

Adriana Bittel: Writing Jewish, Writing Woman¹

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THE ROLE of Jewish artists and writers in the development of Romanian culture, especially since the beginning of the modern age, is well known. An excellent analysis of this contribution to the Romanian avant-garde is offered by Carol Iancu in his article “Artistes juifs de Roumanie dans le mouvement d’avant-garde et le rôle de Tristan Tzara—le fondateur du dadaïsme.” Much less is known about the Jewish writers who still live and write in post-communist Romania. This essay is meant to fill this gap.

According to Radu Cosașu, Adriana Bittel (born on 31 May 1946, Bucharest) is one of the few Jewish fiction authors still active in Romania. Extremely discreet about her Jewish origins, Bittel is one of the best short story authors in contemporary Romanian literature. Mircea Iorgulescu notices that there is with Romanian Jewish writers the consciousness that death is inevitable for them as a “species,” not as individuals. Iorgulescu quotes Radu Cosașu’s statement about the future of Romanian-Jewish writing. Radu Cosașu thinks that he is the last or, maybe the last but one short story writer with Jewish roots in Romanian literature. Only Adriana steps in his footsteps as a Romanian-Jewish short-story writer. Nobody is in sight, at least, not at present. “The most striking presence of these circumstances is the prevalence of the feeling of agony. Whether they come from Romania, of from countries where they went into exile, or whether they are ‘natives,’ Israelis, the Romanian-Jewish writers have, even if not always directly and explicitly, the consciousness of their inevitable extinction, as a species, not as individuals. ‘I realize—says Radu Cosașu—that I am the last or the last but one. Namely, behind me, as a Jewish short story writer in Romanian, there is Adriana Bittel. After Adriana Bittel, there is nobody left in Romania, now.’”²

The present paper analyzes Bittel’s short stories from the collections: *Lucruri într-un albastru* [Things in blue] (1980); *Somnul după naștere* [Slumber after birth] (1984); *Iulia în iulie* [Julia in July] (1986); *Întâlnire la Paris. Unsprezece povestiri* [Meeting in Paris. Eleven short stories] (2001); *Cum încărunește o blondă. Povestiri din secolul trecut* [How a blonde is getting grey-haired. Stories from the last century] (2006). The short stories focus on women’s lives during the Communist regimes. Ethnic indications relating the stories to the author’s Jewishness are rare but eloquent. They point to the survival of a minority group that suffered the imposition of totalitarianism and victimization as the “favourite” Other of the Romanian xenophobes. All the stories written by Bittel give an ethical lesson about the heroism of everyday life. Daily survival implies ethical choices and this insistence upon ethics is normal if we remember that in Jewish culture the relation between man and God is mediated by duty. In his programmatic article, “Ethical Literary Criticism: Ethical Choice and Sphinx Factor,” Nie Zenzhao, the father of ethical literary criticism, says that the “Sphinx factor” (1) is the basic ethical statement to be found in any literary text. The variations of this factor reveal clearly the value of ethical choice in the history of society and individuals, the choice also manifest in the ethical conflicts among rational will, natural will, and

the irrational (cf. Zenzhao 1). According to this grid, the Sphinx factor of Adriana Bittel's stories is very high and implies no didacticism. The ethical lesson is never taught directly, the reader is to infer it from the narrative material. According to the Jewish tradition, the author invites the reader to ask questions about himself, the author does not give too many answers because asking questions is a much more valuable activity than answering queries both from the logical and the ethical point of view. There is, therefore, an ethics of questioning in Bittel's stories which has to do with the complexity of life and the impossibility of giving simple yes/no answers to the ethical choices imposed by life.

Bittel focuses on women and the way they are devoured in a petty domestic *inferno* created by the needs, the cares, and the claims of their family. Bittel obviously displays a sort of literary sisterhood with another Jewish woman writer from Romania. I am thinking of Anca Vlasopolos and her book *No Return Address. A Memoir of Displacement*, published in 2000. According to Ralph Freedman, one of the reviewers of Anca Vlasopolos, "It is in this self-identification with her gender that *No Return Address* achieves its greatest depth as a memoir. The book abounds in female characters, many of them attractive, some despicable, but many more suggesting acts of heroism and selflessness. At the same time, Vlasopolos draws patterns of female enslavement" (5).

