a two-stage project is needed. First, the analysis of identity formation in various fields of human praxis is to be examined. On the next level, the results from undertaken research are to be employed in conceiving of a theoretical synthesis capable of dealing with performing identity as an autonomous and distinctive phenomenon. Such a venture is thought of as *New Theatrology*.

This collection comprises presentations given at the aforementioned conference, re-edited for publishing in the form of scientific

papers. Since these papers represent initial steps in configuring a new field of research, they either open up a completely new perspective, or try to locate the phenomenon of performing identity within a precise analytical frame. However, in this phase of research the intention to form an enclosed platform would be methodologically, as well as epistemologically, inadequate. Therefore, each paper presents an instance of a distinctive new approach to the chosen problems.

In the first paper, Sibila Petlevski, senior professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, discusses problems of identity re-shaping by propaganda, cultural programming and formation of memeoids. The paper explores replication and transmission of ideas and customs focusing on an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, such as "imitation". The term "meme", coined by Dawkins by analogy with a gene, is defined as a contagious information pattern that replicates by parasitically infecting human minds and altering their behavior, causing them to propagate the pattern "gene". Although the starting point is in memetic theory, Petlevski questions some aspects of the memetic approach to culture, explores memetics as a meme in itself, pointing to possible misuses of theoretic insight into the principles of meme production, connected to military abuses of "applied memetic engineering" in "inhibiting imitative terrorism".

Darko Lukić, another senior professor at the Academy of Dramatic Art in Zagreb, examines the patterns of social formation of performative identitites, with particular emphasis on socio-cultural distinctions between Eastern and Western performing practices. In this historically founded account of traditional approaches, Lukić deconstructs the usual prejudices on the origin of theatre as a cultural and artistic phenomenon. Thus, he offers a trans-cultural interpretative model capable of surmounting the still existing contradictions within the more traditional culturalistic perspectives in theatrology.

Kim Skjoldager-Nielsen, Danish independent scholar and theoretician, analyses the radical performative approach of Danish/Austrian artistic duo SIGNA's work "Salò". SIGNA expands the

aesthetic and communication frame of performance into encompassing and accommodating hypercomplex spaces for interplay between reality and fiction, centred as it is on basic issues of identity: formation, worldview, and power structures. Thus, strategies for staging the audience as co-creators of the dramatic event(s) are employed. Drawing on examples of audience and actor interactions, the paper elaborates identity formation as a learning potential combining systemic communication theory (Luhmann; Qvortrup) with a phenomenological understanding of reality-effects facilitated by the performance-installation. To support his insights, Skjoldager-Nielsen draws heavily on the results of his own quantitative research of the audience in this particular case.

In his paper "The Discursive Construction of Carnival Politics", Ivan Lozica, senior research advisor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Research in Zagreb, presents a rather controversial interpretation of carnivalesque identity formation. Employing Agamben's concept of biopolitics in the political analysis of carnival, as well as Girard's seminal insights on the ritual nature of violence, Lozica manages to highlight some particular features of carnival that usually don't receive sufficient theoretical examination.

Aleksej Kišjuhas, junior research fellow at the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, expands Randall Collins' sociological network theory to the field of art. Kišjuhas uses Collins' causal theoretical model to explain the basis and causal dynamics of a phenomenon we socially interpret as the field of essential creativity. The basic research approach used in this enterprise is the analysis of creative individuals' networks, network dynamics, and the stratified position of these individuals (i.e. artists) within the social networks in which they participate. The creative identity is thus being examined as a socially structured phenomenon, rather than the embodiment of immanent potentials.

Leonida Kovač, senior professor at the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb, engages in an audacious attempt to deconstruct the notion of coherent (narrative) identity in the work of Croatian dramaturge and performer Ivana Sajko. Kovač examines the poetical processes where the very terms and procedures chosen to articulate identity are being established as political. The self-referential readings of

Sajko represent more than a mere presentation of the author's story. With their orientation to the medium, not as a tool, but as a social institution, they stress the conventional character of "natural" phenomena such as gender, political hierarchy or economy, and offer the possibility for their subversive re-interpretation.

