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“MARIO UND DER ZAUBERTER” AND “LE TORRENT”: EVENT, NARRATIVE STYLE, AND SILHOUETTE IN THE NOVELLA

The novella is a literary genre which has occupied a prominent place in the history of European literature. It is generally placed between the short story and the novel in terms of length; however, as several studies have shown, the length of a literary work is by no means an adequate way of arriving at a definition of the novella¹. Formal and thematic considerations must play a role in determining the genre. The novella derives its name from the Italian word “novella” or novelty which developed from the old Provençal “novela”, a literary prose narrative that reported an unusual new occurrence or event.² Benno von Wiese adds that the “newness” or novelty of the novella can be inherent in the story itself or in the newness of the narrative method, that is, its stylistic and formal presentation³. The constant expansion and development of this literary genre is perhaps most evident in the history of German literature. Unlike Italian and French literary traditions which view the novella as a fairly stable genre, German “Literaturwissenschaft” has produced complex theories concerning the novella or “Novelle”. As a result of a long history of novella criticism and theory, the German novella has probably been defined more precisely than that of other literary traditions. In French literature, for example, the term “nouvelle” has been applied to the novella as well as to the short story, which suggests a certain flexibility in definition between short prose narratives in France which the German literary tradition does not espouse⁴.

¹ For an introduction to a definition of the novella, see Mary Doyle Springer's opening chapter on the subject, “Approach to the Novella through its forms”, in *Forms of the Modern Novella*. The University of Chicago Press, 1975. Springer believes that the length of a work alone does not brand it as a novella: “The achievement I hope for will be a definition of the novella less by what it is (I have just said that what it is simply a length of prose fiction), than by describing what it does: a series of formal functions which can best be achieved at that length, functions which cause authors intuitively or consciously to choose that length”, p. 9.

² Benno von Wiese, *Novelle*. Stuttgart: J. B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1963, p. 1.

³ Benno von Wiese, p. 1.

⁴ English and German criticism have two distinct genre labels: the short story and the novella. In both cases, the novella is longer than the short story. However, in French literature, the term

Because of the variety of definitions available for the word "nouvelle", I have decided to use the term "novella" in this essay, drawing for the most part on German novella theory. By applying these features, I hope to see to what extent they can be applied to a French-Canadian novella as well as to a German work. I intend to focus on three important elements of the novella which have been described by countless practitioners and theorists of the genre. The first of these three components is the "newness" or unheard of nature of the event. Under this term I wish to include the extraordinary or strange nature of a particular event or "Begebenheit" that the novella presents. Critics have agreed that the novella is concerned with event more than with the presentation of character: "was ist eine Novelle anders als eine sich ereignete unerhörte Begebenheit"⁵. The second criterion of the novella to be examined here will be the art or style of narrative; in other words, how the narrative method has precedence over narrative motivation. Benno von Wiese describes this phenomenon as follows: "In jedem Falle ist das Wie des Erzählens hier wichtiger also das Was"⁶. This feature of the novella necessitates a consideration of the kind of narrator presented in the text and his method of reporting the singular event. Finally, after having addressed the event and the depiction of the event, I intend to examine the special "silhouette" effect of the novella, a term coined by Paul Heyse. For Heyse, the silhouette refers to the idea within every novella, there is a single sentence which summarizes the entire work. I would, however, like to expand on Heyse's limited definition of the silhouette and also apply the term to multiple episodes and patterns in the novella that help define it as a genre. Very often the novella consists of two major divisions with one section highlighting the main intrigue or event; yet the novella is also composed of a series of parallels and repetitive devices which hone the major "Ereignis" or event to create a déjà-vu effect. Thus, all three major features of the novella--the peculiar event, the strong emphasis on the style of narration, and the silhouette or mirroring effect--serve to distinguish the novella from the short story and the novel which may also contain such devices but do not seem to be dictated by them.

"nouvelle", often defined as a literary form which lies between the "conte" and the "roman", is usually used interchangeably for the short story and the novella. This ambiguity arises because of a confusion between conte and nouvelle in French literature of the nineteenth century where writers like Flaubert and Maupassant used the terms interchangeably. A conte can be translated as a tale, yet it can also be synonymous with a fantastic tale. A nouvelle, on the other hand, was thought to deal with more realistic material. However, the variations on definitions for the two genres are endless. In short, French literature does not seem as concerned with the length factor as English or German Literature. Therefore, I have used the English and German sense of the novella to avoid any confusion with the wide range of possibilities inherent in the French word "nouvelle".

⁵ Johann Peter Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe in den letzten Jahren seines Lebens*. Leipzig: F. A. Brockhaus, 1913. 29. Januar 1827. p. 178. "What is the novella, but a transpired, unheard of/extraordinary happening".

