

V A R I A

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Dematerialization and Form-of-Life in Matila Ghyka's Writings

Abstract: My analysis applies on Matila Ghyka's memoirs, whose second volume is entitled *Heureux qui comme Ulysse...* (*Happy is He Who, Like Ulysse...*). A hybrid narrative, half-fictitious and half-biographical, Ghyka's memoirs awake, through the chosen title, the memory of Classical tranquility from Joaquin du Bellay's sonnet. Estimating the core meaning of the referent text, I found that the poem inspiring Ghyka is not devoted to Ulysses as a heroic character but to those that can turn his model and narrative into an icon of "happiness", similar to the exemplary stories of Buddha, Abraham, Moses or Jesus Christ. While Ghyka is secretly unfolding this repetitive, enchanting pattern, his *Ulysse* comes to the fore not as voice of confession but as a voice of a trained memory and trained will. Applying Giorgio Agamben's suggestions on how the theories of "Form-of-life" should be grasped, I propose to define Ulysses' prophetic voice from Matila Ghyka's memoirs as such Form-of-life. Hence, a certain inclination towards massive self-referencing unfolds, in the manner of le Bon's theory on dematerialization, the dematerializing aspects of serial writing and experiencing.

Keywords: Dematerialization, Serial Referencing, Form-of-Life, Materiality of Dreams, Nostalgic Crystallization, Voice, Mannequin Challenge

1. Who or, better, what is Matila Ghyka?

One of the most fascinating figures of the Romanian diaspora is, by far, Prince Matila Ghyka. Born in 1881, Matila is the son of the Wallachian officer Matila Costiescu and of Maria Ghyka, the niece of Prince Grigore Alexandru 5th, who ruled over Moldavia twice (1849-1853; 1854-1856), actually being the last ruler of the Moldavian Principality before the „small Union” from 1859. However, he did not inherit the title either from his mother or from his father, but from his mother's half-brother, Grigore Ghyka, who lost his only child in 1896. Being the unique male successor of

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the Moldavian prince' eldest son (Constantin), Grigore agreed to adopt Matila when, already a teenager, the latter was studying at the French navy school "Borda". Being the result of a late decision and of an artificial way of ensuring lineage, this "princely" title was not treated by Matila as a defining trait of his public identity, as a source of prosperity or as a propeller for his social aspirations. On the contrary, he grew perfectly aware that much of his inherited capital was owing to another Moldavian family, the Balș family, whose properties had been taken over by his grandmother, Ecaterina Balș and then by her son, Leon Ghika-Dumbrăveni. In his turn, Leon Ghika-Dumbrăveni, also called Leon the Magnificent, was – like the aforementioned Grigore Ghyka – only half-brother to Matila's mother (Sturdza 2002, 251-327).

Compared to Matila's new princely title, this branch of the Ghika family ("Ghika-Dumbrăveni") had a debatable genealogy and thus was generally considered impure, even base. Nevertheless, in spite of his aristocratic legacy, Prince Matila Ghyka always felt himself magnetized by Uncle Leo's personality, whose passion for art and electricity are mentioned several times in Matila's memoirs. Also, his eccentric habits at Dumbrăveni domain became quite famous around 1900 (Callimachi 2015, 31; Claymoor 1905; Ghyka 2014, 36, 75-77, 133, 148).

Because they are stamped by half-breeding and incomplete information, I will quit for now these family intricacies and turn to a more meaningful way of formulating the hypothesis of my research. I will not try to follow an individual, but rather an objectified person. Something like a *mannequin*. Those readers who are already acquainted with "mannequin challenges" will surely understand my point here. *Who* Matila Ghyka was is of lesser importance than *what* or *how* Matila Ghyka was.

So, what is the *object-mannequin* that we shall henceforth call "Matila Ghyka"?

In order to find a pertinent answer to this question, I explored Matila Ghyka's preface to his two volumes of memoirs, *Escapes de ma jeunesse* (1955) and *Heureux qui, comme Ulysse...* (1956). They also bear an umbrella title in French (*Couleur du monde*) and another in English (*The World Mine Oyster*). Published 5 years after the French version and 4 years before Matila Ghyka's death, in 1961, the English edition should be considered a stylization of the previous texts; it is not only a translation and abbreviation of the original, but also the author's proposal of bettering the original.

