BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF LETTERS

DAVID LODGE. BETWEEN PARADISE AND HELL

(David Lodge. Între Paradis şi Iad)

Summary

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Introduction

> (...) the individual self is not a fixed and stable entity, but is constantly being created and modified in consciousness through interaction with others and the world. It may be, therefore, that every time we try to describe the conscious self we misrepresent it because we are trying to fix something that is always changing (...)
>
> David Lodge. *Consciousness and the Novel*, p. 91

The purpose of the PhD thesis is to investigate the problem of the 'self' and 'consciousness' as looking for the 'centre' of the being as delineated with philosophy, but especially linked to literature through the author: David Lodge. The main purpose is its representation through a number of the writer's books. Starting from the first authors who dealt with the concept, David Lodge appears as a continuator of the theory of 'consciousness' though brought to a different realm. Thus, he supports the opinion that its study is better performed with literary works.

He does not diminish in any way the importance of other sciences that have studied and continue to study 'consciousness'. Lodge sees in philosophy and science other means of getting to the core of the matter. Beside these, he considers literature as a kind of knowledge that enriches the research and which is necessary to be performed so as to enhance the universe of research and to save humanity from itself. As preserver of 'consciousness', literature, in the author's view, does not work in the manner of the sciences. These look into 'consciousness' so as to replicate it in the artificial intelligence of the robot that belongs to a reality that is no longer human. It is the 'simulacra' that copies without being able to register experience and build the subjective 'self'.

Why then should the individual strive to fight for one's definition which for Lodge represents one's 'self'/ 'consciousness' as connected to divinity? Because for him, the Above defines us before anything else does, without denying the importance of our interaction with the world. 'Consciousness' and its study through his theory and novels makes the author state the necessity of it to be made eternal through the literary works. David Lodge writes in his last published novel, *Deaf Sentence*, that: after one dies, his/her identity is not lost, it is kept alive

through the 'consciousness' of those who remain. The concept speaks of us being together as a community and our ability to communicate to and with everything that surrounds us, it is ultimately the experience of 'Otherness'.

Chapter I
Searching for Paradise

The purpose of the first chapter, *Searching for Paradise*, is to take a short incursion in the problem of the 'self' and 'consciousness', to show how they appeared and developed as concepts, and to shape the necessity to retrieve a lost 'centre', in this case the state of being in 'paradise', as opposed to the condition given by losing the 'centre', which would mean a state of being in 'hell'. The problem is delineated first from the philosophers' point of view, with a presentation of three Romanian authors and continuing with David Lodge in showing the importance of literature in the study of 'consciousness'. This comes as an additional type of knowledge, complementary to the scientific and the philosophical one and more democratic in being able to reach larger audiences.

The chapter begins with Plato and Aristotle's first delineations of the problem. They provide the beginning of the research with the delineation: body-spirit, yet they leave room for another entity that they do not name, which could explain the connection between the individual and the world. Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza refuse to acknowledge that third entity, as that would mean acceptance of the world of experience as not sinful. The body comes as an inferior entity and this condition is only surpassed with Locke and his naming of the trinity: body-soul-self and delineating 'consciousness'. This brings with Hegel and Nietzsche the rejection of the 'soul' and the acceptance only of the 'self' and body. The suffusion in the world of perceptions and of experience brings about the theory of 'perception' with Husserl, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty and Ricoeur, Sartre. Deleuze and Levinas rise from the world of 'appearance' to the necessity to acknowledge the connection with the divine. The chapter also gives a short account on the idea of searching for 'paradise', more likely, searching for the 'centre' of the being which comes to be identified with divinity. It also shows the need to define the human being as made of three parts: body-soul-self. David Lodge is introduced as the writer who theorizes the self-definition of the individual and of the better grasp on 'consciousness' and on the individual 'self' through literature. He appears as the continuator of old theories on 'consciousness' and of the whole path,

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and especially of Ricoeur and Merleau-Ponty who had already mentioned the importance of literature in "consciousness" studies.