⁶ Benno von Wiese, p. 46. "In any case, the method of narration is more important here than the explanation".

In order to provide a rather precise analysis of these three features of the novella, I have selected two texts, each of which belongs to a different tradition. The two novellas to be examined in this essay are Thomas Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer* (1930) and Anne Hébert's *Le Torrent* (1947) which has been called a "conte", a "nouvelle" and a novella. Although these two works belong to two different traditions (the German and the French-Canadian), I hope to discover through an analysis of the stylistic and structural elements of these texts whether there are indeed conventions or stylistic apparati governing the novella. Such a comparative analysis should also disclose whether there are indeed "typical" aspects of the novella that cross national boundaries.

Thomas Mann's novella *Mario und der Zauberer* (1930) is clearly a product of the German preoccupation with the clearly defined novella form. Mann's careful attention to discourse and style help reinforce the unusual or "new" event depicted in the work. The novella is presented through the voice of a narrator who provides an account of his vacation in a tiny southern Italian town, Torre di Venere. The first part of the narration includes a series of preliminary episodes which heighten the atmosphere of disquiet and strangeness during his stay. The second half of the novella, however, contains the focal event of the work, namely the appearance of Cipolla, a "Zauberkünstler" or prestidigitator. The central event in this novella, namely Cipolla's manipulation of his audience during a performance, is closely associated with the demagoguery of Mussolini or Hitler. It soon becomes clear to the reader that the underlying effect of Cipolla's tricks and his hold over the audience form the thrust of the novella, especially for the narrator. The tendency of novellas like Mann's to focus on the action and the drama of the story rather than on the personalities of the characters has been noted by Benno von Wiese⁷. It is this valorization of the event over the characters that allows the novella to develop towards its often catastrophic end or climax. In this respect, Mann's story is no exception, for Cipolla's powers are cut off when he is shot by one of his "volunteers" or victims (Mario) at the end of the work. This sudden end furthermore serves to highlight the determinism inherent in many novellas, that is, the concept of destiny which interestingly enough also marks Greek tragedy. Like Greek tragedy in which the inexorable nature of fate and the chain of events are emphasized rather than character, Mann's novella presents a narrator who carefully tries to link unusual episodes to the central event of Cipolla's performance and to his hypnotic effect on the audience. This thread of determinism, often reinforced by leitmotifs, seems to typify the novella and not its sister genre the short story where this steady assemblage of patterns is not usually present. In the novella, the core event is carefully prepared for through what appears to be a series of coincidences; however, the narrator or the reader inevitably recognizes the fateful rendering of the events. Many critics have indicated that the event need not be catastrophic; however, in the case of

⁷ Benno von Wiese, *Novelle*, p. 5.

Mann's and Hébert's novellas, the element of catastrophe, or disaster clearly defines both works.

Much discussion has also been generated by German critics concerning the "newness" or "unerhörte Begebenheit" of the novella's story and style--a fact which has resulted in a plurality of meaning for this feature of the novella. The reference to the "strangeness" of the story in a novella has been questioned by Benno von Wiese who believes that Goethe probably used the term "unerhört" in the sense of "noch nicht gehört" rather than in the sense of strange or uncanny⁸. Mann's work clearly reflects these multiple ways of understanding the "newness". The story in one respect represents a new and unheard of tale, yet at the same time, conveys a kind of peculiarity and strangeness. This ambiguity is convenient for the purposes of Mann's tale which combines the two notions of the "unheard of" and "peculiar" event: Cipolla's presence on stage and his uncanny hold over the audience and the narrator who also has difficulty explaining why he did not leave the disturbing show, are all part of the strange mood generated in the text:

Das richtigste wäre die Frage, warum wir jetzt nicht gingen, mit der anderen zu beantworten, warum wir vorher Torre nicht verlassen hatten. Das ist meiner Meinung nach ein und dieselbe Frage, und um mich herauszuwinden, könnte ich einfach sagen, ich hätte sie schon beantwortet. Es ging hier geradeso merkwürdig und spanned, geradeso unbehaglich, kränkend und bedrückend zu wie in Torre überhaupt, ja mehr als geradeso: dieser Saal bildete den Sammelpunkt aller Merkwürdigkeit, Nichtgeheuerlichkeit und Gespanntheit, womit und die Atmosphäre des Aufenthaltes geladen schien; dieser Mann, dessen Rückkehr wir erwarteten, dünkte und die Personifikation von alldem; und da wir im großen nicht 'abgereist' waren, wäre es unlogisch gewesen, es sozusagen im kleinen zu tun. Nehmen Sie das als Erklärung unserer Seßhaftigkeit an oder nicht! Etwas Besseres weiß ich einfach nicht vorzubringen⁹.