Nadežda Čačinovič, senior professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, gives a short overview of a radical theory of identity as presented in the work of Galen Strawson. The paper focuses on some of the most controversial aspects of Strawson's approach, highlighting the rich epistemological potential especially in its most counter-intuitive aspects.

Miloš Lazin, independent scholar and eminent theatre director from the Independent Theatre Group Mappa Mundi in Paris, presents an encompassing theoretical and historical approach capable of grasping the canon of 20th century theatre directors in a consistent manner. Postulating an original paradigm, Lazin analyzes theatrical identity formation in its situatedness within particular patterns that stem from dialectics between traditional cultural factors and concepts of historical Otherness.

Treating the European space beyond geographical concepts as a particular sphere of identity, Goran Gretić, senior professor at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, offers a peculiar philosophical perspective on the formation of European identity which transcends mere sociological aspects usually employed in similar endeavours.

Hrvoje Jurić, assistant professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, questions the widely acclaimed emancipatory potentials of contemporary techno-scientific achievements in a provocative manner. Stressing the need for new, transhumanist, ethics, Jurić highlights some of the issues that have been insufficiently studied thus far, such as the role of human genetics in identity formation, and, consequently, the need for new anthropological evaluation of the scientific progress.

Željko Uvanović, associate professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Osijek, discusses Peter Greenaway's films, stressing the importance of gender identity issues in particular. Analyzing some of the most significant Greenaway's works, Uvanović emphasizes the significance of the corporeal component of identity and the role of

carnal indulgence as a generator of narrative representation.

Lucia Leman, research fellow at the University of Nottingham, explores historical and socio-cultural conditions which significantly influence the construction of identity in postmodern Croatian literature. The concept of "nation", as conceived in the period of Romanticism, is being questioned mainly through scrupulous analysis of the representative narrative works that constitute the Croatian postmodern literary canon.

Monika Bregović, PhD student at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb, examines the significance of 1960s German docu-drama in establishing an "alternative memory" corpus, considering the German Nazi past and the following social amnesia. The paper elaborates on particular dialectics of social and alternative (individual, traumatic) models of memory, as presented in the most prominent instances of the genre: Hochhuth's play *Der Stellvertreter* (The Deputy), and Weiss' play *Die Ermittlung* (The Investigation).

In her paper "Performative images", Blaženka Perica, associate professor at the Academy of Arts in Split, postulates a specific theoretical status of "moved pictures" which enables a new approach to the dominant practice of inter-mediality in contemporary art.

Boris Čučković, MA student at Leiden University, explores the remodelling potential of new technologies in the field of visual arts, particularly the radical changes of perception and interpretation considering ferrofluid sculptures. Ferrofluid sculptures, as a fairly recent scientific innovation, challenge our traditional view on materiality and mediality of sculpture, pushing it dominantly into the interactive performing sphere. Although the inclusion of sculptures in performance practices as passive objects is well known, ferrofluid sculptures question the basic ontological assumptions of the conceptual approach to the oldest form of visual art.

"The Phenomenology of Dance", a paper by Matjaž Potrč, senior professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Ljubljana, presents a phenomenological account of dance, with particular emphasis on transglobal environment, as the only proper experiential dimension for the phenomenological investigation of dance.

Finally, Goran Pavlić, junior research fellow at the Academy of

Dramatic Art in Zagreb, offers a re-definition of theatrical space, using insights from Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, and the phenomenological approach to acting as art of the most distinguished Croatian theatre director and theoretician Branko Gavella. A new, particular, ontology of the art of acting is being proposed, capable of apprehending its subject matter transhistorically and transculturally.

Sibila Petlevski

Virulent Ideas, Memetic Engineering, Memeoid Identity, Aesthetic Warfare

Merlin Donald's theory: The role of mimesis as "representational dimension of imitation" in human cognitive evolution

There are some intriguing contributions to the recent interdisciplinary theory construction in the sciences of memory. Dynamical, "situated" approaches to cognition have resulted in the reinterpretation of the distinction between so-called *external* and so-called *internal* representational formats of memory "storage". In *Origins of the Modern Mind* (1991) Merlin W. Donald suggests that the increasing reliance on external memory media in "technology-supported culture" as the third stage in the development of human capacity through culture, may have deep effects on human cognitive development and behavior. The externalization of memory has changed the way humans use their cognitive resources, what they can know, where that knowledge is stored, and what kinds of codes are needed to decipher what is stored (cf. Donald, 1997:362).