Woman sacrifices herself both for her household and for her job. Without any exaggeration, woman is a martyr of a world (the Communist one) which pretends to have emancipated women. Working hard from morning till evening she makes the domestic ship sail onwards and onwards. Bittel focuses on those everyday sacrifices that make life possible, on the anonymity of female heroism, on the few and petty joys of a life without any perspective in spite of the Communist regime's pretense that this is the best possible world. Still, we must not valorize Bittel's fiction only as a sociological document about life under the Communist regime. On the contrary, in her short stories the grey of everyday life gets the nuances of rich psychological life. Without any exaggeration, Adrian Bittel belongs to that great family of women writers that includes Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, Alice Munro, Elizabeth Strout and who are able to express the superb incompleteness of life and enjoy life in spite of everything.

One of the few critics who wrote about Adrian Bittel is Boris Marian, who reviewed the collection *Cum încărunește o blondă. Povestiri din secolul trecut* [How a blonde is getting grey-haired. Stories from the last century] (2006). Says Marian, "To write these pieces in prose is a delight. Not because they are short. Almost each short story seems to be the nucleus of an unwritten novel, maybe a new *Chronicle of the Family*" (16)³. Boris Marian considers that "Virginia Woolf's neuroses are missing" (16) from Bittel's stories and "so do the broken flights of Tchekov's characters. But Adriana Bittel's characters live, breathe, and stifle in their own 'spleen'" (16)⁴.

Jewish presence in Bittel's short stories is very elusive. Rather it is names that suggest a possible Jewish origin and this is particularly true for her first collections. For instance, the narrator from the short story "Natură moartă cu Narcis, covrig și cupă" [Still life with Narcissus, a pretzel, and a cup] from the collection *Lucruri într-un pod albastru* [Things in blue] sees David, the owner of a little shop "At David's, friction and permanent rollers" (47)⁵. The narrator from this story refers to himself as the "wandering Jew" (20). We are in Bucharest, in the 1950's. The narrator wants to buy a very special present for himself and he finds himself in a magic shop where time has a different speed and he realizes that a decade has run in a second. There is some influence here from Mircea Eliade's short story "La țigănci" [At the women Gypsies']. What is peculiar about this text is the narrator's condition as a kind of chronicler of the Jewish community or his identification as a Jewish voice who tells stories about the others while placing them in a Jewish calendar and using Jewish reference points.

In "Vara nevestelor bătrâne" [The summer of the old wives] from the collection *Somnul după naștere* [Slumber after birth], the voyeuristic narrator is again interested in a character of possible

Jewish extraction. “I could clearly see Mrs. Solomon with a book in her hand. She was wearing high heel galoshes and her legs grew like some dead stalks from her woolen socks” (62)⁶. In “Vineri, când vine Frusina” [Friday, when Frusina is coming] from the same 1984 collection *Somnul după naștere* [Slumber after birth], reference is made to events that tragically affected the Jewish community in Bucharest in 1940 during the rise of fascism. “Joseph had come home from the pharmacy, haggard, his tie astray and he told everybody how their friend, Malec, had been taken to the slaughterhouse and hung from the hooks for beef carcasses. And how the hooligans had set fire to the shops on Văcărești Road” (54)⁷. For a Romanian reader this sentence reminds of a very tragic event: the pogrom organized by Fascist elements in Bucharest in 1941. On the other hand, Văcărești Road was a famous Jewish neighbourhood in Bucharest and the reference is very clear for any Romanian reader. In the same collection, *Somnul după naștere* [Slumber after birth], one of the stories is entitled “Tulpină fragedă, iată securea” [Fresh stalk, here is the ax] which is an allusion to the brutality of the Holocaust and the innocence of the victims represented by a vegetal metaphor.