As the narrator suggests there is something grotesque yet attractive about Cipolla's ability to force people to submit to his will (in the course of his stage act he makes people dance, contort, and kiss). The strangeness of the tale lies partly in the grotesque, deformed appearance of Cipolla himself (he is only a step away from being a supernatural, monster-like entity), and partly in the uncomfortable mood generated by other events in the novella, especially as they are stressed by the narrator¹⁰. The narrator of the story makes constant reference to the uncomfortable aspects of his trip to Italy with his family; these disturbing episodes in turn set the mood for the grand event, that is, Cipolla's performance and the uneasiness created by his hold over the audience. The

⁸ Benno von Wiese, p. 5.

⁹ Thomas Mann, *Mario und der Zauberer. Ausgewählte Erzählungen*. Berlin und Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischers Bibliothek, 1939, p. 188. All subsequent references in the text to the German version of the novella are to this edition.

¹⁰ Given this kind of focus on the grotesque in the novella, it is not surprising that some expressions of the form are even concerned with marvellous, fantastic, and inexplicable events. [Herbert's *Le Torrent* is this kind of novella, although many events fall under a realistic umbrella].

multiple references to other episodes in the novella which seemingly foreshadow the kernel event account for the novella's unusual form, a form which consists of a series of recognizable satellite events that herald the main "Begebenheit" or "Ereignis". All of these unpleasant, satellite events serve to underscore the importance of stylistic elements in Mann's novella. They furthermore reinforce the novella's stress on the narrative method as opposed to narrative intent or motivation.

An initial reading of *Mario und der Zauberer* might lead one to skip over the first part of the story (the narrator's experiences prior to the Cipolla performance) in anticipation of the primary event; however, a second reading of the text reveals that Mann has carefully crafted the work to show how the main event is anticipated by other occurrences. The hypnotic effect of Cipolla's rhetoric in the second part of the story is prepared for in the first part by the narrator's own discourse, a somewhat hedging parlance which often understates the importance of particular occurrences. For example, when the narrator and his family leave the Grand Hotel as they are forbidden to eat in the Grand Hotel dining room because the management thinks their child's whooping-cough is contagious, the narrator describes the event as inconsequential; he is perfectly content to stay at the Pension Eleonore:

Dabei fühlten wir uns mit dem Grand Hôtel nicht einmal überworfen. Die Kinder unterhielten ihre Freundschaften dort nach wie vor, der Hausdiener besserte ihnen ihr Spielzeug aus, und dann und wann tranken wir unseren Tee in dem Garten des Etablissements...¹¹

The above occurrence is shrugged off by the narrator here, but later recorded as a significant episode in contributing to the uncomfortable nature of the vacation. The slow development in the narrator's own position concerning Torre di Venere is highlighted by Mann through the narrator's defensive position concerning his decision not to leave Torre despite countless uncomfortable situations. The narrator thus appears guilty of a constant ebb and flow in his views concerning the Torre di Venere experience; this split attitude is especially clear in the passage following the public outcry concerning the nudity of their eight year old daughter on the beach. At this point in the novella, the narrator attempts to interact with the narratee by asking: "Hätten wir nicht abreisen sollen?"¹², a query which is followed by "Hätten wir es nur getan! Wir hätten dann diesen fatalen Cipolla vermieden"¹³. The subsequent statement reads: "allein mehreres kam zusammen, den Entschluß zu einem Ortswechsel hinauszuhalten"¹⁴. With this latter declaration, the narrator absolves himself of responsibility by stressing the fateful role of events. This focus on the events which are beyond the control of the character remind us

¹¹ Mario, p. 167.

¹² Mario, p. 170.

¹³ Mario, p. 170.

¹⁴ Mario, p. 170.

again of the novella's supposed valorization of event over character. In addition, we should also be aware of Mann's deliberate move in shifting the narrator's responsibility through the shift in pronouns. The narrator switches from the first person form to the more general impersonal "man" in the following passage:

Hätten wir es nur getan! Wir hätten dan... Ein Dichter hat gesagt, es sei Trägheit, was uns in peinlichen Zuständen festhalte--man könnte das Aperçu zu Erklärung unserer Beharrlichkeit heranziehen. Auch räumt man nach solchem Vorkommnis nicht gern unmittelbar das Feld; man zögert, zuzugeben, daß man sich unmöglich gemacht habe, besonders wenn Sympathiekundgebungen von außen den Trotz ermutigen¹⁵.

This kind of shift in pronouns has also been identified by Grant F. Leneaux in his article "Mario und der Zauberer: The Narration of Seduction or the Seduction of Narration?"¹⁶ Leneaux to the great relief of many readers of Mann's novella, points out the *ironic* presentation of the narrator. Other critics of *Mario und der Zauberer* such as Allan J. McIntyre have viewed the narrator as another voice for Mann and thus interpret the narrator's critique of the southern Italians as Mann's criticism¹⁷. This reading or rather misreading of the novella disallows the theoretical precedence of the novella's form or the narrative style over the content. I believe that while Mann stresses the importance of the reported event--the Cipolla performance and its effect on the audience--he also explores on a narrative level the effect of the narrator's words on a narratee to challenge the reader's awareness of this more subtle technique of persuasion on an extratextual level.