The externalization of memory, initially a very gradual process coinciding with the invention of the first permanent external symbols, is now accelerating, because–Donald claims–in a technologically advanced society as ours, the number of external presentational devices now available have altered how humans use their biologically given resources. Donald's thesis is that although culture and technology are products of cognition and action, in

Željko Uvanović

Peter Greenaway's Film Productions of Sex and Gender Gap: Bodies and Identities of Men and Women in Mortal Conflict

Introduction

The interactions between male and female bodies and identities in Peter Greenaway's films *The Draughtsman's Contract* (1982), *Drowning by Numbers* (1988) and *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover* (1989) can be marked as perfidious, postmodernist, deadly games. The film director and scriptwriter Greenaway has produced here very intelligent film plays where actors and actresses take part in thrillers, which means that corpses in this war between sexes and genders are unavoidable. But Greenaway has a clear thesis: the psychological wars end with dead male bodies and with the victory of women who stick to their sex and gender solidarity. Men are too obsessed with their elimination drive and mutual brutality to survive as victors in this battle. Whereas the female body survives and remains undamaged as a rule, the male body has to be mutilated and destroyed–preferably by men themselves, but women could perform the execution of men, too. The actors' performances of male and female gender in the films show clearly a pragmatic female constructivism in contrast to a male (auto) destructivity. Female identity is thus defined by the struggle for absolute survival, the struggle ignoring

false morals that are imposed by men, the struggle to defeat the immoral, misogynistic, phallogocentric policy of men. Male identity shows infantilism, readiness to deceive and to subordinate firstly women and secondly other men (treated as inferior beings like women as well). Finally, male and female identities differ in moral consequences: female crimes, presented as revenge for immoral behaviour of men, remain unpunished and without legal consequences. On the other hand, male crimes, including the failure to report crimes committed by women to the police, cannot avoid punishment. Greenaway constructs two different systems or moral spaces of sex and gender identity: firstly, female sex and gender identity in the relativist system of irrational postmodernity; secondly male sex and gender identity in self-punishment, in the causality system of modernity.

The main part of this paper is going to focus on each of the three films, in order to interpret them separately and to analyze actors' performances which are preoccupied with constructing mentioned identities that are constantly at war. Performing arts are represented through the performances of film actors and film music. We focus on verbal and non-verbal expressions of the problems of marriage and adultery in British culture exemplified in the three films that could be considered to be highly sophisticated Greenaway's postmodernist gender war circuses. In contrast to dramatic performance in theatre, acting in film has some other qualities (cf. Ante Peterlić's explanation in: *Filmska enciklopedija*, vol 1, 1986:672-675). Besides, the final film product is made in the montage and in postproduction, and the viewers have no immediate contact with actors: the 'fourth wall' of the film screen remains intact. Nevertheless, Greenaway, who considers himself a painter who works in the film industry (cf. Gavin Smiths's interview in: Gras and Gras, 2000:100), wants his audiences to believe that his film plays are theatre plays–we see the theatre curtain fall at the end of film *The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover*. We can see that even in the aspect of playful genre hybridization Greenaway shows symptoms of postmodernity.

We are looking for various identities of conflicting bodies, sexes and genders in the discourse field of marital relations. In the

following three films five marital and pre-marital tragedies take place in which men's guilt varies from really very small character flaws that normally would not deserve a death sentence to rather grave violations of marriage rules (adultery, neglect of marital duties, egoistic materialist abuse of misogynist social conditions) which can provoke a death sentence in the form of a perfect murder only as a consequence of an accumulation of hatred as a consequence of male misconduct for a long period of time. The roles of husband and wife fall apart and construct a space of hatred where postmodernist games with no moral or legal punishment for female revenge crimes can take place. The female punitive subversion of the male grotesque perversion of marital relations seems justified–although the murder itself can appear to be an overreaction. But is not postmodernism itself an over-modernism, or a modernism with double-coded overreactions to modernism of the false, quasi-traditional male value system (cf. Vattimo, 2000:151-167)? Anything goes! Who cares who has committed the perfect murder? Let the perfect murder remain perfect in its beauty! Please, no later investigations!