What fascinates the most in Matila Ghyka's works is the technique of extensive self-quotation, showing the secret communication of texts, a way of joining them in a system of *serial referencing*. Yet this is not merely what may be called, chiefly in the case of great authors, "inner coherence" or "system of communicating vessels". Here, repetitions and series have a special purpose, linked with Ghyka's own conception on rhythm and on the

invariants of Beauty, of Life, and of World in general. As we will see in what follows, the memoirs, which come the last in the line of Ghyka's writings, endorse, appropriate and embed fragments from earlier narratives: the collection of short stories *Contes marécageux*, written around 1900, and unpublished (Ghyka 2014, 17-18) and the novel *Pluie d'étoiles* (1933). Ghyka's own comments to his previous texts suggest that these two poles – that is, the unpublished short stories, the unique manuscript, and the “successful” novel, the serialized publication – also measure an evolution from what Matila Calls “irony and stylistic incompleteness” to a special kind of aesthetic achievement.

However, when transferred to a spatialized myth of self-realization such as the story of Ulysses's return to Ithaca (Berard qtd. in Homer 1963, 29-30), the idea of evolution – both spiritual and aesthetic – must fall back on a couple of physical properties: *distance* as the property of physical space, and *mass* as the property of physical bodies. Mass and matter become particularly intriguing for thinkers such as Gustave le Bon who, through his theory on dematerialization, became a source of inspiration for Matila Ghyka's own way of articulating a meaning of the great distances he himself had covered during his life (Ghyka 2014, 116). In Gustave le Bon's opinion, matter is nothing else but pure electricity, mass being only an appearance, that is, an effect of inertia (le Bon 1907, 101-187). In a nutshell, *mass is something that a body leaves behind after its movement in space, when the distance has been already covered*. In the same fashion, a body, matter in general, represents the expression (paradoxically, full and fulfilled) of something that is not simultaneous with that body and with that matter, of something that is already producing other bodies and matter somewhere else.

In this frame of thought, the serialization of distances, thus the life-style of a tireless traveler, should have sounded for Matila Ghyka as a good method of dematerializing his own embodied consciousness. Also, a way out of John Stuart Mill's paradox: “If, therefore, we speak of the Mind as a series of feelings, we are obliged to complete the statement by calling it a series of feelings which is aware of itself as past and future; and we are reduced to the alternative of believing that the Mind, or Ego, is something different from any series of feelings, or possibilities of them, or of accepting the paradox, that something which ex hypothesi is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series” (Mill 1865, 213-214). Briefly, if consciousness acknowledged its condition of “thread”, of mere series, it would also acknowledge the fact that it does not exist.

2. Map in hand: Matila's way stations

Returning to Ghyka's introductory remarks, I will just point out that, completely outstanding for a memorialist, Matila Ghyka's main drive is to push back confessions, testimonies, and dramatic disclosures. Obviously, in

the vein of Renaissance treatises (chiefly, Balthasar Gracian's), *discreetness* and *prudence* represent qualities that recommended him as a very apt diplomat of Romania's diplomatic corps of the interwar period. However, this scarcity of intimate details is not determined by Ghyka's fear of gossipy and colorful discoursing on his life. As a matter of fact, his main point in writing these memoirs is to draw a serial line of "careers", of virtualities (Ghyka 2014, 18). His own, but also virtually someone else's.

Subsequently, his chase for happiness does not emerge from an ideal of completeness, according to the aforementioned Renaissance paradigm. I am sure that Matila Ghyka did not look for a materialized design of personality, based on the complementarity of talents and on their full actualization. On the contrary, his sensibility directed him towards the philosophical ground of mathematical series: the meaning of his memoirs should convey a sense of dematerialized life, his approach to the Form-of-life.