The individual had to take the fall so as to become more complex and to better perceive the world in its complexity. He had to experience it also as part of the past of the humanity, then capable to discern through the evolution of thought of different authors the 'soul', the body, and the 'self' which raises the most intricate issue of 'consciousness', as treated most extensively in literature, including David Lodge, who also issued the book to link the need for literature to be produced in respect to the need to experience other consciousnesses through it, and, thus, get to know better how our own 'consciousness' works. According to Delumeau, the contemporary world still needs utopias like that of 'paradise'. I would say that it needs 'centres' towards which to direct its yearning soul, which, though gained a 'self', that nearly killed it in theory, still requires its cooperation in journeying the world searching for completeness of the being in performing its centuries old search for 'paradise'.

Chapter II

Crisis of the Self

The second chapter, *Crisis of the Self*, addresses the question as to what makes and breaks the 'self'. Though existing and proved in its existence, the concept was to undergo various investigations especially from the side of philosophers. We present here the opinions exhibited by Lavelle, Nietzsche but also by Cioran and many others. Ever since the individual gave it a name: 'the self' and identified it with participation in the world, its subjectivity has attracted many researchers. As a new term, it makes them question at times the previous theories of divinity and of the making of the world by divine intervention. This leads to an assumption of the world to a level that becomes dangerous as predicted by Hegel.

The problem that arises is that of the incapability of classifying the human being as more than body and "self". With Bossuet, Lavelle, Kierkegaard and Bro Bernard there is reiterated the need to reconnect to the divine. On the other hand, too much repression at the level of discourse brings about the consequences of the statements prompted by Hegel. His books make his followers state that God is dead and bring the relation with divinity to an end. They prolong the crisis of the "self" which can no longer define itself by lacking the higher authority. The danger of rejecting a part of human identity brings about the rejection of the world with Michel Serres or

the suffusion into the world with Virilio. He portrays the danger of the electronic existence, of the technology that destroys the world and eventually the humans who lack rapport and can no longer define themselves after destroying their environment and the deity that created them.

The problems of the individual arise from becoming unable to accept all the facets of the being. The spiritual side is praised and then sunk, with various authors, some aware of the consequences, some not and unfortunately influencing 'history' i.e. the destinies of a multitude of individuals. The chapter shows the attractions of both sides with the last word given to Virilio and his portrayal of the 'material' as deadly to the 'self' of the being, by giving rise to false communication and interaction with the world. The 'image' that attracts is electronic and has no hidden message; it is the complete opposite of the initial meaning of the 'image'. It also forwards a situation that has become more present with the development of the electronic be it under the form of the TV, cinema, or internet. Still, these leave one with no questions and no goals to be achieved as shown in the next chapter. They are a false attraction to the 'history' that corrodes.

Chapter III
Labyrinthine Hell

The third chapter aims to present the causes and the effects of losing the 'centre' by the individual, thus giving rise to the crisis of the 'image'. Reminding of Locke and his mark upon the development of the concept of the 'self' and of 'consciousness', there is a part of the work that dwells on Hegel, Nietzsche, Cioran, Sartre, all linked by the same belief in the death of God which is destroyed as a concept, an enterprise that leaves one with a void that needs to be filled and causes different reactions at having broken with the 'transcendental', as shown through the Kierkegaardian 'anxiety', the choice of the 'world of appearance'(Sartre) and the development of the concept of the 'simulacra', with the beginning of the crisis of the 'image' whose basis had been set before with Husserl and then continued with Wittgenstein, to name just one of his followers. The crisis is better covered with Baudrillard and his theory of the 'hyper real' though he had himself his own precursors who tried to distinguish themselves the problems of killing God and of toying with the 'image' thoroughly corrupted in its role.