Our constant return to the parallel structures in *Mario und der Zauberer* have led us to the concept of "silhouette" in the work. I have taken the concept of silhouette from Paul Heyse's description of a novella silhouette as the building blocks of the text which permit one to study its organized and structured form¹⁸. Heyse's view of the "silhouette" also suggests that a good novella can be synthesized or encapsulated in a single sentence. While this idea may seem somewhat extreme, it seems to apply incredibly well to Mann's work *Mario und der Zauberer*. The first two sentences of the novella neatly summarize the entire work:

Die Erinnerung an Torre di Venere ist atmosphärisch unangenehm. Ärger, Gereiztheit, Überspannung lagen von Anfang an in der Luft, und zum Schluß kam dann der Choc mit diesem schrecklichen Cipolla, in dessen Person sich das eigentümlich Bösartige der Stimmung auf verhängnishafte und übrigens menschlich sehr eindrucksvolle Weise zu verkörpern und bedrohlich zusammenzudrängen schien¹⁹.

¹⁵ Mario, p. 170.

¹⁶ Grant F. Leneaux, "Mario und der Zauberer: The Narration of Seduction or the Seduction of Narration?" *Orbis Litterarum* 40 (1985) pp. 327–347.

¹⁷ Allan J. McIntyre, "From Travemünde to Torre di Venere: Mannian Leitmotifs in Political Transition", *Germanic Review* 59, i (Winter 1984) pp. 26–31.

¹⁸ Johannes Klein, "Novelle", *Reallexikon der deutschen Literaturgeschichte*, pp. 685–701.

¹⁹ Mario, p. 163.

Both sentences draw attention to the importance of discomfort and atmosphere in the work; they link these features to the figure of Cipolla who personifies all that is truly horrible. Thus as we have already noted, character in this novella is merely representative of an entire situation.

The above example of silhouette, that is, the compression of the novella into a single statement is only one expression of the silhouette phenomenon in this Mannian work. Other examples include the overall two part structure (the pre-Cipolla and Cipolla parts of the novella), and the multiple, overlaying episodes in both halves of the novella which result in a cascade of silhouettes. The narrator's experiences before Cipolla's performance serve as interesting parallels to Cipolla's numerous "games" with the audience during his performance. In the course of the text, Cipolla and his games become more serious and intense until they culminate in the catastrophe of his death via Mario and his gun. And let us not forget how the narrator's own discourse and attitudes (in a rather covert fashion) underscore Cipolla's effect on the townspeople and his ability to influence them. The narrator appears to manipulate his readers or narratees in his meandering-like narrative, just as Cipolla manipulates his audience by entertaining while also exerting his power over the spectators. Still another silhouette effect is contained in the co-existence of play and reality inherent in Cipolla's performance. For the children, Cipolla is a "Zauberer"; a conjurer who brings something magical to the evening. For some of the adults, on the other hand, including the narrator, Cipolla's performance is somewhat disturbing; his tricks are sometimes an affront to human dignity and therefore suggest the serious, political ramifications of Fascism. Thus Cipolla embodies a certain duality which helps Mann reinforce his silhouette effect. Through Cipolla, Mann shows how the boundaries between art/artifice and reality are challenged and become blurred.

Many of these countless examples of silhouettes in *Mario und der Zauberer* could also be called leitmotifs--literary (originally musical) patterning devices which appear in many of Mann's works. The leitmotif of play and innocence, for example, continues throughout the novella as does the motif of public and human dignity. However, regardless of whether one speaks of silhouettes or leitmotifs, both conventions contribute to the overall images of "Verhüllung"/"Enthüllung" (disguise and revelation) in the novella, a concept which interestingly enough, is also found in the detective novel. Indeed, one could postulate that the novella with its recognizably involved and layered structure can be seen as a sister-genre to the detective novel. Wolfram Krömer indicates that the novella like the detective novel contains a "Pointe" and stresses "Enthüllung" or revelation²⁰. This relationship between the novella and the detective story works particularly well, we must admit, if we consider the name of Mann's main character: „Cipolla" translates as onion, a symbol universally recognized to convey complexity and disclosure.

²⁰ Wolfram Krömer, p. 210.

