OTHERNESS AN UNDERGROUND OBSESSION OF HIPSTER STUDENTS A BECOMING MAINSTREAM OBSESSION

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Abstract: Today's society has a nightmare of being mediocre. People would do almost anything in order to avoid the impression of mediocrity. For us, life has become too short to live it in mediocrity. Hipsters feel this urge to differ, conveying the message of difference through old-fashioned glasses, intelligent quotes from difficult literature and unique clothing. The hipster would rather die than live in constant mediocrity, and pities all those who do not dare to seize the opportunity to differ. This yearning for something else, something Other than the usual manifests itself as a drama in students' life, a psychologcal struggle. "And where there is no longer anything, there the Other must come to be. We are no longer living the drama of otherness. We are living the psychodrama of otherness, just as we are living the psychodrama of "sociality", the psycho-drama of sexuality, the psychodrama of the body – and the melodrama of all the above, courtesy of analytic metadiscourses. Otherness has become socio-dramatic, semio-dramatic, melodramatic."[1]

Keywords: Otherness, hipster students, mediocrity, teach

Today we are constantly committed to the discovery, exploration and invention/re-invention of the Other. We witness "a multitude of differences. We are the ones who offer virtual encounters, we use and abuse of interfacing and interactivity. Once we get beyond the mirror of alienation (beyond the mirror stage that was the joy of our childhood), structural differences multiply ad infinitum – in fashion, in morality, in culture."[2] Raw otherness, difficult otherness – the otherness of nationality, race, mental sanity, of economic status – haveceased to exist. Otherness, similar to everything else, has fallen into the category of consumerism, the laws of a universal market, which, if boken down, is the law of demand and supply. Alterity has become a rarity, an exotic commodity, thus it is worth extremely much on a social and psychological hierarchy of values. No wonder, our students (and we too) struggle so much to simulate the uniqueness of the Other, of the different. "A veritable obsession with ecology extends from Indian reservations to house-hold pets (otherness degree zero!) – not to mention the other of "the other scene", or the other of the unconscious (our last symbolic capital, and one we had better look after, because reserves are not limitless). Our sources of otherness are indeed running out; we have exhausted the Other as raw material. (According to Claude Gilbert, we are so desperate that we go digging through the rubble of earthquakes and catastrophes.)"[3]

In the past, anything that belonged to the Other was rejected, hated. In the meantime, we grew to be attracted in a way to the exotic in the Other, to the unknown that it represented. Slowly, Western societies started to be obsessed with the notion and phenomenon of alterity, the individual's highest goal has become to be different, to be the Other. "Consequently the other is all of a sudden no longer there to be exterminated, hated, rejected or seduced, but instead to be understood, liberated, coddled, recognized. In addition to the Rights of Man, we now also need the Rights of the Other. In a way we already have these, in the shape of a

[1]http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, accessed on 29.04.15.
[2]http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, accessed on 29.04.15.
[3]idem

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universal Right to be Different. For the orgy is also an orgy of political and psychological comprehension of the other – even to the point of resurrecting the other in places where the other is no longer to be found. Where the Other was, there has the Same come to be."[4]

Today's society has a nightmare of being mediocre. People would do almost anything in order to avoid the impression of mediocrity. For us, life has become too short to live it in mediocrity. Hipsters feel this urge to differ, conveying the message of difference through old-fashioned glasses, intelligent quotes from difficult literature and unique clothing. The hipster would rather die than live in constant mediocrity, and pities all those who do not dare to seize the opportunity to differ. This yearning for something else, something Other than the usual manifests itself as a drama in students' life, a psychologcal struggle. "And where there is no longer anything, there the Other must come to be. We are no longer living the drama of otherness. We are living the psychodrama of otherness, just as we are living the psychodrama of "sociality", the psycho-drama of sexuality, the psychodrama of the body – and the melodrama of all the above, courtesy of analytic metadiscourses. Otherness has become socio-dramatic, semio-dramatic, melodramatic."[5]

There are often implicit ‚rules' about what someone should do in a particular situation. For example, when there are two job opportunities, the ‚rule' says that you should take the one with higher pay. But is that what you want? Does it help you achieve your dream? Maybe the job with less pay will help you achieve your dream while the one with higher pay doesn't. Do you have the courage to be different and follow your dream?