The concept might come from Plato or from Wittgenstein (Moyal-Sharrock 2015, 21-42; Agamben 2016, 230-300). Ghyka does not mention it in this fashion but he repeatedly reflects on the unitary meaning of Life, on how this can be proved scientifically, on the Forms this unitary Life might take. Thus, his Form-of-life from the memoirs is drawn like a smooth line of serial aptitudes and postures developing one into another. Being a mathematician and a sophisticated researcher of rhythms (*Esthétique des Proportions dans la nature et dans les arts, Le nombre d'or. Rites et rythmes pythagoriciens dans le développement de la civilisation occidentale, Philosophie et mystique du nombre*), Matila Ghyka also reveals, through his life episodes, a practical sample of thinking the abstract mathematical series, as well as the consequences of infinite sequencing.

Florin Manolescu noticed that, given their diversity, Ghyka's memoirs and fiction should be read map in hand (Manolescu 2012). Also, in a group of four essays published in "Viața Românească" between 2014 and 2016, Iliana Gregori emphasizes the infinite openings offered by this serial linking of careers, hobbies, passions, aptitudes as well as by the infinite number of "sunrises" hidden within the pockets of Ghyka's *écriture*. "Progenitură de neam mare, strănepot de domnitor, cosmopolit și poliglot, erudit, ajuns în funcții înalte și distins cu înalte decorații europene, născut în Moldova, crescut și educat în Franța, absolvent al unor instituții de studiu de mare prestigiu, ofițer de marină, inginer, doctor în drept, diplomat, profesor universitar, estetician, matematician, memorialist, romancier și traducător. Dacă ții seama, dincolo de această carte de vizită aproape neverosimilă, și de datele secundare ale personajului – pasiuni, performanțe, hobby-uri: călătoriile, colecțiile, filmul, gimnastica, printre altele – te vei strădui zadarnic să nu 'vezi' chiar și cu ochii legați că, abordându-i opera, te implici într-o chestiune care te depășește" (Gregori 2014).

Within this frame of thought, the series of life-experiences and the series of readings incited by Ghyka's *Pluie d'étoiles* may prove to be a way to dematerialize both the living body (the individual, the "who", the "I") and the body of the book (the book as an object). It is not by chance that the memorialist considers that there are 4 "I"s, which, in the same fashion as cinema or dreams, build up the illusion of tridimensional/ bodily reality. "În acest domeniu, am fost încă din copilărie, obiectul ori subiectul unei puzderii de vise de toate felurile, de la cel euforic în culori bogate, cu decoruri feerice, până la coșmar, plin de bestii feroce, între care ursul și tigrlu jucau un rol esențial ... Îmi amintesc multe dintre aceste vise și am băgat de seamă că totul se petrecea ca și cum un *eu*, pe care-l numesc *eul fabulatoriu* și care nu se manifesta în viața reală (deci deosebit, cel puțin în aparență, de celălalt fabulatoriu ce se manifesta în activitatea mea de scriitor), încerca să distreze și chiar să uimească eul firesc, *eul temporal* al vieții de toate zilele, chiar ca martor în somn. Îl numesc *temporal* ca să-l deosebesc de *eul permanent*, judecător și arbitru, care nu se amestecă, presupun, în acest joc" (Ghyka 2014, 258). Note that Ghyka's actual perspective is more nuanced than Proust's famous distinction on the two "I"s. Again, it is not by chance that, in spite of their common friends (Ghyka 2014, 257), the French novelist won Ghyka's sympathy only very late, after a few readings.

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Far from being the type of child conveyed by Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, Matila Ghyka is the citizen of a Moldavian Byzantium, a reader of Grimm, Andersen, Plutarch, Herodotus, and Enlightenment authors. As a pupil of the French boarding schools (St. Anne and Jersey) in the times of decreed and decried Decadence (1891-1899), he grows into the consciousness of his European identity. During the holidays, he travels a lot, from Bade, Gastein, Montrouge, Marsillia, St. Moritz, Merano, Como, Milano, Geneva, Biarritz, Worishofen (Bavaria), Hohenschwangau, Neuschwanstein, Munchen, Nymphenburg, Amalienburg, Chiemsee, Konigsee, Tegern See, Zell am Sie, to Carolles and Cauvigny in Normandy etc. Then, as an aspirant in the French Navy, he journeys to Madeira, Canary Isles, Senegal, Caribbean Isles, Antilles and Azores. Once employed in the Romanian Navy, he lives in several Southern Romanian cities such as Zimnicea, Constanța, Sulina, Galați. During his studies at *École supérieure d'électricité* he lives in Paris and spends pleasure holidays in Worigshofen and Marne.