Having analyzed the "Ereignis", the narrative style and the silhouette features in *Mario und der Zauberer* we can now turn our attention to Anne Hébert's *Le Torrent* and examine its use of these elements. The French-Canadian author's work has been called a short story, a nouvelle, a novella and a "conte" or tale. Hébert's literature as a rule seems to defy easy genre classification as the form and substance of her work show. Her novels read like poetic narratives and the author complicates the issue of genre categories even further by referring to her novels and stories as poems or even "dramas". For example, the epigraph of the novella „L'ange de Dominique" reads "ce conte est un poème"²¹ and in interviews, Hébert has described prose in the following way: "La prose, c'est une autre forme poétique"²². Such interchangeability between prose and poetry would seem to pose some difficulty to theorists trying to arrive at a definition of the novella; however, this is not necessarily the case. In the history of the genre, writers have experimented with different kinds of novellas, including epic, lyric, and dramatic forms. Mann's own novella, as we have observed, is particularly dramatic. The combination of dramatic situation and lyric compression or explosiveness of feeling is particularly evident in *Le Torrent* where a chain of episodes (seemingly coincidental but again containing the thread of fate or destiny) seem to warrant more attention than the characters. Hébert suggests this precedence of inner logic and consequence over character through the narrator's (François) own observations on drama and poetry:

Je considérais la formation d'une tragédie classique ou d'une pièce de vers telle un mécanisme de principes et de recettes enchaînées par la seule volonté de l'auteur. Une ou deux fois, pourtant, la grâce m'effleura. J'eus l'aperception que la tragédie ou le poème pourraient bien ne dépendre que de leur propre fatalité intérieure, condition de l'oeuvre d'art²³.

Here, in a moment of enlightenment, François gains insight into the inner workings or fateful association of events in a work of art, a phenomenon which interestingly enough permeates this Hébertien novella as well as Mann's. Like Mann's novella which stresses Cipolla's strange power over his audience and his ultimate death, Hébert's work accents the series of episodes which continue to show how François is destined to remain "un enfant dépossédé du monde"²⁴, a fate which is foreshadowed in the first sentence of the novella. Not surprisingly, it is this fate of dispossession, this vacuum of confusion which

²¹ Anne Hébert, "L'Ange de Dominique", in *Le Torrent. Nouvelle édition suivie de deux nouvelles inédites*. Montréal: Collection l'arbre Editions HMH: 1963, 67.

²² "L'écriture et l'ambivalence, entrevue avec Anne Hébert", par André Vanasse, *Voix et Images*, 7, iii (printemps 1982) 443.

²³ Anne Hébert, "Le Torrent in" *Le Torrent, nouvelle édition suivie de deux nouvelles inédites*. Montréal: Collection l'arbre Editions HMH: 1963, p. 24. All subsequent references in the text to the novella are to this edition.

²⁴ *Torrent*, p. 9.

prevails as an atmosphere in the novella rather than character. Pierre H. Lemieux has suggested this fact rather nicely by pointing out that the character in the novella is the torrent: "... le torrent joue véritablement le rôle d'un personnage, parce que sa fonction n'est pas seulement de réfléchir l'âme de François, mais d'être un protagoniste dominateur..²⁵.

This observation brings us back to the prominent place of the event in the novella as opposed to characterization. *Le Torrent* is no different in this respect. The key event in the work is both "unerhört" and terrible in nature. The "aventure" is the deafness of the main character François, which is caused by his mother who strikes him over the head with a set of keys. The episode can be seen as the kernel event of the narrative for a variety of reasons. François himself states that he cannot remember a single pleasurable moment before this occurrence: „Je ne me souviens d'aucun loisir avant cette singulière aventure de ma surdité"²⁶. Furthermore, this particular "aventure" marks the narrator's first break with his mother: „Je me croyais défait de ma mère et je me découvrais d'autres liens avec la terre"²⁷. Gilles Houde has referred to the break as „la mort psychique"²⁸ of Claudine, which is later followed by the physical death of François' mother through the horse Perceval.

Like Cipolla's grotesque and terrible performance in *Mario und der Zauberer*, the happenings in Hébert's novella, (and in her fiction in general) are somewhat out of the ordinary, although they are very often based on actual occurrences. Hébert dismisses the label "fantastique" in a critique of the collection of stories called *Le Torrent* which includes the story by the same name²⁹, yet the strangeness and horrible power of Claudine in her repression and oppression of her child clearly make the story extraordinary. Thus as in Mann's novella the concept of "Ereignis" or "aventure" applies not so much to a single episode as to the general atmosphere which is personified by a single entity; in the case of Hébert's work this consciousness is François, although as we shall see, he is not presented as a solid, physical character like Cipolla. He is much less tangible because he resembles many of the other "figures" in the work. As narrator of the tale, he merges with other figures such as Claudine, Perceval and the cat. At one point in the text, he even says that he is synonymous with the landscape: "Je suis identifié au paysage"³⁰, thereby accentuating the "strangeness" of the novella.