Another worry hipsters face day-by-day is if someone worries more about being loved than being what they love. They consider average people do not dare to be different because they are trying to meet other people's expectations. They often worry more about what other people say than about what matters to them. But living someone else's life is a bad way to live your life. Why should anyone miss an opportunity only because of what others might say? "All we do in psychodrama – the psychodrama of contacts, of psychological tests, of interfacing – is acrobatically simulate and dramatize the absence of the other. Not only is otherness absent everywhere in this artificial drama-turgy, but the subject has also quietly become indifferent to his own subjecti-vity, to his own alienation, just as the modern political animal has become indifferent to his own political opinions. This subject becomes transparent, spectral (to borrow Marc Guillaume's word) – and hence interactive. For in interactivity the subject is the other to no one. Inasmuch as he is indifferent to himself, it is as though he had been reified alive – but without his double, without his shadow, without his other. Having paid this price, the subject becomes a candidate for all possible combinations, all possible connections.The interactive being is therefore born not through a new form of exchange but through the disappearance of the social, the disappearance of otherness. This being is the other after the death of the Other – not the same other at all: the other that results from the denial of the Other.The only interaction involved, in reality, belongs to the medium alone: to the machine become invisible. Mechanical automata still played on the differ-ence between man and machine, and on the charm of this difference – something with which today's interactive and simulating automata are no longer concerned. Man and machine have become isomorphic and indifferent to each other: neither is other to the other."[6]

In our case, hipster students are a subculture of people who are already dominant. They are those people who do not want to be grouped or classified, the artist student, the

[4] ibidem

[5] http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, accessed on 29.04.15.

[6] Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil: Essays On Extreme Phenomena (c 1990). Translated by James Benedict.
New York: Verso, 1993:124-138., at http://www.ubishops.ca/baudrillardstudies/vol3_1/baudrillard2.htm, 29.04.15

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starving but pub-fan graduate highschool student, the neo-bohemian, the vegan, the animal rights activist, the bicyclist, the skater- they are going to become the future blue –collar generation, however, they are post-racial, identifying the past as ideal and the present as repulsive, they align themselves with rebel subcultures and with dominant classes, grabbing whatever is likable from the two, making their own unique identity which exoticises otherness instead of despising it.

”Is the Master the slave's other? Yes, certainly – in terms of class and power relations. But this account is reductionistic. In reality, things are just not so simple. The way in which beings and things relate to each other is not a matter of structural difference. The symbolic order implies dual and complex forms that are not dependent on the distinction between ego and other. The Pariah is not the other to the Brahmin: rather, their destinies are different. The two are not differentiated along a single scale of values: rather, they are mutually reinforcing aspects of an immutable order, parts of a reversible cycle like the cycle of day and night. Do we say that the night is the other to the day? No. So why should we say that the masculine is the other to the feminine? For the two are undoubtedly merely reversible moments, like night and day, following upon one other and changing places with one another in an endless process of seduction. One sex is thus never the other for the other sex, except within the context of a differentialistic theory of sexuality – which is basically nothing but a utopia. For difference is itself a utopia: the idea that such pairs of terms can be split up is a dream – and the idea of subsequently reuniting them is another. (This also goes for the distinction between Good and Evil: the notion that they might be separated out from one another is pure fantasy, and it is even more utopian to think in terms of reconciling them.) Only in the distinction-based perspective of our culture is it possible to speak of the Other in connection with sex. Genuine sexuality, for its part, is “exotic” (in Segalen's meaning of the term): it resides in the radical incomparability of the sexes – otherwise seduction would never be possible, and there would be nothing but alienation of one sex by the other.”[7]

Diversity can mean a process of coordinated shift of focus. However, what could present itself as a chaotic element in this orderly transaction of points of view? What is the thing that we cannot transmit to others? These are relevant questions as divergence and variety do not often have a place in the human rules of interaction., founded on a common understanding of how one should behave when in contact with other specimens of mankind. ”Wherever exchange is impossible, what we encounter is terror. Any radical otherness at all is thus the epicenter of a terror: the terror that such otherness holds, by virtue of its very existence, for the normal world. And the terror that this world exercises upon that otherness in order to annihilate it. Over recent centuries all forms of violent otherness have been incorporated, willingly or under threat of force, into a discourse of difference which simulta-neously implies inclusion and exclusion, recognition and discrimination. Childhood, lunacy, death, primitive societies – all have been categorized, integrated and absorbed as parts of a universal harmony. Madness, once its exclusionary status had been revoked, was caught up in the far subtler toils of psychology. The dead, as soon as they were recognized in their identity as such, were banished to outlying cemeteries – kept at such a distance that the face of death itself was lost. As for Indians, their right to exist was no sooner accorded them than they were confined to reservations. These are the vicissitudes of a logic of difference. Racism does not exist so long as the other remains Other, so long as the Stranger remains foreign. It comes