He is irrepressibly attracted to the world of theatre and cinema, but also sketches the core of his aesthetic theories and is quite able to exchange opinions with the venerable Gustave le Bon. Returned to Romania, he takes part wholeheartedly to the intense social life of Bucharest and makes tours on cities such as Suceava, Czernowitz, Rucăr, Brașov, Sibiu, Sighișoara. The

accreditation of Superelec gives him a new status: Matila Ghyka is now not only a naval officer, but also an engineer and professor of the Naval School of Constanta. A short remark on him being a Renaissance man (Borgia, Machiavelli and da Vinci at the same time) triggers a Shakespearian phrase that will actually become the title of the memoir's English version: *The World Mine Oyster* (Ghyka 2014, 141).

3. The vessel of dreams: London, Japan, the Gardens of Paradise

Always, a new adventure is waiting. He leaves for the Caucasian regions and Persia, together with Georges Bibescu and George Stoicescu. All three represent Romania in a diplomatic mission. Once they are back, Ghyka spends a very glamorous year within the society of aristocratic VIPs such as Maruka Cantacuzino, Martha Bibesco, Elena Sutu, and the future Queen Mary of Romania. After that, Matila visits London for the first time. The life of this city – of the English nation in general, leaves him the powerful impression that it is organized “according to the elastic and precise discipline of a battleship” (Ghyka 2014, 187). It is not because of its locating force that London will obsess him from now on. In many ways, London becomes the city of dreams and of dreamy experiences, mentioned several times not only in his memoirs but also in *Pluie d'étoiles*, due to its dislocating force. It is not its idealized image, but its containing features that makes London the vessel of Matila's dreams. In spite of the city's geographical concreteness, London seems to be able to move like a ship from one place to another; to move thus to dematerialize; to dematerialize thus to be boiled down, in an alchemical fashion, to the substance of dreams.

Much as I want to expand upon the contents of Matila's London dreams, I have to admit that, in this context, they should be mentioned only for their serial occurrence and for their perplexing, almost 3D-materiality, also noticed and emphasized by the author himself. The antiquarian located on Judd Street, who eventually has been proven to be real, or the tigers that regain the material properties (such as mass) that they had lost through cinematic conversion also provide evidence for the author's interest in the issue of dematerialization (Ghyka 2014, 238-239, 257-258, 260, 274-276).

Back to adventures, neither the navy nor the teaching careers appeared to satisfy the young prince around 1906. Therefore, pretty decided to become a diplomat, he goes to Brussels in order to pass a doctorate in law. Apart from the philosophy of natural law, his master, Edmond Picard, awakens an interest for two painters. Brugel the Elder is admired for his diminished and pressed figures on the wintery canvass, while Bosch draws Matila's eye not for his famous series of metamorphic monsters but for his talent of expressing the “gothic elegance” of elongated women (Ghyka

2014, 192). Indeed, the singular ways of using bodies in the paintings of Brugel and Bosch called Ghyka's attention and impressed his own conception on matter and bodies.

Immediately after he is awarded a PhD in Law, he embarks for Berlin and London, where he holds mostly unpaid offices. Perhaps a bit disappointed but always keeping a certain eagerness for travels, he decides to voyage around the world: USA, Canada, Hawaii, Japan, Shanghai, Sri Lanka, Egypt.

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It is this apprenticeship journey to the extreme Orient the trigger of Matila Ghyka's aesthetic conception: the rhythms, the series, the arabesque, the golden number, the spiral of Life, the body's meaning. Interesting enough, this aesthetic experience is brought to the fore not through mere evocation but through quotation techniques as if, once textualized, these moments have also acquired the material, 3D properties.