Gradually, this oblique Jewish referencing will give place to more direct Jewish references and to a more complex representation of the Jewish minority under the communist regime, their life, and ideals.

In the collection *Întâlnire la Paris. Unsprezece povestiri* [Meeting in Paris. Eleven short stories], published in 2001 Bittel also includes the short story “Alice în Bariera Vergului” [Alice in Bariera Vergului] previously published in *Somnul după naștere* [Slumber after birth] (1984). It is the first story where she gives us a more detailed picture of a Romanian Jewish family. The author describes a petty bourgeoisie family of Jewish origin living on the outskirts of Bucharest. “Sarah, the younger sister of my grandmother” (7)⁸ is a very romantic woman who used to cry when watching movies. She ran away and left her husband for another man. Efraim, her husband, dies broken hearted because he is fired for racial reasons. The 1940’s and the 1950’s are remembered by a child, the little Alice, who notices the gradual disappearance of several objects from the house. “The mahogany framed mirrors had been given to the milk woman for a month’ milk, some of the piano had paid for repairing the new roof, and Grannie’s engagement ring had turned into a cartful of firewood for the new home was very cold from all points of view⁹. The gradual disappearance of objects accompanied the family’s social descent. Strolling all over Bucharest, Alice gets to “the red building of the Coral Temple where she had once been with her grandmother to look at the first rising star” (13)¹⁰. For the knowledgeable reader, this is the beginning of the Sabbath. The Jewish ethnicity of Alice is obvious and her knowledge of the sacred division of time is beyond doubt. On the outskirts of Bucharest, in the slums called Bariera Vergului, Alice meets the Roma beggars and even dares an affectionate gesture towards a beggar who has lost his legs and crawls on the streets. In this picturesque and poor milieu, Alice “felt safe and full of a calling which she later called love” (21)¹¹. Later on, at various intervals in her life, Alice would meet the beggar in front of some of Bucharest’s department stores, those shops so common in the city under the Communist regime. Once she even dared an affectionate gesture. She caressed the beggar’s hairy and very masculine chest, which made her mother drop all her shopping in dismay. Many years later, Alice will have a daughter whose eyes, unlike anybody else in the family, had black eyes, exactly like the beggar. The gift of love had resonated in her. Her daughter seems to be the gift of love without sexual intercourse which reminds one of the New Testament. Jewish and Christian elements combine in Bittel’s writing and create the image of a dwindling community that lives in a Christian milieu and is influenced by the values that surround it.

In the short story “The Oil Stain” from her 2001 collection *Întâlnire la Paris. Unsprezece povestiri* [Meeting in Paris. Eleven short stories] Adriana Bittel offers us the portrait of Frida, the narrator’s grandmother. Jewishness is rarely mentioned but there are several markers that point to a possible Jewish origin or milieu for a Romanian reader. For instance, Frida and her granddaughter talk about “Frida’s younger sister, Reli, about whose existence I had sworn upon my hon-

our and keeping my hand on the tin knob of the bed that I would tell nobody (52)¹². The writer only offers details that point to situations common mostly in Jewish families. A relative abroad was not a good point for one's file, i.e. in the eyes of the officials. Consequently, many people were very discreet about such details and tried to hide them if they could. Adriana Bittel's slant, oblique writing about her Jewish origins has political and identity causes. Bittel prefers to blend in and lets the reader rather guess that she writes stories about her own Jewish family. Also, this authorial attitude has to do with the publishing politics of the Romanian Communist Party in the 1980s. The nationalism of Ceaușescu's speeches increases constantly and gradually after 1971 when he paid visits to China and North Korea. For a minority writer, such as Adriana Bittel, even if she writes in Romanian, the blend-in policy is the best if one wants to avoid annoying suspicions or even open rejection. In the 1980s Ceaușescu uses the term Romanian citizens of other ethnic origins when referring to ethnic minorities. In his aggressive megalomania, the Communist dictator even rejected the term consecrated in the Communist idelect, "co-inhabiting nationalities," which actually meant "ethnic minorities." Adriana Bittel's discretion about her origins and inspiration is understandable under these circumstances.