The dead are in any case already part of the fertile soil.

The Draughtsman's Contract–Grotesque acting in a caricature of baroque

In this film, Greenaway paints a postmodernist picture with the background of the 17th century elite English countryside dedicated to the ominous "Queen of Night" with her daily killing abilities as it is signalled in the opening credits song. However, this elite is primarily focused on lower, animal instincts. It is addicted to the power of money that has the priority over the worth of human life. The audience is expected not to be morally shocked by jokes about artists who pretend to sell their rich customers equally worth arts products–so that they end up punished by death for the hubris of making a duplicate of the unique thing they already produced. The moral 'verticals' of this elite are marked, to put it sarcastically, by phallic obelisks as omnipresent garden ornaments.

The English marriage was at this period (Greenaway puts a

concrete date: August 1694) more an economic institution, even an instrument of transferring female possessions into the hands of a husband–with the consequence of reversing the marital value system in the male hierarchy with the house as the top priority, followed by garden and horse, ending with wife! And the wife, Mrs. Herbert, together with her daughter, plans a perfect murder. A draughtsman Mr. Neville presents a perfect, multipurpose victim. He makes drawings, considered to be means of reconciliation between wife and husband, according to a contract–which includes sexual pleasures with Mrs. Herbert! But he abuses a sexually neglected wife who is thus equally reduced to a mere thing dominated by a man. However, it is a double game. Mrs. Herbert abuses the draughtsman on several levels: first, it is a mutual sexual pleasure; second, the drawings document dangerous proofs of her husband's murder; third, the draughtsman could be put in the role of a murder suspect–as a punishment for his correct interpretations of the drawings! At a certain stage, Mrs. Herbert's daughter replaces her mother in these multipurpose relations with the artist who appears to be further multi-useful (as a gigolo and even as an insemination machine replacing her impotent husband) and again, everything is arranged by a contract–but this time the pleasure is requested by Mrs. Herbert's daughter who now dominates the sexual intercourse. The power constellations have been significantly changed. The phallic wheel of fortune has turned downwards. The abuser of women has been abused by women, too (Görling, 2002:197). The sexually immoral artist walked into his own trap. However, the death sentence is not carried out by women. In the final stage of his disturbing actions, the parvenu is accused by male figures of the elite for trying to agree on a marriage contract with the widow Mrs. Herbert (that carries advantageous economic consequences)–which leads to the (false but multi-useful) conclusion that he committed the murder of Mr. Herbert out of greed! The male horde blinds him, which is a symbolic castration (ibid.), kills him and throws him into the water–to be decomposed in one of the elements of nature unnoticed by the police or the court of justice.

The message of the film is a postmodernist one: the viewer had rather not be an investigator but a blind recipient taking part in

a skilful game characterized by cheerful arrangements, morbid humour and actors' performances framed by elegant symmetries lit by candles. No moral questions–entertainment spirit is what is demanded, a spirit that accepts euphoric intoxication via pleasant visual and musical drugs. No sorrow over dead bodies is expected–rather a readiness to enjoy in symmetrical and cyclical constructions (Petersen, 2003:69-73) in the context of the perfect murders. The aesthetic film performance is finally emphasised by Michael Nyman's film music mixing minimal art, baroque music and rock (Lüdecke, 1995:211-221; Gras and Gras, 2000:25; Görling, 2002:189; Petersen, 2003:73-75), turning the tragedy into a melodrama ignoring the murderers and corpses hidden in the labyrinth of a too complicated plot. Do not worry, be happy!