It completes the crisis of the 'self' of the second chapter with that of the 'image' viewed as the sacred component that is lost by denying the divine authority. God's death makes the

world as needed to establish rapport with. The danger stands with the fact that a new authority requires a new environment and this results in the rise of the VR. The degradation had started with Nietzsche and is rendered in the attempts made at restoring the lost centre with Deleuze and Bataille. The defeat is surprised in Baudrillard's books which analyse the decayed reality in the crisis of the 'image'. The choice of the material side of the world makes the community break, which results in alienation. The emergence of the concept of the 'self' brought the death of the authority of God. The 'labyrinth', as it is presented by Castoriadis, refers to the troubles of the human being turned upon itself. Having no greater 'Other' to resort to, the individual is confronted with fear brought upon himself by himself. The world is decaying by being renounced. It was created by God, so it is replaced, much like Him, with the virtuality of things. The new type of human, who chooses 'nothingness', lives between boundaries created by himself and resorts to the image that sends to nothing else. The 'simulacra' rule an existence that is dedicated only to the moment and that rejects the initial source it was based upon. It corrodes reality and is the temporary solution that attracts the human being by creating the illusion of reality and suspending authority.

The 'centre'/God can be approached or denied and thus send humans to the reality of the 'simulacra' with no end. It is a fall caused by the being, a crisis of belief that breeds the crisis of the 'image' and of the 'self'. Still, much in the manner of Augustine, as we shall continue to show in the following chapter, for David Lodge, the fall is something that is required to be performed, a descent into a personal 'Hell' of losing one's 'centre', only to recover it, and re-define oneself as a reborn individual.

Chapter IV

Between Paradise and Hell

The last chapter, *Between Paradise and Hell*, focuses on a number of David Lodge's novels and endeavours to present David Lodge as the writer who continues the tradition of Merleau- Ponty and the others in linking 'consciousness' studies to literature. For him, it is the most expressive means of communicating it. As such, his novels are a portrayal of that belief and a thorough study of the 'self' as caught between 'paradise' and 'hell'. 'Paradise' is ultimately viewed as being by the side of God, of retaining or regaining faith despite the aggressive environments.

'Hell' is the impossibility of 'paradise' and suffusion in the 'corrosive' time of 'history' with no alternative or escape.

The individual is portrayed in search for a 'centre' and even if his search is not complete, the mere longing for it saves the being. His characters are caught between the two possibilities of 'paradise' and 'hell', the first representing the 'centre' of their being. It stands for perfection, retrieval of faith and being at peace with one's 'consciousness'. The quest for it may cause crises of the 'self' presented with too many possibilities and deceived by 'simulacra' that present themselves as false centres, false paradises: material bounty, temporary fulfilment of petty goals to the detriment of the others. The being takes the road that makes him experience the 'labyrinth', as an exploration of the 'self' with all its shortcomings.

Not all of his characters manage to reach the 'centre' that interests them, many are lost to 'simulacra' and take the exploration of the world as the only solution. Usually, the author takes a neophyte on a journey that enables him also to take the 'fall' and then choose if he wants to rise or not. The character may be pure from the beginning like Persse McGarrigle or quite corrupted like Mark Underwood and still become able to shed the 'limits' in order to aspire for the 'centre' and, for the author, that is retrieval of faith. One has to make amends, atone for past sins, be they of the entire world, the original sin, or personal, causing the 'fall' of the ones around them. The journey towards the 'centre' makes them more powerful and is an opportunity to study the meanders of 'consciousness' and of the 'self'.

The interaction between the individual and the world is investigated in reproducing 'qualia' and shows the effects of experience resulting in 'knowledge' or loss of innocence for the ones who assume it too readily. 'Perception' builds the subjective side of participating in the world, and the body needs and builds its own environment. 'Memories' of the distant 'centre' are there to torment the being, they remind one of past 'artificial paradises' or of past moments of completeness that they are unable to regain or of past deeds that should not have been performed and detain them from achieving perfection. Phillip Swallow is emblematic of the stance as the human being unable to be complete, longing for perfection, but only under the shape of 'simulacra', being presented with the possibility of 'paradise' three times and as many times refusing even the 'simulacra', not because of being aware of their false quality, but by being unable to assume the change in his identity by doing so.

'Fear' and 'anxiety' define the characters in their relation with one another and especially with divinity. The mistakes they make, the sins of betrayal of the 'others' and of the greater 'Other' delay them from achieving perfection and torment them with the incapability of escaping the material world that seems perfect in its grasp. Science/industry are portrayed as the apparently 'hellish' worlds where there is no room for human 'consciousness' and undoubtedly no room for belief in God. Their representatives are offered the possibility of change and escape from the doom of 'repetition' to choose 'difference', but are no longer able to do so but for a brief time, though they do come to admit the existence of the 'centre' for a brief period.

