PUSHING THE LIMITS OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY: SCHIZOPHRENIA IN THE WORKS OF FARIDA BELGHOUL, AGOTA KRISTOF, AND MILCHO MANCHEVSKI

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In 1971, Philippe Lejeune's *L'autobiographie en France* initiated the study of the history of autobiography. It is now a landmark, as well as his *Pacte autobiographique*. Lejeune certainly contributed to considering autobiography a genre which, as with any genre, is in constant evolution. The study of Farida Belghoul's and Agota Kristof's novels, and of Milcho Manchevski's film will illustrate the following point, that, as the self becomes increasingly elusive, the limits of autobiography can and must be pushed.

The core of Lejeune's definition of autobiography (1975) is the identity between author, narrator, and character. Although the definition is very strict, the genre itself is vague. For instance, Lejeune admitted that "le sujet doit être *principalement* la vie individuelle, la genèse de la personnalité: mais la chronique et l'histoire sociale ou politique peuvent y avoir aussi une certaine place" (Lejeune 15). In fact, the first and major requirement for a work to be autobiographical is the author's intention, the pact between author and reader, film director and spectator. Parallel to the autobiographical pact Lejeune suggested a novelistic pact which comprises two aspects: 1. "*pratique patente de la non-identité* (l'auteur et le personnage ne portent pas le même nom)" 2. "*attestation de fictivité* (c'est en général le sous-titre *roman* . . . sur la couverture)" (Lejeune 27). But the novelistic pact can sometimes be problematic, as Lejeune noted, using *A la recherche du temps perdu* where a brief incursion from the author into the text is both a guarantee of the novelistic pact and an autobiographical sign, thus putting the text in an ambiguous space. All the written works that I will deal with in this study are given as novels: they all are attested fictions. But they all rely heavily on autobiographical sources.

The question at the end of the twentieth century is: where does autobiography stand? At the beginning of the 1970s, Lejeune conceded that the definition he had formulated gave way to exceptions. My point here will be to show that we may be witnessing a new kind of autobiographical production where the narrator/character stands for his/her generation or country. (Moreover, autobiography can no longer be limited to merely writing, other artistic forms (like films) should also be taken into account.) Since the *auto* of autobiography is not restricted to the individual him/herself but may also include what s/he stands for, these narrations show an unexpected turn, a complex structure, where schizophrenia or split personality sometimes play a major part, as it does in the works of Belghoul, Kristof, and Manchevski. These works not only express a predicament, above all they embody the contradictions of a given situation: the *Beurs* caught between France and Algeria; the exile split between his/her native land and adoptive country; Hungary torn between its true identity and what its successive occupants imposed on it; Macedonia torn between Slav Macedonians and its growing Albanian minority. These works embody the contradictions of these situations as if the people or nation involved had a personality of their own, a split personality.

The case of Farida Belghoul

Georgette! is about one school day in the life of a seven-year-old *Beur* ("second generation immigrant"). It stages the clash between two opposite worlds (school and home), two cultures (French and Algerian/Moslem), two different experiences and outlooks on the world. Most *Beur* writers express in their novels this cultural tearing which affects their identity. According to Azouz Begag, a *Beur* himself, *Beurs* are from an early age subject to "une double aimantation identificatoire: celle de leur famille et celle des institutions sociales (école, télévision...)" (Begag 47). Hence, most of them feel that they have a double identity, that they are culturally Arab and French, and politically Algerian and French. This sense of double belonging often amounts to a feeling of double exclusion: as Michel Laronde argued, "C'est dans une coïncidence *partielle* entre double exclusion et double appartenance . . . que s'ouvre le lieu d'une identité ambiguë" (Laronde 145). The narration in *Georgette!* makes it obvious that the girl was born in a country where she does not fit in. She shares the ambiguous identity of the *Beurs*. She is in fact in a no-man's-land, or rather, in a space without a name, somewhere between these two opposite worlds. This is exactly what Begag noted about the coinage of the word *beur* (the loose *verlan* version of *arabe*). For him, being *Beur* means belonging neither here nor there, being unclassifiable and unwilling to be classified (Begag 83). In *Georgette!* the girl also refuses to be classified; she refuses the patterns that both her father and the French teacher want to impose on her. She will not let them "(re)territorialize" her with their "tracings" (*calques*); on the contrary, as we will see, she will "deterritorialize" herself along a Deleuzean "line of flight."