Drowning by Numbers – Morbid neo-surrealism with a murderous female trinity and five male corpses

The background for the actors' performance in the next Greenaway's film is a sinister atmosphere resulting from unbelievable readiness to commit murder in cold blood and to protect such murders. This dystopia is, however, combined with a typically male mania to organize and order the physical world by wrapping it into a net of numbers, for example from 1 to 100. Greenaway allows three family related women with the one and the same name Cissie Colpitts to drown two husbands, to let one fiancé and their collaborative coroner drown–and the fifth man in these deadly games is the coroner's son who hangs himself in his final, 'perfect' game. Three angry women–Holden-Moses (1998:230) believes that they could represent one women at three different stages of life–construct their motivation platform for the elimination of men by making a catalogue of men's sins and flaws: a strong tendency to adultery, gluttony and sexual impotence in marriage, pregnant woman's appearance, the habit of not washing their feet–and extreme redness of the male nose! Three poor men who are emotionally related to the three Cissies Colpitts encounter no sympathy with the coroner Madgett, there is no compassion for their tragic fate, their corpses are not a subject of a police investigation–and their ashes are spread

in the water in an illegal, mocking nocturnal ceremony. The whole film seems to be designed as a witches' mass with the sacrifice of male bodies to the nature element of water. And the water can wash the whole memory of the victims away! Everything remains silent, the elements of male bodies are recycled back to Mother Earth! Three Cissies Colpitts do not look like witches, at least dressed up, they wear sentimental masks indicating their readiness to mourn and cast tears. However, their actions reveal witch intensity and strength (cf. Gras and Gras, 2000:112; Greenaway considers Medea to be one of the most famous models of witch intensities in the culture of mankind).

On the other hand, the characters of male figures in the film give the impression that male sexual identity is reduced to sexual satisfaction and to playing the role of a fertilization machine and the male gender identity turns out to be rather closer to female weakness! Their manhood is in the shadow of food addiction, it suffers from psychophysical corruption, it is worn out by surrogate fantasies. The solidarity among men is crippled by the possible stigma of socially unaccepted homosexual tendencies in such type of solidarity, which means that the strong appearance of heterosexuality should be preserved–even when one's own personal catastrophe caused by gullibility towards women approaches. However, men's emotional and sexual relations with men-hating women could put in jeopardy the whole male existence. The coroner Madgett, a man with some necrophiliac adventures in his past, falls into his own trap of immorality. The non-swimmer Madgett is bound to finish his life in the same manner as previous male victims of female hatred and of his own malicious personal and professional intentional negligence. Madgett is a type of an immoral game player who believes that social contracts are temporary, limited only to one's own egoistic benefit, and arbitrarily annullable. He also walks over male corpses and reacts too late to save himself from the chain reaction of male deaths. He is the fourth victim in a row–because he is too slow, too credulous and too fat for a swift change of life and for a moral re-orientation. After three rather primitive, instinctive and stupid men have been drowned, the fourth victim is a feminist, gourmand man who used to show concern for female

victims of male barbarism and brutality! He dies while drowning, without any protests, sentenced to death by three women whose crimes he officially protected as a triple accomplice, undressing as an obedient convict in the sinking boat.

Let us now concentrate on Madgett's son Smut. He is a morbid *puer ludens* who celebrates violent deaths–even the deaths of three victims of the murdering female trio–with fireworks. Smut is an insensitive, rational being that puts numbering marks in the film scenery–demonstrating thus a critically deconstructed "male" model of thinking: physical measurements which do not contribute to a deeper understanding of wider life contexts. Smut symbolizes men's infantilism and the flight from reality into lifeless abstractions and sterile games. Male identity can be characterized by intelligence, but this intelligence seems to be self-destructive. Smut represents a typical "male" occupation with the irrelevant things in life: man makes a system out of essentially trivial phenomena and matters. He remains a prisoner of his own absurd vicious circle. This kind of thinking leads, however, to suicide–a phenomenon widely acknowledged to be significantly more typical of men than of women. But let us see what kind of false moves Smut makes before he hangs himself. There is a series of examples of his actions ruining the reputation and fortune of men. Firstly, he embarrasses his father by circumcising himself with ordinary scissors–causing serious doubts about his father's ability to bring him up to behave in a normal way. Secondly, he represents an element of weakness in two games. He causes bad fate for the third victim of the Cissies Colpitts and eventually for his father who misses the chance to start resistance towards the unholy female trinity of murderers. Because everything depends on the outcome of those games, there is no free action without previously going through an eliminatory game by throwing dice. Although Smut's suicide should be understood as a punishment for his own egoism and for the lack of solidarity, he himself sees in it differently: his suicide is simply a "final game", which means the best game, the game in which the victor and the defeated are united in one being–which deserves to activate his final, best arranged firework–as a colourful, orgiastic boasting of his own destructivity. Defeats should be celebrated as victories!