It is not necessarily with the most likely to find revelation: priests, that the quest for the 'centre' is shown. Much to the amusement of the reader, they are beings shown as unable to hold the 'centre' they are already assumed to be possessing. David Lodge's priests are more preoccupied with the world, becoming bored with the Above. This does not diminish the quality of 'paradise' , it simply shows that it is the result of continuous striving towards it and becoming proud of one's assumed position does not mean that it will continue forever. Moreover, the writer draws a clear distinction between the felt or re-discovered belief and the institutionalised one which acts through constraining means upon the individual and perceives it as the result of sin that cannot be escaped (quite contrary to the teachings of the Bible) one which has to be kept in 'fear' and crushed through the obsessive control of privacy, which allows for no personal response to divinity and expects controlled responses as from machines with no preoccupation for the 'self' of the being.

The saved individual of David Lodge's books is one who chooses himself over anything else and the only rapport that defines and interests him is the one established with God through one's restored faith. It is 'Otherness' that which preoccupies one, 'nothingness', though its may attract, is disdained and the worldly 'anxiety' is managed to be surpassed. He manages to do it by becoming inconsistent with choosing from possibilities. Thus, he does not choose the 'mythical realm' of dreamy escape, or apparently safe 'repetition' of past divine acts, nor the 'historical' one of the reality that corrodes and destroys the 'self' in too many possibilities that turn life into an electronic robotic existence with no superior end, none of these. The postmodern being of David Lodge's novels dwindles between possibilities, not choosing entirely none as the only drive that he needs is the location of the 'centre' of one's being which is Faith\God.

Conclusions

Though 'consciousness' may be too elusive for who attempts to grasp it, there can still be the quest, the yearning for the ability to approach it. One can adopt the way of the cognitive sciences like Ralph Messenger or that of literature like Hellen Reed. It still proves to be a pillar that dictates the existence of the individual to such an extent as to define his relation with the world and with the other individuals, but also with divinity.

As shown in the previous chapters, 'consciousness' had always been a corner stone of thought, though it lacked proper naming, it had always been there for the thinker to retrieve. Getting a name through Locke, it was used as a weapon against divinity, as a measure of destroying it as a concept and hence as existing. This only brought the trouble of having to handle only the body and the 'self'. The equation that suits also Lodge's literary endeavours that portray the individual is: body-self-divinity. His characters are on the way of discovery of the 'self' and having it best defined through acknowledging the strong necessary relation with divinity.

Lack of understanding of its importance leads to the trouble of self-definition. This makes Lodge's individuals fall into the crises of the lack of defining borders, the crisis of the 'self' leading also to the crisis of the 'image'. By denying their being to have been moulded 'in His image' they begin to have problems of representation, moreover of self-representation. Relying only on oneself has been deemed as a wrong choice even by Hegel and David Lodge goes on to illustrate the decay one is subjected to while forgetting about one's soul or 'consciousness' as linked with the divine.

Surrounded by a reality that is fast deteriorating due to the electronic developments that misrepresent the former representations and aspirations, having everything apparently explained, the longing 'self' embarks on the quest of rediscovering the missing borders by way of thought, exploration, inner contemplation and by becoming mirrored in and through literature. The characters become representatives of humanity on the verge of losing itself but being granted one last possibility of redemption through the words of the text.

Maybe because of one's roots, one's religious convictions or due to other assumed 'limits' the author, David Lodge, is the writer to state that one cannot go on living undefined and that the process is a gradual one that requires keen participation, the making of one

'consciousness' bringing about the rise of the collective 'consciousness' as all are responsible for the rise and fall of even one individual. 'Consciousness' and its fronting through the works of David Lodge, speaks of survival and of the dangers of exposure to artificial creations, all the while one of the solutions to cure that is the reading and production of literature that surfaces the quality of the 'centre' that of becoming involved in a non-selfish way in the larger life, coming to accept and pursue the road to self-definition irrespective of the obstacles and 'false centres' one is presented with.

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