Lidia, the main character from "Întâlnire la Paris" [Meeting in Paris], the title story from *Întâlnire la Paris. Unsprezece povestiri* (2001) [Meeting in Paris. Eleven short stories] is a woman typical of the beginning of the post-communist age, the 1990s. Lidia is from Bucharest and she gets to travel to Paris at the beginning of the 1990s. It is the first time that she is free to do it. Under the communist regime she had often dreamt of this experience. For the first time she has no tasks, no chores, she feels free. After decades of compulsory limited movement in the prison that Bucharest, and Romania, had become under the Communist regime, she finally could do what she wanted and how she wanted. Strolling about the French city acts like a drug upon Lidia. She no longer needs to follow a target; she no longer has to care about the tyrannical clock. "After decades spent on the same routes in Bucharest—the 'walk' had disappeared from her life, the ways had a target and were against the clock—strolling in a huge city gave her the euphoria a drug can give" (97)¹³. While walking all over Paris, Lidia remembers her relative, Bianca Solomon, who had left for France under the communist regime. She was not the only one, in fact. There was a kind of influx towards immigration which nothing could stop, maybe hinder a little. "The Professor's flirtatious assistant from the polyclinic had succeeded in getting pregnant by a Jewish dentist who had already applied for immigration; she converted to Judaism and was learning Hebrew while they were both waiting for their Israeli relatives to pay their immigration fees"¹⁴. Bittel uses phrases common during that period when talking about the various stages and situations which could ease immigration and which were used by the Communist authorities as a source of money.

The name of the title character suggests some alienness, maybe Jewishness in the short stories "În creștere" [Growing up] and "Doctorul Blum" [Doctor Blum] from the collection *Întâlnire la Paris. Unsprezece povestiri* [Meeting in Paris. Eleven short stories], but this is all one can say in connection with the author's ethnic roots.

Adriana Bittel's latest collection, *Cum încărunțește o blondă. Povestiri din secolul trecut* [How a blonde is getting grey-haired. Stories from the last century], was published in 2006. In her original introductory note, Adina Keneres, emphasizes that "[b]eyond the author and her feminine emblem, these pages give us a wide picture of the 1980s" (2)¹⁵. Again Jewishness is discreetly presented. Allusions, names, a sort of oblique presentation of the narrator's or character's family—in fact autobiographical elements—all these are Bittel's repertory in terms of Jewish representation. The causes of this discretion may be the author's desire to blend in as well as the considerable dwindling of the Jewish minority in Romania.

In this latest collection Bittel includes the short story "Numele" [The name] (238-262), published first in *Iulia în iulie* [Julia in July] (1986). Sara Marcu, spoilt by her family with the name

Sarina, goes to Sibiu¹⁶ in order to meet the parents of her lover, Ernst. Sarina is introduced to the parents, potentially her future in-laws, as a friend of Ernst's who is in Sibiu on business and needs accommodation for a couple of days. The narrator never openly mentions Sarina's Jewishness but she makes Sarina say the following, "My family had made up their mind that beyond everything, they are and will be Bucharest natives, they had raised me so that ethnicity should be neither a matter of anxiety nor a question of pride for me, but I should overcome, with humour, the critical situations which stopped occurring. My fiancé's interest in Judaism was not passionate, it was a scientific interest, I deluded myself that that it was because of me" (242)¹⁷.

Sara and Ernst pay a visit to the Coral Temple in Bucharest. She feels intimidated and stays at the door, he comes to the conclusion that he likes no fanatical ideas of whatever sort. No other explanations are given but the author implies some distance from traditional Judaism. On the other hand, Sara (Sarina) is an assimilated Jewess who does not know too much about the religion of her people and feels somehow uncomfortable about this. "Unfortunately, I could not give him scholarly information. Only what I had learnt by hearsay" (242)¹⁸. Sarina had hoped that meeting Ernst's family would help her understand the relation within their couple better. "I had foreshadowed, with my mind's eyes, this journey to Sibiu, which he had caused, as the long expected clarification" (251)¹⁹.