Male characters in this film articulate the notion of postmodernist fatality and the absence of a clear difference between the morally good and the morally bad–because this difference seems to be a matter of the subjective perspective and a matter of game outcome. Male collective identity here is the identity of desperate losers, the identity of mutually eliminating, short-sighted egoists who act in relation to women as emotional, sexual and material servants. Greenaway himself plays in his film with the old motif of Samson, a man who lost power after Dalila cut it off. But he ridicules this motif–which becomes quite obvious in the scene where Cissie 2 crops Hardy's hair, but this time after drowning, not beforehand. The space of Greenaway's film is a space of a morbid nightmare. Sex and gender gap has been tragicomically widened and deepened, producing even macrocosmic shifts as a consequence of the thinking of this type, mainly reduced to stereotypes such as: anything goes, there is no moral, who cares about corpses. While looking at the stars in the night sky, nobody feels Kant's famous moralistic certainty any more, and nobody believes that there are true moral rules that dwell both in man's heart and at the heart of the universe. Instead, artificial fireworks celebrate and illuminate in rainbow colours the state of mind that had been previously diagnosed rather as moral insanity. There is no place for a morally based rebellion–possibly not even amongst the viewers'–because the recipient is made blind, dumb and passive through the fact that three female criminals do indeed confess their crimes, but the coroner blocks any further investigation for his own reasons. (In "normal" crime films perpetrators do not confess anything, which intensifies the efforts to prove their guilt and to punish them adequately.) Here, the correction impulses are stopped. The viewer's moral conscience is, so to say, drugged by nice colourist details of the countryside as idyllic place, by continuous architectonic harmony, by splendid symmetries in the eye of the film camera and by anaesthetizing film music (dignified requiem, classic music, sentimental music from soap operas) suggesting that nothing embarrassing has happened.

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife and Her Lover – A canibalist carnival in the culture of the British late capitalism–with two male corpses

After three witches from the English countryside in *Drowning by Numbers*, here we are confronted by a male monster. Albert Spica is a psychopath and a gangster boss. He is the embodiment of male chauvinist immorality *par excellence*, but he does not survive as the ultimate film villain: he is shot dead by his wife after he eliminated his wife's lover–but his death becomes no subject to police investigation, similar to what we have seen in the previous two films. His story is a mini-story, not a story that should become a mega social event with legal consequences for the positive figure of his wife Georgina. Let private justice be done without external social interventions! Besides, Mafioso's wife gives the impression that she appears in TV commercials for Gaultier-costumes which she changes from scene to scene in this bloodthirsty tragedy (cf. Felix's comments on the stereotype beauty of commercials in postmodernist films, 2002:167). Therefore, our sympathy is doubtlessly on the side of this beautiful, fancy lady who kills her monstrous husband with a full moral justification and with the consent of the film audience.

As in the previous two films, this horrible tragedy is put in an atmosphere of visual festiveness, extreme elegance and pleasant arrangements of the mise-en-scène. The monster Spica performs his role in such a way that he produces strong vibrations of uncontrollable malice. Greenaway gives this character attributes of a conservative who hates the French Revolution, of a quasi-religious extremist who mocks people living in poverty, who humiliates his dependents–even forcing them to eat dog's faeces (fortunately, the actor ate chocolate pudding!). At the same time, he is able to become sentimental while listening to songs of the biblical psalms (even though he doesn't understand them)! What would be a psychological description of this "thief"–as he is euphemistically called in the title of this film? His sadism manifests itself in his relation to both men and women. His anal fixation is articulated in both his eating