Speaking in terms of quantities, the novel *Pluie d'étoiles* is mentioned in Matila Ghyka's memoirs around 15 times (which is quite a lot). I could also identify 8 instances where extensive quotations travel from one text to the other, all of them counting approximately 10 pages from an amount of 450. Two of them have drawn my attention in particular. In these cases, the author gives up quotation marks and cites the fragments from memory in the same fashion he declaims some Henri Regnier's pieces: the first is the material revelation of "Eve" at Kandy (Ghyka 2014, 274-277) while the second is a dream about the dematerializing force of love (Ghyka 2014, 260).

4. Maximilien Eulert and Leonhard Euler: the series as a dematerializing dispositive

Among all these episodes, life in the USA becomes particularly inspiring for Matila Ghyka, as here he is dawned by the extravagant idea to assume a fictional identity or to play the comedy of anonymity. He wants to check if the American typology of the self-made man is possible under any conditions. To and fro, Matila Ghyka is always on the move; like an electron...

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What is Matila Ghyka before the 1st World War? He is "a hero with a thousand faces" (Campbell 2004) or, even better, an impersonated series of masks, a gallery of mannequins. Through this serial metamorphosis (Manolescu 2012), he has already styled himself as a body able to leave behind its shapes, thus apt to dematerialize to the contour of the "Form-of-life". A manner of raising forth; a manner of being.

Taking distance from Plato's original approach, Giorgio Agamben provides us with a useful definition of the Form-of-life: "Form-of-life is not something like a subject, which preexists living and gives it substance and reality. On the contrary, it is generated in living; it is *produced by the very one for which it is form* and for that reason does not have any priority, either substantial or transcendental, with respect to living. It is only a manner of being and living, which does not in any way determine the living thing, just as it is in no way determined by it and is nonetheless inseparable from it... form-of-life is a *manner of rising forth*, not a being that has this or that property or quality but a being that is its mode of being, which is its welling up and is continually generated by its *manner of being*." (Agamben 2016, 224).

What is Matila's definition of "Form-of-life"? A Moldavian child turns into an European student, a French navy aspirant, a Romanian navy officer, an engineer, a professor, a jurist, a diplomat, a historian, then into a fine and seductive gentleman in all circumstances, but most of all ... into Maximilian Eulert! But who is this Maximilian Eulert?! Spelled by a malicious sorcerer, he is *the man with an owl head*, who will not succeed to turn back into human if three feathers will not be plucked out of his head plumage. Maximilian Eulert is a marionette from a German street theatre, Matila's frozen posture, a mannequin challenge. Indeed, Matila Ghyka's American identity bears this funny name of Maximilien Eulert: "Tout me plaisait, surtout le fait que j'étais seul, inconnu, absolument indépendant, sans coups de téléphone ni lettres pour me rattacher au passé dont un océan me séparait. C'était comme si j'avais dépouillé une personnalité pour en revêtir une nouvelle, et pour compléter cette impression, j'avais pris le nom d'une marionette vue jadis à Munich dans une pièce fantastique dont le héros, métamorphosé en chouette (la tête seulement) par un mauvais magicien, ne devait reconquérir son identité que lorsque trois plumes auraient été arrachées de sa tête au cours d'aventures abracadabrantes. Ce personnage s'appelait Maximilien Eulert et c'est le nom sous lequel je m'étais inscrit dans mon hôtel de cabotins de bas étage. C'était, encore une fois, une évasion complète hors du passé, et l'impression de soulagement, due à l'arrêt complet de l'engrenage de ce passé, était délicieuse" (Ghyka qtd. in Manolescu 2012).

Is this strange marionette, whose name overlaps Matila Ghyka's American identity, a signifier of Matila's life? Is Maximilian Eulert a fabulous *persona* of the mathematician Leonhard Euler, who got blind because of his enormous, superhuman work on cartography? Leonhard Euler, who had invented mathematic notation, and who was eventually chased away from the court of Frederick the Great of Prussia? Is he the type of the "poet-adventurer-mathematician", epitomized by Claude Farrere in his novel *Les Civilisés* as well as by Matila Ghyka's several portraits of fellow officers from the French Navy (Claude Farrere, Piere Louys, Yves Lecerf)?