What first strikes the reader is the narrator's lack of identity: "Georgette" is a name she puts in her father's mouth to reproach her for becoming French (148). Mireille Rosello saw this omission as the girl's refusal to be imprisoned in a single identity (Rosello 36). Identity is indeed at the core of the novel. As early as the first scene, the girl pretends to be someone else, a seventy-year-old man, later she identifies with an Indian. She takes on different personae and displays schizophrenic symptoms throughout the novel, a long and uneasy stream of consciousness. Centered on events occurring at school, the narrative still makes a lot of room for other inci-

dents—mainly at home, but also on the way back from summer camp and on the streets. A gesture or a thought is sometimes enough to trigger all kinds of delusions. The girl's biculturalism thus gives way to a form of schizophrenia. She seems unable to cope with being caught between her adoptive milieu (France), embodied by the teacher, and the milieu of counter-reference (Moslem Algeria), embodied by her father. She is the point where the two worlds meet—and clash. The notebook incident puts her at a loss; she gets confused by *l'endroit* and *l'envers*—different according to Arab or Western culture—and cannot determine what is the first page of her notebook. She did her homework on the "last pages" as her father showed her to:

> Mon cahier dans les mains, [la maîtresse] recherche mon écriture. Et ne trouve que des feuilles blanches... Elle feuillette toujours les dernières pages! Pourtant, il est pas compliqué mon cahier: les premières pages sont usées (41–2).

In the end, the teacher shows her that she had numbered the pages:

> Son ongle rouge tape sur le numéro un . . . Ma voix est bloquée, je préfère. Sinon, je sors des pages numérotées à l'envers . . . J'ai vu mon père écrire le premier sur mon cahier, et j'étais fière de lui. Pourtant, c'était pas vrai: il était le deuxième . . . C'est le premier écrivain qui donne le sens à mon cahier, c'est pas le deuxième! (57–8)

Exit the father's authority.

Another major confrontation between the two milieus is the reflections on American Indians. The girl is fascinated by the Indians' mimetism with the earth—their skin is red like their land—and their ever-elusive identity: "personne ne connaît la vraie figure des indiens" (72). The parallelism between cowboys-Indians and French-Algerians is easy to draw: the French exercised on the Algerians a politics somewhat similar to the cowboys' on the Indians. Besides, the Indians' war-cry may sound like Arab women's *youyous*; the girl's father maintains that the reflecting orange vest that street-sweepers have to wear makes them look as if there were tens of thousands of them (86), as cowboys always (think they) are outnumbered by Indians in westerns. In this postmodern novel, the isotopia of the Indian constitutes a "rhizome," and the Indian is one among several personae on the girl's road to deterritorialization.

Being at the crossroads of these two milieus could be an advantage—the individual can get the best out of each of them. But for this to happen, a lot of strength and skill is required. In this case, however, it brings about only anguish to the girl, and the characters she imagines are the way to let it out and to escape the contradictory forces exercised on her. As R.D. Laing noted, schizophrenic reflexes are a defensive medium against the two milieux: "in phantasy, the self can be anyone, anywhere, do anything, have everything. It is thus omnipotent and completely free" (Laing 88). Still following Laing, the schizophrenic individual lives in what to him/her is a threatening world from which there is no exit but fantasy. When the girl's father tells the neighbor how he was treated by the settlers in Algeria, an earthquake builds in her brain and she escapes to the castle of angels (112–13). Similarly, when questioned by the teacher about the contents of her bag, the girl escapes on an imaginary train (120). At school, she neither moves nor says a word, which is in sharp contrast with her uninterrupted inner soliloquy. She is thus exhibiting classically schizophrenic catatonic behavior. Patrick O'Brien gave four signs of schizophrenia, three of which must be met for a patient to be diagnosed with the disorder: "schizophrenic dissociation of thought, alterations of emotional expressions, catatonic symptoms, delusions or hallucinations" (O'Brien 42). Belghoul's character displays catatonic symptoms. As for fantasy and hallucinations, at least eight major examples are present in the text. She seeks and finds refuge in delirious inner images. Disorganized thinking, a dominant feature in schizophrenic-type disorders, is obvious in the way the stream of consciousness develops:

> Cette femme au volant c'est un boule-d'ogre.
> C'est un gros chien qui adore cuisiner les grenouilles. Il les empile l'une sur l'autre et, avant de les éplucher, il sort son premier commandement. Il en a deux seulement. De sa voix affreuse, il dit très fort: "Je veux voir qu'une seule tête!" Ensuite, il les coupe en morceaux. Il se garde juste les cuisses et prononce le deuxième: "Assieds-toi!" (140)

The girl mixes up the two orders the teacher usually gives the pupils with her brother's reflections: "L'ogre y voudra pas de toi. T'es trop maigre, y'a rien à manger dans tes cuisses de grenouille" (92). Her disorganized thinking feeds on and blends elements of two different episodes.

Belghoul's character meets three out of the four signs of the schizophrenic disorder—alterations of emotional expressions are absent. In the real world, she would be classified schizophrenic. Her system of reference is blurred. The already mentioned concepts of *endroit* and *envers* are questionable: the right side for one culture is the wrong side for the other, and vice versa. In both (and in fact in all) cultures, there must be an *endroit* and an *envers*. For the girl, salvation lies in abolishing this dichotomy. Realizing, thanks to her conversation with a speaking doll, that the teacher's and the father's behavior may both be fatal to her, she ceases her attempts to please them, and sets off on the salutary road to deterritorialization. This identification with the doll opens a new line of flight along which the girl escapes the identity strait-jacket in which society tries to constrain her.

In *Georgette!*, schizophrenia is staged first to convey how painful the *Beurs*' situation is, but also and mostly,

as Deleuze and Guattari construed it in *Mille plateaux*, as a revolutionary, deterritorializing process. *Georgette!* is undoubtedly a postmodern novel. As mentioned earlier, the girl's hallucinations can be interpreted as lines of flight, and the narration displays a rhizomorphic nature. According to Deleuze and Guattari, a rhizome has six "approximate characteristics," the first two being the "principles of connexion and heterogeneity: any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be" (Deleuze 7). The Indian illustrates this characteristic: here it is a "pot [peau] rouge," there the bright colors of the mother's dress, there a "jeu de piste." The text is interspersed with such elements which, in the end, form a network, a rhizome. The many digressions in *Georgette!* all convey an identity dilemma. Because of them, the narrative is not made of "points or positions" (Deleuze 8), but of "lines" which make the whole piece proliferate, this is the third characteristic, the "principle of multiplicity." The fourth is the "principle of asignifying rupture:" "a rhizome may be broken . . ., it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines . . . Every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is . . . territorialized, organized . . ., as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees" (Deleuze 9). The girl's digressions shatter the unfolding of the school day: the writing lesson is constantly interrupted by the child's "divagations" which send her in another space and time, but she always returns to the classroom and the present. The lesson and classroom are lines of segmentarity which territorialize the narrative: but the narrative flees into digressions as the girl deterritorializes herself in her hallucinations. If they privileged the rhizome over the root, Deleuze and Guattari preferred the "map" to the "tracing" ("principle of cartography and decalcomania"): the latter is merely reproductive, the former is productive, generative, open. Both the father and the teacher attempt to territorialize the child with tracings (they teach her how to write): through her schizophrenic hallucinations, she draws herself a map which she uses to flee her identity crisis.

As Begag argued, *Georgette!* is Farida Belghoul's voice: "les inversions, les asymétries et autres déconstructions de l'espace-temps narratif nous font saisir plus et mieux la situation où évolue l'héroïne de *Georgette!* que les faits qu'elle raconte" (Begag 105). Through Belghoul, the girl is also the voice of all *Beurs*, the voice of a "lost generation" (as Sakinna Boukhedenna put it), a sacrificed generation—their children will not have to face the cultural clash, the tearing, and the estrangement that *they* experience. Through one of their spokespersons (*auto*), *Georgette!* (*graphie*) is the expression of the situation (*bio*) and feelings of that generation. The opening line of the novel, "la sonne cloche," does not simply express that something *cloche* (is not right), it can also be read as the extension of the *verlan* mechanism—instead of syllables, words are inverted. As the children of Maghrebi immigrants coined the word *beur* to define themselves as different from Arab and French, "la sonne cloche" could illustrate the narrator's search for a new identity and a new space, which she seems to have found in the end of the novel: "Le bonheur est dans..." (139). The interruption at the very point when the place of happiness was to be revealed and the lack of a full stop at the end of the novel lead us to believe that the schizophrenic, deterritorializing process was successful. Thanks to her inner monologue, the girl transcended her "non-identity" (Laronde 149), her situation of in-between.[1]