obsession and sexual perversion toward his wife Georgina, who is accused of making him lose his original paradise of infantile purity. Generally, in Spica's psyche, woman stands for obscenity and sin. Therefore, excessive eating prevents him from falling into the 'abyss' of sexual activity (Madgett and Henry, husband of Cissie 2, join this rather negative gender characterization of men in their tendency to castrate themselves through gourmandizing). But when the sexual drive cannot be suppressed any more, it is manifested again in an animosity towards the vagina, i.e. in an attraction for the anus (cf. Gras and Gras, 2000:86-87). But this anal obsession is sexless on his part, because he treats his wife with toothbrushes, bottles etc.–which the viewer hears from Georgina in the scene after her lover Michael was murdered. Spica's character stands for the type of men whose erotic energies are extremely perverted and who have behavioural problems in dealing with both sexes. An interesting detail illustrates his hate of sex: he would like to send the authors of sexy graffiti in the restaurant toilets to jail–only for inventing verses like the following ones: "There was a young man from Uckinham / who was caught while he was..." Well, frozen sexual energies could lead not only to overreacting but also to cold-blood murders. Spica's new, infantile asexual purity thus joins criminality. And this criminality is spiced with the culinary circus while eating at the carnival restaurant table.

The gangster boss Spica functions as the head of his hierarchy of morally corrupt, totally obedient male scoundrels who Spica defines as "queers". They read comics and porno magazines and they would not manage to cope with the world if it wasn't for Spica's father figure. He does not hesitate to strip naked those males who owe him racket money, he sees no obstacle whatsoever in his plans to force one of his criminals to castrate his rival Michael with his own teeth, he has no problems with giving men the "short, sharp treatment" of hitting their testicles with his knee. Furthermore, Spica does not tolerate discussions of male homosexuality in his social surrounding, he restricts himself to blaming some of his subordinates for showing homosexual tendencies, but at the same his relationship to Mitchel (the main scoundrel in his male horde; in the film script he is only seventeen years old, but in the film

he looks older) reveals some traces of homosexuality (Greenaway, 1989:15). The suppression of his latent homosexuality in his mind seems to have contributed to his behavioural deviations in relations to men. One is tempted to put the following question: why does he play a husband role in a heterosexual marriage if he has strong homosexual inclinations? He neglected his wife sexually, she was just a puppet having the purpose of being shown in society as a piece of expensive male possessions, reduced to the status of an extravagant female consumer in the capitalist society. However, the possibility that she could have a lover causes Spica's fantasies of annihilation of the lover's manhood, which is suggested by the following infantile comment of his: "Who is he? I hope he is a woman. I do not want any man to touch my wife." (54:29). Spica seems to hate men even more than women. As long as his wife is sexually pure, she is a goddess–and if the goddess sins against their marriage, she can be pardoned, but any male rival in his marriage bed deserves death without hesitation. Greenaway gives his character Spica a much larger dimension than simply being a cuckold in a usual adultery conflict. Spica's revenge could be an illustration of the cannibalistic tendencies in male hierarchies, under the mask of a highly civilized society (Lüdecke, 1995:146). Since he swore that he will have the adulterer cooked and that he will eat his flesh, his wife Georgina uses the opportunity to make this happen. The free performance of the suppressed, tabooed male-to-male cannibalism (cf. Attali, 1979) lurking in the subconscious is enacted on the film set and before the eyes of the film viewers. In this final scene, Greenaway seems to have made one of the most bizarre cannibalism scenes in the history of the film art–but with the message that this scene in its extremism could reveal the true nature of the strongest hostile relations among men, which is a phenomenon that could rarely be found among Greenaway's female characters–if at all. Greenaway suggests that the male body is preferred in revenge sacrifices and cannibalistic ceremonies. The female body is too sacred, it is the temple of giving birth to a new life, it is preserved from the lynching masses–or at least in Greenaway's film discourse.