In Sibiu, at Ernst's parents, Sara realizes that she gets references about a very different person and not the Ernst she had met in Bucharest. Firstly, in Sibiu Ernst is called Bruno and he is far from what Sara would have liked her future husband to be. Sara also has to confront the past which is far from being a dead leaf in the life of Ernst's family. Ernst's family had sympathized with Nazism. On the other hand, terrible things had happened in the neighbourhood during the War. The home of a Jewish family living nearby had been robbed and the daughter had been raped. Ernst and his people had known about all this and had done nothing. Sara decides that the engagement cannot last any longer, she returns to Bucharest a new woman. This voyage made her realize who she was and how one cannot forget his roots. It was a sign from God, although the Almighty is never mentioned. Bittel's light self-irony is absolutely charming and her separation from an apparently care-less Enlightenment atheism is final. "We shall have enough time to sleep, answer, smoke, and interpret, and finally, we shall invent a nice name for he who holds us in his palm, the owner of the all-encompassing point of view" (262)²⁰. It is interesting that we can make a connection between Bittel's approach to Holocaust and post-Holocaust redemption and the approaches of three Israeli women writers. In her article "'Idelogically Incorrect' Responses to the Holocaust by Three Israeli Women Writers" Rachel Feldhay Brenner analyzes the responses to the Holocaust in the works of three Israeli women writers: Lea Goldberd, Ruth Almog, and Shulamith Hareven. Brenner emphasizes a possible influence of gendered constructions in the contemporary perspective on the Holocaust. Women are much more concerned with care, social responsibilities and people's interdependence. In Bittel's story these values which are so important in women's writing survive in time. The fact that Ernest's family is a passive participant in the horrors inflicted upon the Jews as well as Sara's solidarity with her kin transgress through years. Under these circumstances the engagement between Sara and Eric cannot be functional any longer. One can never run away from one's roots.

Unlike many other authors who deal with the Holocaust, Bittel does not introduce the issue of memory in connection with the great tragedy of the Jewish people. Rather we can apply to her re-presentation the characterization given by Victoria Aarons in a seminal article on the uncertainties of Holocaust representations and memory in post-Holocaust literature. "In such narratives the past collides with the present, moving it aside for the more pressing demands of a memory fragmented by the shards of historical rupture" (134). Bittel's character, Sara, is not a survivor, neither does she meet any survivors. She gets her information from the hearsay of the neighbourhood and this vague frame gives the Holocaust memory some kind of vagueness but does not deprive it of credibility. Bittel chooses an excellent strategy in order to suggest that the

Holocaust memory cannot die once facts become history, this tragedy survives in individual consciousness. The refinement of Bittel's wording, the beauty of referencing and the elegance of style make this text as close to a masterpiece as one can dream of.

In "Contrariul morții" [Contrary to death] (38-45) the main characters are Lazarus and his daughter Esther. The father is dying and Esther takes him from hospital so that he can peacefully die in his own home. The whole story about Esther's heroism reminds the reader of the biblical heroine. On the other hand, the story is about the frailty of the human being and the tragedy of death. How difficult it is to die and get rid of one's body! No reference is made to Jewishness directly, this is a father and a daughter clinging to their love of each other and confronting death, but names suggest a Jewish family. Esther is a lonely woman who fulfils her duty. Bittel's characterization in a broken sentence hovers on the way in which characters are introduced and portrayed in such old texts as *The Book of Esther*. "Esther, devotion fighting with helplessness and love frozen with fear" (39)²¹. Her love of her father is love for her people, for her people's past because through the father a connection is made with the past generations. Everything is seen through a woman's eyes, a loving woman obliged to watch the gradual collapse of her father into matter. And if we consider the father's body as matter in time, this story is about the death of matter in time. In a few words, an emotional story! A story about us all as dying bodies!