²⁵ Pierre H. Lemieux, "La symbolique du Torrent d'Anne Hébert", *Revue de l'université d'Ottawa* 43, i (Janvier-Mars 1973) 127.

²⁶ Torrent, p. 10.

²⁷ Torrent, p. 29.

²⁸ Gilles Houde, "Les symboles et la structure mythique du Torrent", *Barre du jour* 16 (1968) p. 31.

²⁹ "Je ne vois pas en quoi les nouvelles du *Torrent* sont fantastiques, sauf "L'ange de Dominique". Elles sont plutôt poétiques, quelquesunes sont plus réalistes, comme "Un grand mariage". "Anne Hébert et les eaux troubles de l'imaginaire: une entrevue de Donald Smith". *Lettres québécoises* 20 (hiver 1980/81) p. 68.

³⁰ Torrent, p. 37.

The horrible and unheard of nature of the event in *Le Torrent* is obviously not a feature solely characteristic of the novella; however, I would argue that the combination and pattern of incidents marked by a sense of fatality and interrelatedness are elements that we identified in Mann's work and which we also discover in *Le Torrent*. But before we look at this silhouette effect, let us turn once more to the role of the narrative or the "how" of Hébert's novella in relation to Mann's work. Unlike Mann's leisurely, meandering style, Hébert's form of discourse in the novella is terse, even bare at times. Yet it is this very terseness which adds tension to the narrative and provides the illusion of disorganization and confusion amid a carefully crafted patterning of events. The reader begins to understand that François' world consists of fragments and segments of reality; thus his role as a narrator must per force be limited by this fact, unlike Mann's narrator who is a traveller, an outsider provides a seemingly more objective commentary. François merely looks from the inside out, and all other forms of reality, including the girl Amica whom he distrusts, are perceived in terms of his own existence: "Tout vit en moi."³¹ His limited and fragmented outlook is reflected in his view of his mother; he only remembers individual parts of her body, not the total person:

Quant à ma mère, seul le bas de sa figure m'était familier. Mes yeux n'osaient monter plus haut, jusqu'aux prunelles courroucées et au large front que je connus, plus tard, atrocement ravagé.

Son menton impératif, sa bouche tourmentée, malgré l'attitude calme que le silence essayait de lui imposer, son corsage noir, cuirassé, sans nulle place tendre où pût se blottir la tête d'un enfant; et voilà l'univers maternel dans lequel j'appris, si tôt, la dureté et le refus.³²

The narrator in *Le Torrent* also lacks the interaction of Mann's narrator with an audience or narratee; he is utterly alone in his self-contained world: "Je suis seul, seul en moi"³³; only rarely does he see his state of mind objectively and comment on his own "drame" like the chorus of a Greek tragedy:

L'emploi de ma force physique indique trop bien la défécation de ma puissance spirituelle. La brutalité est le recours de ceux qui n'ont plus de pouvoir intérieur.³⁴

For the most part, Hébert's novella does not attempt to disclose the narrator's process of self-awareness or explain why he is as brutal as his mother. The work returns continually to a kind of deterministic world where François is destined to continue the will and force of his tyrannical mother. In other words, the "how" of the narrative or tale, the series of identifications, and parallels with other situations or episodes becomes more important than providing a conclusive definition of what the "torrent" might represent as a symbol. François himself points out the uselessness and futility of trying to

³¹ Torrent, p. 64.

³² Torrent, p. 13.

³³ Torrent, p. 64.

³⁴ Torrent, p. 46.

explain his conduct: "... à quoi bon disserter sur la raison de mes gestes et impulsions. Je ne suis pas libre"³⁵. Again, a statement in the novella leads us to an inevitable comparison with Greek tragedy which is characterized by the powerlessness of the human individual in a universe dictated by the arbitrary role of fate. In their works, both Mann and Hébert describe a happening, a consequence, and their narrators seem to evade the possibility of rationalizing or justifying certain occurrences. They simply accept them, or continue to report. This sense of destiny I believe, is not usually present in the short story. The novella as a literary form seems to consist of segments that resemble the acts of a play, whereas short stories can be divided into segments, but the climax is reached without as much delay. Short stories are also not characterized by the strong sense of one episode echoing a previous one in a determined or predestined fashion. On the other side of the spectrum, we have the novel which is usually too large in scope to present such a repetition of incidents with the same sense of underlying determinism so often found in Greek tragedy and the novella.