The case of Agota Kristof

In *Le grand cahier*, the first novel of Kristof's trilogy, twins are brought by their mother from the capital to live with their grandmother at the far end of the country. In Chapter 12, the reader finds out that the very brief chapters about their life there are in fact short compositions written by the twins. A composition is "good" only if it tells the truth; however, some aspects of the narration are inconsistent with the story. The twins' too great unity calls into question the "reality" of the narrating *we*: it is as if they were one person, one acting and thinking being. That is what the use of a first person plural possessive adjective suggests in the following example: "Notre vue est voilée, nos oreilles bourdonnent, notre tête résonne. Nous avons terriblement soif. Notre bouche est sèche" (127). The twisted use of pronouns and possessive adjectives and the vague feeling one has that the twins' unity is too good to be true eventually lead the reader to interpret the narrating *we* as one schizophrenic being.

The twins indeed show signs of the disorder. They live in their own imaginary world (26). They counterfeit hallucinations to avoid going to school (170). They exercise to endure hunger and physical and moral pain. They test their skills at mendacity, blindness, deafness, and cruelty. Some of these so-called exercises can be interpreted as catatonic symptoms: "Au bout d'un certain temps, nous ne sentons effectivement plus rien. C'est *quelqu'un d'autre* qui a mal, c'est *quelqu'un d'autre* qui se brûle, qui se coupe, qui souffre" (21, italics mine) or "avec le temps, nous n'avons plus besoin de fichu pour les yeux ni d'herbe pour les oreilles. Celui qui a fait l'aveugle *tourne simplement son regard vers l'intérieur*, le sourd *ferme ses oreilles à tous les bruits*" (45, italics mine). Their emotional expressions are altered: in fact they suppress all emotions: when their mother and sister are hit by a shell in the yard, they answer their cousin's question about what happened by a cold "un obus a fait un trou dans le jardin" (154). At the neighbor's request, they set her house on fire (with her inside): they help their grandma die; and finally, one twin crosses the border on his father's dead body. According to Eva Valenta, "the twins' inability to form separate identities is a result of that same society in that this is a society in an identity crisis which forces the individual to either collaborate . . . or to live

[1]For a full development of schizophrenia and the postmodern dimension in Belghoul's and Kristof's works, see my dissertation: "Représenter le *double bind*: double et schizophrénie dans les œuvres d'Annie Ernaux, Agota Kristof et Farida Belghoul."

outside of it" (186). I would rather put forward the argument that they have different personalities because they live in such a society, and, as Valenta argued, they respond to society's madness (Nazi and Soviet occupation) with a madness of their own. In fact, schizophrenia is called for by the mere situation of the country that is cut off from the rest of the world as the schizophrenic cuts himself off from the outside world. Once again—as for Belghoul—schizophrenia is not only used as a way to protect oneself from a threatening environment, but also and mostly as a means of escape, a line of flight.

At the beginning of *La preuve*, after one twin crossed the mined border, *we* is replaced by an identified *he*, Lucas, also called "'idiot' (8) (the madman). When establishing his identity card, he tells the Party Secretary to write "'Idiot,' si vous le pouvez. J'ai eu un traumatisme, je ne suis pas tout à fait normal" (28); his psychic condition is then officialized. Although people still consider him crazy, Lucas seems to have come to terms with his split personality and to be assuming a single personality. The narration is interspersed with signs that Lucas has always been alone at grandma's house and that his "brother" Claus was a fantasy: all the activities carried out by the twins in *Le grand cahier* are here ascribed to Lucas alone; he has in his possession the jewels which grandma left after her death, and which were taken across the border by the other twin! Moreover, the anagrammatic aspect of the names (Lucas-Claus) is suspicious and reinforces the interpretation of the twins as one schizophrenic being.