5. From Joaquim du Bellay' to Matila Ghyka's Ulysses: nostalgic crystallization and Form-of-Life

But the series of way stations is by far not completed. After the 1st World War, he marries Eileen O'Connor, an Irish noblewoman, and becomes a family man. This Ulysses, beforehand a mannequin called Maximilien Eulert, has not reached his natal island. Nor can he see from the distance "the smoke coming out of his house's chimney". Probably he is a bit puzzled because he has not found out yet where his natal land is located. In 1918, he is again in the USA, in 1921 he works at the Romanian embassy of Madrid, in 1924 he moves to Warsaw. After 1924, he decides to live in Paris, where he makes friends with Paul Valery, Lucien Fabre, and Leon-Paul Fargue. In 1928 he restarts his diplomatic activity for the International Commission of Danube established in Bratislava and Vienna, in 1930 he returns to Bucharest but at the end of the year is sent to Stockholm, where he writes his novel, *Pluie d'étoiles*, which is introduced to his fellow countrymen as a "propagandistic novel" (Gregori 2016). Immediately after, he takes his family for a trip to the USA, where the children Maureen and Roderick satisfy their curiosities about Hollywood and their father remakes the secret trajectory of his first journey from 1911. Another stay in London (1936-1938) comes after an interlude in the capital of Romania.

In 1940, he decides to quit diplomacy and consecrates to a writing career. Apparently, in the same year he starts working at his memoirs. Dealing with this impersonation of Ulysses, it is perhaps relevant to emphasize – as Mihai Sorin Rădulescu does (Rădulescu 2008), the symbolic dimension of the place where the second volume of memoirs is finished: a huge Irish house from the 17th century situated in a park, not far from Dublin (Ghyka 2014, 466-467). As everyone already knows, Dublin is also James Joyce's archetypal place for his archetypal hero, Stephen Daedalus. But Joyce's Dublin is written or imprinted with what Jean Starobinski calls "the ink of melancholy" (Starobinski 2012, 283-331). And Matila is looking for happiness, the happiness of dematerialized bodies, the happiness of pure movement.

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My aim is not to provide here a snapshot of what the elaborate Joycean scholarship has produced for over a century. However, I am tempted to compare the urban melancholy and general un-fulfillment of Joyce's character with Matila's permanent disposition for happiness. Briefly said, to compare a character penned with "the ink of melancholy" and a narrating voice that conveys the nostalgic's "ecstasy", which was noticed by the physician Johannes Hofer in the 16th century (Hofer, qtd in Davies 2010, 262-268).

This Moldavian Ulysses voices the story of his voyages from a place, whose atmosphere is compared with the Emerald Island, the island of the ones who found happiness. It is not the first time when Matila Ghyka actualizes this archetypal image of serene happiness. He mentions it when he narrates his chase after Rakon, Chojiro's golden seal of happiness (Ghyka 2014, 90, 233) all the way through the Japanese islands, when he comments Böcklin's painting *Isle of the Dead* (Ghyka 2014, 108), and when he reaches the Golden Gate of San Francisco. In all three situations, the air is so "transparent", that it seems to facilitate access into the very nature of things. It seems to have no actual weigh.

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All in all, happiness gains the force of a philosophical motif that synthesizes Ghyka's oriental experiences. In Yokohama, where he finds the Street and the Temple of the Goddess of Happiness, Benten (Ghyka 2014, 234). In Kyoto and Nagoya, where he experiences a strange feeling of dematerialization, induced by the Japanese cult for inner harmony and by the philosophy of Zen. In Ceylon, where he has the epiphany of Eve's embodied archetype. Returned to Romania, at Chilia, he has a fabulous dream entitled *The Garden of Love*, which seems a written replica of Bosch's Garden of Paradise or of the Japanese embroidery having as theme The Fortunate Island, the Island of the Blessed (Ghyka 2014, 329). While Joyce's Ulysses comes with brand new literary techniques such as pronounced intertextuality and fragmentation but also with gloomy and melancholic setting, Matila Ghyka's Ulysses presents us with a proposal of *nostalgic crystallization*.