Finally, in the story "Luptători la pensie" [Retired fighters] (93-107) the focus is also feminine. The narrator is a girl in her teens who is looking for her identity. The girl finds out that she takes after an aunt, Aunt Caroline, a member of the Romanian Communist leadership in the 1950s. We are now in post-communist Romania and Caroline is dead but the surviving husband invites the teenage girl to meet his friends who used to be Aunt Caroline's friends, too. These former Communist activists who are now retired people living on meager pensions try to offer an alternative memory to this young visitor. They want the young woman to write their version of history. Although she does not turn them down bluntly, she is unwilling to fulfil their request. This is an oblique manifestation of separation. In this text there are no Jewish names or Jewish references but a Romanian reader would know that some of the Communist militants in the '50s were of Jewish extraction and also the name Caroline is not exactly of Romanian resonance, it has some kind of alienness in it. The witness character does not want to be rude, to offend. Although she does not want to write what she is expected, neither does she want to be impolite or upset these people. Their old age imposes: "curiosity and a certain desire—impossible to understand even by me—to be nice to them, held me prisoner" (100)²².

The short story is a complex network of allusions and subtle cultural or historical references which are not easy to grasp if the reader is not knowledgeable in Romanian history and even Romanian everyday life. For those readers, this is a story about a group of nostalgics and a story about how history and time treats the losers of the great social upheavals. We can easily apply to this text the considerations of Aleksandar Stević in a very rich article about the use of nostalgia in the reconstruction of the past. "Nostalgia ... serves not only as mechanism for working through traumatic memories, but as a catalyst for a critical examination of the past" (439). Caroline feels nostalgic when she considers the situation of these elderly people who belong to the past of the country but this does not prevent her from rejecting any nostalgia in a political sense. Her critical attitude towards those who got mesmerized by false egalitarian ideologies is unequivocal. Bittel proves again, in this text, her exceptional gift for the detail. Significant particulars refer to what happened in the 1950s when many goods changed their owners in the vortex of the Communist revolution. The narrator ironically notices that Aunt Caroline had not wasted her time and she had taken or received objects that obviously belonged to the bourgeois elite before World War II. "Aunt Caroline had not wasted her time. Rosenthal sets and crystal glasses, silver trays and cutlery engraved with other people's names which had been taken 'as a bargain' filled the chest board which I quickly checked looking for the tea pot and the sugar bowl" (100)²³. These sparse objects tell an iron-

ical story about the ups and downs of life and history and futility of political power if not accompanied by ideals, love and sincere beliefs.

In conclusion, we can say that Adriana Bittel, an exceptionally gifted short story author, is able to construct an atmosphere, recreate a history with few but well chosen, highly suggestive elements. Bittel's Jewish identity appears in the character's naming or in the circumstances of the plot. It is obvious that under the Communist regime Bittel wanted to be as discreet as possible about this aspect of her creative identity but especially after 1990 her Jewishness was more overtly expressed. Whether she referred to the relatives from abroad or to the former Communist activists her understanding of the complexity of human experience is impressive and her wording is exquisite.