However, Lucas's condition gets worse again after the arrival of Yasmine and her disabled young child, Mathias; the reader then wonders if Lucas has ever really been cured. The love he feels for Mathias goes very far, so far that he kills Yasmine who wanted to leave with her child. Now, Mathias displays disconcerting similarities with the twins of *Le grand cahier*; he is quite smart and keeps a "cahier." Disabled, his shoulders and legs are malconformed and "[il] marche . . . avec une *clau*dication très marquée" (49, italics mine); Mathias comes to replace Claus in Lucas's disturbed mind. The narration itself plays a trick of fusion: "[Mathias] raconte ses cauchemars" (110). After which follow three paragraphs starting with "Un autre rêve," then the fourth paragraph, "Le rêve le plus terrible...," ends with these words:

> L'enfant s'assied à côté de Lucas, il attend.
> Le soleil se lève, Lucas ouvre les yeux:
> —Que s'est-il passé, Mathias?
> L'enfant dit:
> —Ce n'est qu'un nouveau cauchemar. (111)

The reader is first led to believe that the nightmares are Mathias's, but the last one may as well be Lucas's. The narration unites them in a single being. Besides, Lucas reacts in the same way after Mathias's suicide as he did after Claus's disappearance: he stops reading, eats and sleeps less; he enters denial: "Pour Mathias, tout va bien. Il est toujours le premier à l'école et il ne fait plus de cauchemars" (171). The reader legitimately wonders at that point whether Mathias is a character or the product of Lucas's imagination, or both.

The last chapter—Chapter 8—is an abrupt twist in the narration. Claus arrives in the small town of K. where he meets Peter, a former friend of Lucas. He is instantly mistaken for Lucas who disappeared some twenty years earlier when the body of a woman (Yasmine) was discovered. Peter tries to convince Claus that he now can reveal his true identity (as Lucas) (180). There is even a slip in the narration, "Lucas dit" (181) instead of "Claus dit." In the police report that closes the novel, the fictional status of the text is emphasized (189), and neither Lucas nor Claus are said to have ever lived in K. (188). Thus, the novelistic pact given by the author ("*La preuve* roman" 5) is reinforced in the police report... which is, however, part of the fiction. The schizophrenic aspect which seemed to have been abandoned at the beginning of *La preuve* is thus still present: 1. through Mathias with whom Lucas tried to re-create the past twin harmony, 2. through the reappearance of the so-called Claus (who could be Lucas under his "twin" name), 3. at the narrative level, by the self-denial of the text which contradicts itself and self-destructs (a schizophrenic symptom).

As a clarification attempt, *Le troisième mensonge* resumes elements from *Le grand cahier* and *La preuve*. The physical exercises Lucas must do to walk again (after being accidentally shot by his mother as she was shooting at her unfaithful husband) recall the twins' exercises of cruelty, hunger, etc.; the woman whom he was taken to after the Center was bombed calls him as grandma called the twins, "fils de chienne" (39); Peter (the Party Secretary and Lucas's friend) and Clara (Lucas's mistress) belong here to the western country where Lucas has fled; he crosses the border on the body of a stranger; the passport renewals and the police report are also present; the character of Mathias can be made out of the parents' names (*Mathi*lda and André*as*) of Antonia, his father's mistress; his father's name, Klaus-Lucas T., was the grandfather's name in *Le grand cahier*; finally, Claus (Lucas) admits that he was alone in K.:

> Tout le monde dans la ville connaît mon histoire: je suis à la recherche de mon frère avec qui j'ai vécu ici, dans cette ville, jusqu'à l'âge de quinze ans . . . Tout cela n'est qu'un mensonge. Je sais très bien que dans cette ville, chez Grand-Mère, j'étais déjà seul, que même à cette époque j'imaginais seulement que nous étions deux, mon frère et moi, pour supporter l'insupportable solitude. (76)

Against all appearances (such as, a seemingly logical narration of events), schizophrenia is very much present in *Le troisième mensonge*. Indeed, each character made the other twin part of himself: Lucas "*clau*dique" (15) (as Mathias did)—his brother's name is present in the word for *limp*—and after he crossed the border, he wrote three lies in his statement to the authorities, the third being: "Il

ne s'appelle pas Claus" (91). Klaus, when he had to choose a name to publish his poems, chose Klaus Lucas:

> —Pourquoi avoir changé de prénom?
> —A cause de toi, Klaus. Quand je remplissais le questionnaire dans le bureau des gardes-frontière, j'ai pensé à toi, à ton prénom, à ce prénom qui m'accompagnait tout au long de mon enfance. Alors, au lieu de Lucas, j'ai écrit Claus. Tu as fait la même chose en publiant tes poèmes sous le nom de Klaus Lucas. Pourquoi Lucas? En souvenir de moi?
> Je dis:
> —En souvenir de mon frère, en effet. (118)

The role of this third novel is not only to rationalize the story. Kristof said that "[c]e troisième livre explique que les deux premiers étaient un mensonge . . . Je vois ces livres comme une variation sur le même sujet, comme si chaque fois [Claus] essayait de dire ce qu'il était" (Mésavage 70). The problem is that in spite of its rationalizing efforts, this third novel is another lie, the third lie, "le troisième mensonge." Kristof, however, gives a personal turn to the word *lie*. When Peter asks Lucas what he writes in his notebooks, Lucas answers "Ce sont des mensonges . . . Des choses inventées. Des histoires qui ne sont pas vraies, mais qui pourraient l'être" (96). In fact, in Kristof's terminology, writing lies amounts to writing fiction, or "confond[re] la réalité avec la littérature" (81). More interesting is what Lucas says about his writing process:

> "j'essaie d'écrire des histoires vraies mais, à un moment donné, l'histoire devient insupportable par sa vérité même, alors je suis obligé de la changer. Je lui dis que j'essaie de raconter mon histoire, mais que je ne le peux pas" (14).

The sources of Kristof's trilogy are also her own story, but the plot gradually broke away from reality. We touch here the autobiographical part of the trilogy. The coincidence of some elements in the novels with her life is disconcerting; in fact, in several interviews, Kristof acknowledged the presence of autobiographical elements in her work. Most of the action is set in the small town of K., close to a border which people risk their lives to cross. That border is of course the Iron Curtain, and the town is Köszeg, where Kristof was born and grew up. In *La preuve* Lucas is said to be born in 1935, and in *Le troisième mensonge*, on October 30; Kristof was born on the same date. As Valenta argued, Kristof's writing reflects her double life, as a bilingual and as a "dual citizen of a divided Europe," "she writes from both sides of the unpenetrable border" (Valenta 198). Hungarian born, Kristof lives in Switzerland and writes in French; the twin who crossed the border to live in the West and the twin who stayed in Hungary are both part of her; they represent the two facets of her own being. She has the double personality of an exile: while one part of her is still in her home country, the other part is in the present, in Switzerland. She is both Lucas who went to the West and writes fiction—*Le grand cahier*, *La preuve*, and half of *Le troisième mensonge*—and Klaus, the Hungarian poet (she used to write poetry). In each twin, she projected a part of herself. Her trilogy is the tale of her *moi* split between the Francophone novelist-playwright and the Hungarian poet.

Apart from the special meaning that she gives to the word "mensonge," Kristof's French does not display a non-traditional use of the language, unlike Belghoul who reproduced in *Georgette!* colloquial and spoken French, the French of immigrant workers ("Moi j'ai pas fait les études d'la médecine. Mais si j'suis docteur, j'laisse pas un enfant crever de soif . . . Tant que je suis vivant, tu mort pas. N'ch Allah" [107]). Belghoul also developed what Deleuze and Guattari called "intensives," words or elements used in a non-traditional way (she consistently spelled "indien" in lower case and extensively used exclamation marks). Kristof did not make such use of the French language[2]; her language is refined, very austere; does this austerity stand for the austerity of the totalitarian regime under which the author grew up? Her style is also minimalist in contrast with Belghoul's multi-directional stream of consciousness. Both trends are nevertheless ascribable to postmodernism: according to Lance Olsen, postmodernism "explores the impossibility of imposing determinant meaning on a text . . . through the minimalism of a Barthesian degree zero of writing (Kafka, Borges, Handke) all the way up through a maximalism of signification" (Olsen 8). As *Georgette!*, though in differing ways, Kristof's work constitutes a rhizome, a rhizome abruptly interrupted at the end of each volume: with, respectively, one twin crossing the border, the "procès verbal," and Klaus's contemplation of suicide; but it always starts again in another direction, along another line of flight. After the closed space of the trilogy, *Hier* (Kristof's latest novel) opens up new alternatives, new orientations. The character (and through him, Kristof?) finally seems to have deterritorialized himself. His schizophrenia, his crossing of a mental border illustrate the escape from the closed space of totalitarian Hungary toward an open (mental) space which is impressed on the text and makes it an open (postmodern) space.