Wolfram Krömer suggests that the novella can convey forceful statements, largely because of its limited length, whereas a novel tends to present social reality and psychological analyses with greater ease. Furthermore, the building block process of the novella's form with its numerous silhouettes, helps reinforce the method of the narrative or the "wie des Erzählens" and contributes to the drama generated by the genre and its suitability to matters dealing with the catastrophic³⁶. Anne Hébert's *Le Torrent* is no different in this respect. Like Mann's *Mario und der Zauberer*, *Le Torrent* consists of many segments which combine to form the total drama. These segments are part of the silhouette effect in this novella. Of course, before looking at the relationship between multiple episodes we should recognize that like Mann's novella, Hébert's can also be summed up in a single statement. The first sentence of the work reads "J'étais un enfant dépossédé du monde"³⁷. This opening sentence captures the spirit of the novella which is mainly concerned with depicting the state of dispossession or the inability of the narrator François to belong to or possess anything. Of course, the silhouette effect is not limited to Heyse's definition as I attempted to show when analyzing Mann's story. The term can also be applied to the two major divisions of *Le Torrent* which have been described in numerous ways. One can compare the events before François' deafness with those following it, or see the physical death of the mother as the dividing line between the two segments. Gilles Houde provides the following division:

Le Torrent est divisé en deux parties sensiblement égales, chacune correspondant de façon remarquable aux deux temps symboliques du conte: l'exaltation et la dépression du

³⁵ Torrent, p. 48.

³⁶ Wolfram Krömer, *Die französische Novelle im 19. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt: Athenäum, 1972, pp. 210–11.

³⁷ Torrent, p. 9.

personnage principal, Claudine (remplacée symboliquement dans la seconde par son fils François)³⁸.

Regardless of where one places the division, it is possible to uncover many silhouette effects in the novella. Even the characters, for example, serve more as leitmotifs than distinct personalities. This leitmotif/silhouette effect is signalled by François himself early on in the text:

Moi, je baisais les yeux, soulagé de n'avoir plus à suivre le fonctionnement des puissantes mâchoires et des lèvres minces qui prononçaient, en détachant chaque syllable, les mot de "châtiment", "justice de Dieu", „damnation", "enfer", "discipline", "péché originel", et surtout cette phrase précise qui revenait comme un leitmotiv:

Il faut se dompter jusqu'aux os. On n'a pas idée de la force mauvaise qui est en nous! Tu m'entends, François? Je te dompterai bien, moi...³⁹

In this passage, Hébert draws attention to the style or structure of the leitmotif/silhouette form of her novella through the narrator's enslaved existence which is dependent on repetition and obedience to the will of his mother. As the story develops, we realize that this phenomenon of enslavement is continuous and resurfaces in François' relationship with Amica. She is an echo of François, Claudine, Perceval, and the cat. In fact, all of the characters, are really figures or expressions of similar states or forces. They represent the fragments of reality that Hébert present in much of her fiction; however, in *Le Torrent* they are less developed than in a work like *Kamouraska* where the different Elisabeth-narrators are all aspects of the narrative expression of Elisabeth, the central consciousness. In *Le Torrent*, a lack of distinction between individual characters, François, Claudine, Perceval, Amica, the cat and even the peddler is deliberate⁴⁰. All figures seem to be closely associated with the force of guilt: they either instill guilt or battle against it:

Puis, je crois reconnaître un arôme particulier, déjà senti, composé de cuir humain pas très jeune, de tabac, de paperasses et d'encre... Cela me fait penser au chef de police, à l'interrogatoire qu'il me fit subir après la mort de ma mère!... (p. 59). Mon flair d'animal traqué m'a fait craindre la touche de la police sur Amica. Mais, si je m'étais trompé?... Il n'ya pas de senteur d'encre et de papier... Ah! je crois que c'est plutôt le goût rance du colporteur!... (p. 60)

This passage clearly shows the ease with which the narrator and Hébert move from one character or image to another in the novella. In this section of the text, the atmosphere of guilt predominates to the extent that it diminishes the individuality of characters. Thus the "Ereignis" and the easy transition from one image and character to another become the focal point of the texts. This blurring effect in the narration (a device often used by Hébert) places the

³⁸ Gilles Houde, p. 30.

³⁹ *Torrent*, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁰ *Torrent*, p. 59.

emphasis on the “how” of the narrative rather than on the “what”. The art of clouding the narrative and the silhouettes help highlight the overall confusion experienced by François, and account for the ambiguity at the end of the novella. Did François kill Amica, or not? It really doesn’t matter, because the tale fuses realistic and imaginative realms of experience. Asking the question is like asking whether Cipolla was merely a harmless conjuror, or really a diabolical manipulator of the human mind. Both novellas permit both readings--this is perhaps one of the distinguishing features of Mann’s and Hébert’s works.