Notes

1. All quotations have been translated by Mihaela Mudure.
2. "Consecința cea mai izbitoare a acestor două împrejurări este prevalența agoniei. Indiferent dacă vin din România, din țări în care s-au exilat ori sunt 'localnici', israelieni, scriitorii romani evrei au, chiar dacă nu întotdeauna direct și explicit, o conștiință a extincției ineluctabile, ca specie, nu ca indivizi. 'Constat - zice Radu Cosașu - că sunt ultimul sau penultimul. Adică în spatele meu, ca nuvelist evreu de limba română, mai e Adriana Bittel. După Adriana Bittel nu mai e nimeni în România, acum.'"
3. "A citi prozele acestea este o încântare. Nu pentru că sunt scurte. Fiecare povestire, aproape, pare a fi nucleul unui roman nescris, poate o nouă 'Cronică de familie.' Va încerca oare autoarea un asemenea demers? Talentul, timpul sunt de partea ei" (16).
4. "Lipsește nevrozele Virginiei Woolf, ca și frânturile zborului ale eroilor lui Cehov. Dar personajele Adrianei Bittel trăiesc, respiră, se sufocă în propriul 'spleen'" (16).
5. "La David, frecții și permanente" (47).
6. "O distingeam clar pe doamna Solomon cu o carte în mâini. Purta galoși cu tocuri înalte și din șosetele de lână ieșeau, ca niște lujere uscate, picioarele" (62).
7. "... Iosif venise acasă de la farmacie livid, cu cravata strâmbă și povestise cum fuseseră luați prietenii lor Malec și duși la abator unde i-au spânzurat de cârligele pentru vite. Cum huliganii dădeau foc prăvăliilor de pe Calea Văcărești" (54).
8. "Sarah, sora mai mică a bunicii" (7).
9. "Oglinzile cu rame de mahon fuseseră date lăptăresei în contul laptelui pe o lună, din pian se plătise repararea acoperișului, iar inelul de logodnă al bunicii se transformase într-un car cu lemne, căci noua locuință era tare friguroasă" (10).
10. "clădirea roșie a Templului Coral unde fusese odată cu bunica să se uite când apare prima stea" (13).
11. "se simțea în siguranță și plină de un har căruia mai târziu i-a spus iubire" (21).
12. "sora mai mică a Friedei, Reli, despre a cărei existență jurasem, pe cuvânt de onoare și cu mâna pe măciulă de alamă de la pat, să nu pomenesc nimănui" (52).
13. "După decenii pe aceleași trasee bucureștene - 'plimbarea' dispăruse din viața ei, toate drumurile aveau o țință și erau contra cronometru - hoinăreala într-un oraș imens îi dădeau o euforie de drog" (97).
14. "Fășneața asistentă a Profesorului de la policlinică nu se lăsase până nu-i făcuse un copil unui dentist evreu cu actele depuse, trecuse la mozaism și lua lecții de ivrit, așteptând să fie cumpărați" (102).
15. "Dincolo de autor și emblema feminină, în paginile de față se regăsește acum plinar lumea anilor '80" (2).
16. Sibiu is a very old town in the heart of Transylvania. It has an important German minority. Some of the Germans from this area openly sympathized with Nazism during World War II.
17. "Ai mei de vreme ce hotărâseră că mai presus de toate sunt și rămân bucureșteni, mă crescuseră în așa fel încât să nu fac din datul etnic niciun motiv de anxietate, nici unul de orgoliu, ci să surmontez cu umor situațiile critice care nu se mai iveau. Interesul logodnicului meu pentru iudaism n-avea nimic pasionat - era un interes științific, mă iluzionam că era declanșat de persoana mea" (242).
18. "Din păcate, nu-i puteam furniza informații documentate. Doar ce știam așa după ureche" (242).
19. "Întrevăzusem în acest drum la Sibiu, prilejuit de el, așteptata limpezire" (251).

20. “Vom avea timp destul de dormit, de răspuns, de fumat, de răstălmăcit și, poate, până la urmă vom inventa și un nume simpatic pentru cel ce ne ține în palmă, posesorul punctului de vedere cuprinzător” (262).
21. “Esteră, devotement în luptă cu neputința și iubire crispată de frică” (39).
22. “curiozitatea și o anume dorință, neînțeleasă, nici de mine, de a le deveni simpatică, mă rețineau” (100).
23. “Tanti Carolina nu-și pierduse vremea de pomană. Servicii Rosenthal și pahare de cristal, tăvi de argint și tacâmuri cu monogramă luate ‘de ocazie’ umpleau bufetul în care am făcut o inspecție sumară căutarea ibricului și a zaharniței” (100).

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Abstract

Adriana Bittel: Writing Jewish, Writing Woman

This essay is an analysis of Adriana Bittel’s short stories from the point of view of the author’s Jewishness and femininity. There is an increasing presence of Jewish references in Bittel’s short fiction which points to the degree in which Jewish visibility was accepted in Romanian society before and after 1990. As a woman writer, Bittel insists on that everyday heroism which is typical of Romanian femininity, the heroism of coping with the necessities of everyday life.

Keywords

Jewish, woman, Romania, communism, oblique, elusive