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Kristof's work as from Belghoul's. As Belghoul is the spokesperson of her generation, the *Beurs*, Kristof is the spokesperson of the exile with his/her schizophrenic personality. She also speaks for her country: *Le grand cahier* is clearly about the successive occupations of Hungary. The Hungarian situation is expressed through the twins who yield to the Nazis and the Soviets but still keep their true self alive

[2]This issue of language is not relevant for Manchevski's film, since only the second of three parts is conducted in a foreign language, the other two are in Macedonian or Albanian. The bilingualism of the film (Macedonian-Albanian/English) may, however, reflect the issue of bilingualism and biculturalism in Macedonia, and certainly plays its part in the schizophrenic aspect of the film.

and intact. Similarly, to protect its true self from foreign occupations, Hungary had to resort to some sort of schizophrenia, it had to have a double, split identity. Thus, with Kristof, the limits of autobiography are pushed one step further: the writer does not only speak on behalf of a group of individuals, but also on behalf of her country. Manchevski proceeds further into this direction.

The case of Milcho Manchevski

Before the Rain is a film by the Macedonian director Milcho Manchevski.[3] This film being extraneous to French and Francophone studies, it will not be given the full development that it deserves; *Before the Rain* supports the argument that the notion of "autobiography" needs to be extended, which, with its use of schizophrenia, justifies its presence here. The rain is one of two recurrent elements in the film: under an ominous sky, young father Kiril picks tomatoes while Zamira, an Albanian girl, runs to the monastery to hide. That sultry sky lingers on throughout part I, as men search for her in the monastery and as she is eventually killed by her brother as she runs away with Kiril, and throughout part III, where Aleksandar, the war photographer of part II, is killed by his cousin for wanting to help Zamira run away from them—they think that she is responsible for the death of one of theirs. The story then seems to come to a full circle, father Kiril can be seen picking tomatoes as in the first scene of the film, and finally rain falls from the ominous sky on Aleksandar's body and on Zamira as she is running away from Aleksandar's family to the monastery. The sultry ominous sky acts as a filmic representation of the tensions between Macedonia's Slav population (Aleksandar's family) and its growing Albanian minority (Zamira's family). The impossible encounter between the two main ethnic groups in Macedonia is also symbolized by the impossible love between Aleksandar and Hana, Zamira's mother (a young love), and by Ali's (Hana's son) rudeness towards Aleksandar.

The circle is another recurrent element in *Before the Rain*: the closing scene brings us back to the opening one. Besides, at one point of each of the three parts, the same sentence appears: "Time never dies. The circle is not round." As the sentence states, a full circle is an impossible, unreachable figure; and against all appearances, the film narrative is *not* circular. Its structure recalls the elusiveness of Kristof's trilogy. Its three parts are like three pieces of a jigsaw-puzzle, but one piece never fits. Part I follows part III: Zamira, charged with the cousin's death, finds refuge in the monastery; part II follows part I: the pictures of Zamira's killing are on the news agent's desk in London; part III follows part II: Aleksandar carries out his plan to go back to Macedonia; but parts I, II, and III cannot form a sequence since Zamira, killed at the end of part I, is alive in part III, and Aleksandar, killed in part III, is alive in part II. The spectator has to inductively recreate the chronology of events, because in the narrative part I cannot be the actual beginning of the film's plot and initiate the circle since Zamira is alive in part III: neither can part II, which still bears the mark of Zamira's killing (through the pictures on the desk); nor can part III, because in part II Aleksandar decides to go back to Macedonia. Any way one looks at it, the three parts do not form a full circle, and (except by induction) it is in fact impossible to determine a beginning to the narrative, a characteristic of postmodern "texts."