Le Torrent and *Mario und der Zauberer* are carefully crafted examples of the genre called the novella. Both reflect the tendency of practitioners of the genre to select the event over characterization and create an atmosphere of the uncanny or extraordinary. These two novellas also demonstrate the importance of the stylistic rendering of the event(s) or narration and the significant role patterns/leitmotifs play in the development of the novella’s story. It is this overlay of episodes that seems to set the novella apart from the short story which reaches its main “Ereignis” or climax much more quickly and without the same building block effect we observed in *Le Torrent* and *Mario und der Zauberer*. The silhouette effect of many episodes highlighting the main event or atmosphere of the novella suggests an interesting comparison between the novella and drama--a comparison well worth pursuing in my opinion. As Mann’s and Hébert’s works have shown, the novella owes much to the structure and logic of determinism in Greek tragedy; furthermore, the thread of destiny which permeates the two novellas seems characteristic of the genre in general, a factor not usually associated with the short story. It is also this element of fate in the novella which explains the catastrophic tone.

In addition to sharing the novella’s focus on event and multiple layering effects, Mann’s and Hébert’s works reflect the impact of narrative style or method on the presentation of the event. Mann’s narrative is obviously more intricate than Hébert’s because of the ironic presentation of a narrator who oscillates between chastisement and acceptance of his own decision to remain in Torre di Venere. Hébert’s work, on the other hand, is not as developed in this category of novellistic expression, but this may not reflect a weakness in the genre as much as a lack of maturity in Hébert’s early prose pieces. (*Le Torrent* is one of Hébert’s first prose efforts, whereas *Mario und der Zauberer* is a product of Mann’s middle literary phase). Nevertheless, she does manage to present us with a narrator who stresses the unimportance of explaining his actions and the actions of others. Instead, François accepts his existence as part of a human continuum; ultimately his narrative build up or “Aufbau” takes precedence over any explanation of events.

Venturing into the field of genre classification is always a dangerous business, and defining the main features of the novella is no different in this respect. Our analysis of *Mario und der Zauberer* and *Le Torrent* as two examples of the genre is intended to serve as an interesting point of departure

for future studies on this international genre--a genre which seems to contain many typical elements irrespective of the individual historical development of the novella in the literature of different nations.

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„MARIO I CZARODZIEJ” ORAZ „RWĄCY POTOK” ZDARZENIE, STYL NARRACYJNY I POSTAĆ W NOWELI

STRESZCZENIE

Obecna rozprawa to analiza utworów *Mario i czarodziej* (Mario und der Zauberer) Tomasza Manna i *Rwący potok* (Le Torrent) Anny Hébert. Jakkolwiek nowele te należą do różnych tradycji literackich, do niemieckiej i franko-kanadyjskiej, to jednak zawierają one te same wyznaczniki określające nowelę jako gatunek.

W rozprawie wskazano na trzy podstawowe właściwości noweli jako gatunku i zastosowano je przy analizie utworów T. Manna i A. Hébert. Obie nowele akcentują „nowość” albo niezwykłość wydarzeń związanych z postaciami. W utworach tych nacisk położony jest w wyższym stopniu na styl narracji niż na motywacji samego procesu opowiadania, obie te nowele ukazują grupę postaci zarysowanych jak gdyby konturowo, pokazanych jako lustrzane odbicia, jak satelity

towarzyszące głównym wydarzeniom. *Mario i czarodziej* oraz *Rwący potok* różnią się między sobą tym, że ironiczne ujęcie narratora u Tomasa Manna dało bardziej rozwinięty i skomplikowany styl narracji. Jednakże pomimo tych różnic zarówno utwór niemiecki, jak i franko-kanadyjski wyraźnie pokazują, które elementy wyróżniają nowelę (novella) w stosunku do krótkiego opowiadania (short story, Kurzgeschichte) i powieści (novel, Roman).

Przełożył Jan Trzynadlowski

“MARIO UND DER ZAUBERER” UND “LE TORRENT”

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Artikel befaßt sich mit einer Analyse von Thomas Manns *Mario und der Zauberer* und Anne Héberts *Le Torrent*. Obwohl beide Novellen verschiedenen literarischen Traditionen angehören, der deutschen und der franko-kanadischen, haben sie gemeinsame Elemente, die die Novelle als Gattung kennzeichnen. Drei Haupteigenschaften der Novelle werden genannt und bei der Analyse von Manns und Héberts Werken verwendet. Beide Novellen betonen die “Neuigkeit” oder die unerhörte Begebenheit anstatt die Personen; sie betonen ebenfalls den Erzählstil mehr als die Motivierung der Erzählung; und sie enthalten eine Serie von Silhouetten oder Spiegelungen, die als Satelliten das Hauptereignis umgeben. *Mario und der Zauberer* und *Le Torrent* unterscheiden sich aber darin von einander, daß die ironische Darstellung der Erzählers bei Thomas Mann einen verwickelteren und komplizierteren Erzählungsstil ergibt. Trotzdem zeigen sowohl das deutsche wie das franko-kanadische Werk, welche die Elemente Novelle von der Kurzgeschichte und dem Roman unterscheiden.