The last aspect to be discussed in this film is Spica's racism as a further pretext for hatred. The glutton Spica does not hide his

contempt of starving Ethiopians and the Hindus who practice urine therapy. Georgina mentions indirectly Roman Catholics (typical of British racism) and South Africans as Spica's feinds, too. But Michael, who is falsely considered to be a Jew (cf. Greenaway, 1989:77; here Michael denies explicitly being a Jew), is the adulterer who disgraced Spica's marriage. He is his enemy for many reasons: he is an intellectual, he reads books, he is labelled as a Semite in Spica's view, he shows good manners while eating and he proves that the sex between man and woman could be, symbolically speaking, a way to return to paradise. The adulterous bookseller Michael, the "thief" of the other man's wife, had to be murdered in an adequate manner: "He was stuffed with the tools of his trade"–with the book on the French Revolution! Unlike the scandalous marriage relations, the adulterous relationship between Georgina and Michael proves to be a more normal life alternative. Greenaway has turned all of the scenes between Georgina and Michael into a kind of song in praise of heterosexuality, accompanied by fantastically gentle film music and unforgettable colour designs. From the hell of the marriage bond with a psychopath, Georgina is delivered to a sensual, intellectually strong and emotionally warm paradise of complete interaction of souls, identities, bodies and sexes, existing like Adam and Eve before leaving paradise. Finally, from this point of view it is possible to to pose an applausible understanding of the meaning of the Psalm 51 ("The Miserere: Prayer of Repentance. A psalm of David, when Nathan the prophet came to him after his affair with Bathsheba", *The New American Bible*, 1992:635-636). It could be Michael's final prayer, although it is sung at the beginning of the film by someone named Pup in the melody of Gregorian chant as an subtle anticipation of the love tragedy for which the compassion of God, the forgiveness and restoration of God's love towards the sinful man is demanded: "True, I was born guilty, / a sinner, even as my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51, Verse 7). Georgina and Michael represent the only couple in these three films that could function as a model of a true, mature, even marital relationship between a man and a woman–but they are prevented by a maniac who happens to be the cuckolded lawful husband.

Conclusion

Postmodernist texts are double-coded as a rule. The surface layer of the message is meant to entertain and to adjust to populist needs and to pop culture (cf. Harrison, 2001, on pop art's role in the genesis of postmodernism; and cf. Nünning, 2010:175-179 on the affinities between pop literature and postmodernism) of the "lower" layer of recipients who prefer to remain rather intellectually blind and emotionally thrilled by a story. The "deeper" layer of the message can hide some very serious diagnosis of the discussed problem(s), but this diagnosis has to be deciphered. Greenaway has played in his film texts with various formal styles (grotesque caricature of baroque, neo-surrealism and postmodern parvenu capitalism), but at the same time he has created an intellectually rich space of discourses dealing with male and female identities and bodies within the frame of marital relations. The interpretations of the films allow us to draw some interesting conclusions. Men and women differ considerably in the way they behave towards the members of the same sex and towards the members of the opposite sex, in the personal, individual identity and the gender self-description. Firstly, the depicted male-to-male relations reveal egoism, lack of group cohesion, hostility and the tendency of mutual elimination. The marital relationship is considered by man as a chance to pervert the marriage platform for economic purposes. The marriage cannot function because of the infantile blockade from within the male psyche and because of unjust social re-definition of the woman's position in marriage. The male psychological identity is harmed by destructivity, formal rigidity, immaturity, morbidity and suicidal tendencies (cf. Joas, 1999:227-251 on the notion of identity in postmodernism; and cf. Zima, 2001:195-199 on the postmodern disintegration of the subject). Consequently, the male body can easily be destroyed, mutilated or physically or symbolically castrated (cf. Zima, 2001: 233-240 on the physical body awareness), exposed to the feelings of guilt and the self-imposed boomerang moral causality of punishment. The male death brings the male body back to Mother Earth through the medium of water or fire. Secondly, female relations

are very often characterized by a mutual solidarity. Marital relationship is considered by women to be an opportunity for equality in rights and obligations, which leads to a feminist revision of patriarchal dominance constellations (cf. Owens, 1989). Female psychological identity can be defined as strong and not so easily exposed to externally imposed morality norms. A deeper life wisdom does not allow women to become victims of rigid formalisms. Finally, the adopted relativism of moral rules makes them immune to the logic of unavoidable punishment. The female body remains compact–maybe because women tend not to violate the deeper essence of things and, on the other hand, women readily subvert irrelevant male formalisms. To sum up, Greenaway allows his female figures to offer postmodernist feminist gender and identity concepts which could liberate his male figures from their destructive, narcissist, misogynist structures appearing to be mere hypnotic simulations of power.

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