The film displays a split, schizophrenic structure representative of the country in which it is mostly set.[4] Macedonia has a heterogeneous population: 65% Slav Macedonians, 21% Albanians, 4% Turks, 3% Gypsies, 2% Serbs, 2% Moslem Macedonians, and a small number of Vlachs according to the 1991 census (Danforth 143).[5] Albanians are an overwhelming majority in the western part of the country. Their population increased by 36% between 1971 and 1981. In 1988, their birthrate was three times the national average (Poulton 125). They are felt as a threat by Slav Macedonians who fear Albanian separatist attempts like their overwhelming 1992 vote in favor of political and territorial autonomy (Danforth 145). Fear is felt by members of *both* communities, which results in a lack of communication: "[t]he two communities are as far apart as ever, and mutual misunderstanding and distrust are widespread . . . The legacy of distrust and antagonism may yet lead to inter-ethnic conflict and even civil war" (Poulton 190). The film perfectly shows this distrust and these tensions; Zamira's grandfather asks her if she killed Aleksandar's cousin and says: "Blood calls for blood. You'll start a war." Zamira, whom Kiril refused to surrender to the Macedonians, is eventually killed by her brother. Similarly, the Macedonians do not let Aleksandar help her escape; they would rather kill him. If support and help between members of the two communities are unsuccessful, incidents which could lead to more dangerous inter-ethnic confrontations are avoided, even if it means killing a member of one's community. The will to avoid a conflict as in Bosnia (to which the film refers) is obvious. The temporal and structural inconsistencies—or schizophrenic, postmodern aspect—of the film act as a protection against a snowball effect, an escalation of the tensions that could lead at best to a break-up of the country, at worst to a civil war. They reflect the problems

[3]The first and third part, set in Macedonia, are in Macedonian with English subtitles, while the second part, set in London, is in English. A European (mostly British and French) co-production, the film is obviously intended for an international public.

[4]Due to space limitations, a full development cannot be devoted to the differences between filmic and textual representations of schizophrenia. I just wish to mention that unlike Belghoul's and Kristof's novels, *Before the Rain* does not have a single, identified narrator, hence the spectator has no direct grasp onto the I and its identity crisis. Schizophrenia can be sensed through several characters' (Kiril, Hana, Zamira) mutism, and through two media unavailable to written production: visual (the ominous sky) and sound elements (a recurrent, very irritating, repetitive musical sequence).

[5]In the 12 June 1996 edition of the television broadcast *The European Journal*, Albanians were said to be almost 30% of the total population.

caused by the "split personality" (Slav Macedonian/Albanian) of the country and the potentially dangerous cohabitation of its two major communities. The inconsistencies in *Before the Rain* are very similar to those present in Kristof's trilogy and are part of the postmodern dimension of the film. Like the trilogy, *Before the Rain* can be interpreted as a rhizome which flees along different lines of flight and lines of signification. The film's resistance to a single interpretation definitely anchors it into postmodernity. *Before the Rain* is obviously a film against war, designed to urge for the preservation of a biethnic group, bicultural country; through its postmodern structure, it does not let itself territorialize into ethnic conflicts and war, quite the contrary. As Kristof can be interpreted as the spokesperson of her country, Manchevski is the spokesman of Macedonia and of "the Macedonian"—neither Slav Macedonian nor Albanian, simply Macedonian, an inclusive individual. As Kiril and Aleksandar who try to help Zamira in order to avoid a violent confrontation between the two communities, Manchevski clearly warns us against such clashes.

The use of schizophrenia by Farida Belghoul, Agota Kristof, and Milcho Manchevski—mostly represented by the narrative structure in the latter—is twofold. First, it contributes to the postmodern dimension of the works, it is the basis of a deterritorializing process, and it conveys the pain and discomfort of the situation. Second, it plays a part in the evolution of the autobiographical[6] genre. From Belghoul to Manchevski, "autobiography" moves from one individual representative of her generation to the representation of a country and an ideal citizen who prioritizes his country's peace over his own ethnicity. Lejeune's title for another of his studies on autobiography, *Je est un autre*, takes on another value here: the "other" reaches the supra-level of a group of individuals who want and need their voice to be heard, read, or seen.

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[6]In a loose meaning of the term, i.e., not only restricted to written narratives.