Marked by the same dynamic rhythm, Matila Ghyka's aesthetic maturity is synthesized by Joachim du Bellay's verse, which actually gives the title of the memoirs' second part: *Heureux qui, comme Ulysse...* Member of the Pleiade, the French poet also inspires Jean Starobinski in his studies on melancholy and nostalgia. Reevaluating what he had written about nostalgia in 1966, Starobinski comes with a series of 3 studies, among whom the first, published in 2003, presents the stereotypes of "douceur". These are Ulysses, Ovid's voice from *Tristia*, Roland, and Du Bellay's lyrical voice from *Regrets*. Noticing that Starobinski picks up for demonstration Du Bellay's 12th sonnet while Matila Ghyka is developing on the 31st (*Heureux qui, comme Ulysse*), I could not help to ask myself: Isn't *Heureux qui, comme Ulysse* a far more adequate piece for the cultural circulation of the motif sketched by the Swiss critic? But first, let us quote the poem: „Heureux qui, comme Ulysse, a fait un beau voyage,/ Ou comme cestuy-là qui conquit la toison,/ Et puis est retourné, plein d'usage et raison,/ Vivre entre ses parents le reste de son âge!// Quand reverrai-je, hélas, de mon petit village/ Fumer la cheminée, et en quelle saison/ Reverrai-je le clos de ma pauvre maison,/ Qui m'est une

province, et beaucoup davantage?// Plus me plaît le séjour qu'ont bâti mes aïeux,/ Que des palais Romains le front audacieux,/lus que le marbre dur me plaît l'ardoise fine:// Plus mon Loir gaulois, que le Tibre latin,/ Plus mon petit Liré, que le mont Palatin,/ Et plus que l'air marin la douceur angevine”.

Estimating the core meaning of Du Bellay's sonnet, I found something that enlightened Matila Ghyka's approach to the “mono-myth” of Ulysses. Of course, one should take into consideration Ulysses's doubled posture: he is the prototype of the traveler and he is the first Classical hero endowed with a Voice. As a matter of fact, Ulysses's voice is considered by some of the historians the mythical legitimation of Rhetoric as science. The hero is said to have written the first treatises of rhetoric during the peaceful interludes of the Trojan War (Florescu 1973, 23).

But what is this Voice saying in Du Bellay's sonnet? First of all, the poem is not an eulogy of Ulysses's heroism. The recipients should be those that are able to turn Ulysses's model of happiness into a norm of their life course. The emphasis on “happiness” is here similar to the one contained by the exemplary stories of teachers who had turned themselves into such Voices: Buddha (teaching Zen), Jesus Christ (teaching the Gospel), Allah (teaching Coran), Zarathustra, Siddhartha, and so forth. Now, has the Classical Ulysses appended a book of teaching in the fashion described above? Of course he has not! After all, Homer's *Odyssey* could be taken (and it surely has been taken) for just anything except for a book of prophecies.

Nevertheless, here is the bend of Matila Ghyka's reflection: to attach a prophetic dimension to these Ulyssean series of “mannequin” postures. On the one hand, the experience of dematerialization draws to the invariant of all prophets' lives. On the other, the end of a dematerialized life is attained only through serialized movements. While Ghyka is secretly unfolding a repetitive and enchanting pattern of prophetic diction, his *Ulysse* comes to the fore not as voice of confession but as a voice of a trained memory and trained will. Compared to the Classical hero's other avatars, Ghyka's Ulysse is a *Prophet*, able to provide teaching and training for those who pursue happiness.

Blamed by recent Romanian reviewers for alleged aesthetic imperfections, the redundancy of novel fragments, their occurrence within the text of memoirs, the paradoxical immobility of Ghyka's travel accounts convey a special type of working with quintessential memory. Abundantly transcribed and explained in these memoirs (which, in their turn, have two different versions, in French and, respectively, in English), intra-textual references to his previous novel *Pluie d'étoiles* should call our attention to something deeper than individualization through mere storage of memories. As a matter of fact, Matila Ghyka did not give much on who he was but on what his movements left behind: shapes, bodies, postures, figures, all of them enchainned in the great mystery of the Form of Life.

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