[7] Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil: Essays On Extreme Phenomena (c 1990). Translated by James Benedict.
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into existence when the other becomes merely different – that is to say, dangerously similar. This is the moment when the inclination to keep the other at a distance comes into being."[8]

The correct use of *difference* proves to be a utopia- it is proven by racist attitudes themselves, but also movements of an anti-racist humanitarian and tolerant nature as by drawing our attention upon differences and constantly underlying their values, they stimulate and popularize them. "Humanitarian ecumenism, the ecumenism of differences, is in a *cul-de-sac:* the *cul-de-sac* of the concept of the universal itself. The most recent illustration of this, in France, was the brouhaha over the wearing of headscarves for religious reasons by North African schoolgirls. All the rational arguments mustered in this connection turned out to be nothing but hypocritical attempts to get rid of the simple fact that no solution is to be found in any moral or political theory of difference. It is difference itself that is a reversible illusion. We are the ones who brought difference to the four corners of the earth: that it should now be returned to us in unrecognizable, Islamic, fundamentalist and irreducible forms is no bad thing."[9]

Our magnanimous and philantropic ‚understanding' and tolerating difference is matched by our serious attempts at hiding the antipathy we feel towards it, ending in a fiasco of condescendence. From my point of view, experiences of otherness softened and sweetened by slogans like „I respect the fact that you are different from me" mean in fact that inhabitants of third world countries or gay people or hipsters or those living in extreme poverty own one thing and that one thing is the only thing left to them: their Otherness, marked by clothing, habits, traditions, music and culture in a wider sense. Nothing could be more distasteful in its condescendence than this attitude of ‚understanding', which exemplifies the most profound form of incomprehension– one that has become hilarious as it is haughty and contemptuous of the differentness of other people.

"Other cultures, meanwhile, have never laid claim to universality. Nor did they ever claim to be different – until difference was forcibly injected into them as part of a sort of cultural opium war. They live on the basis of their own singularity, their own exceptionality, on the irreducibility of their own rites and values. They find no comfort in the lethal illusion that all differences can be reconciled – an illusion that for them spells only annihilation. To master the universal symbols of otherness and difference is to master the world. Those who conceptualize difference are anthropologically superior – naturally, because it is they who invented anthropology. And they have all the rights, because rights, too, are their invention. Those who do not conceptualize difference, who do not play the game of difference, must be exterminated. The Indians of America, when the Spanish landed, are a case in point. They understood nothing about difference; they inhabited radical otherness. (The Spaniards were not different in their eyes: they were simply gods, and that was that.) This is the reason for the fury with which the Spaniards set about destroying these peoples, a fury for which there was no religious justification, nor economic justification, nor any other kind of justification, except for the fact that the Indians were guilty of an absolute crime: their failure to understand difference. When they found themselves obliged to become part of an otherness no longer radical, but negotiable under the aegis of the universal concept, they preferred mass self-immolation-whence the fervour with which they, for their part, allowed themselves to die: a

[8] idem

[9] Jean Baudrillard, The Transparency of Evil: Essays On Extreme Phenomena (c 1990). Translated by James Benedict.
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counterpart to the Spaniards' mad urge to kill. The Indians' strange collusion in their own extermination represented their only way of keeping the secret of otherness."[10]

Institutions such as the set of laws ruling a country, the media, the type of education we get, religion and so on set the rules of whether something or someone will be accepted as ‚normal' and what is considered Other, a sort of breaking the law in miniature. These institutions hold the balance of power and there is nothing we can do to change this status quo. As far as our culture is concerned, especially teenager culture in Transylvania, "visual representatios of otherness hold special cultural.In Western countries with a colonial history, like the UK, Australia and the USA, whether difference is portrayed positively or negatively is judged against the dominant group – namely White, middle-to-upper class, heterosexual Christians - being the default to which Others are judged against."[11]

It is by no means clear that the other exists for everyone. Does the other exist for the Savage or the Primitive? Some relationships are asymmetrical: the one may be the other for the other without this implying that the other is the other for the one. I may be other for him although he is not the other for me. At the English class, we are trying to contribute to the taming of this otherness, domesticating idioms and phrasal verbs through the process of assisted translation exercises. These idiomatic phenomena cause students to be reluctant when it comes to actually using them, however, the moment they manage to grasp the actual meaning of these phrases, they will willingly use them.

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