

SUMMARY

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Tytuł rozprawy doktorskiej: *Georges Perec: wspominać, pisać, pamiętać*

The thesis *Georges Perec: to reminisce, to write, to remember* reflects on the influence of the psychological work of mourning on both the writing and the outline of Georges Perec's work. The methodology adopted by the author enables to frame the proposed topic in the light of broad psychoanalytic, literary and philosophical studies and trauma research. The thesis consists of a *Preface*, a theoretical *Introduction*, three main chapters, a *Conclusion* and a *Bibliography*.

In the extensive *Preface*, the author presents Georges Perec's literary profile and analyses his understanding of autobiographical writing, considering autobiography as a category underlying his decision to pursue a career as a writer. This part of the work also introduces the state-of-the-art dedicated to the author, the main aims and objectives of the thesis, and the applied methodological approach.

The *Introduction* outlines three core psychoanalytical theories devoted to mourning and working through loss, which are a constant point of reference in the main body of the thesis. These theories include Sigmund Freud's concept based on the distinction between states of mourning and melancholy, Mária Török and Nicolas Abraham's postulation of two distinct defence mechanisms of introjection and incorporation, and Jacques Derrida's reflections on the borderline between psychoanalysis and philosophy. These selected theories, constantly enriched by other methodological references, allow to depict the manifestations of successive mechanisms of mourning at different stages of the author's work, depending on the development of his discourse on loss.

In Chapter I, entitled *To Reminisce*, a biographical analysis of Georges Perec's literary works is carried out. Additionally, other texts manifesting the first strategies undertaken by the writer in order to cope with the loss of his parents experienced in early childhood, are also considered. The author emphasises the significant difference in Perec's definition of the loss of the mother and the father with reference to Jacques Derrida's theory of the 'ontologisation of the remains'. Due to their dissimilar circumstances, these deaths will generate completely

different defensive reactions and entail two separate paths of mourning. The experience of the death of the mother, murdered in the Auschwitz concentration camp and deprived of her grave, will be from the very beginning associated with the mechanism of incorporation. An in-depth analysis of the autobiographical novel *W, or the Memory of Childhood* highlights the element of silence which is characteristic of this mechanism and linked to the denial of death and the attempt to incorporate the lost object within the 'self' in order to secretly maintain a bond with it. In contrast, the loss of the father, confirmed in the external world, will be continually worked through with the use of language, which in turn is referred to as one of the symptoms of introjection. The second part of the chapter focuses entirely on the analysis of the relatively recently discovered *Portrait of a Man Known as Il Condottiere*, written by Perec before his official literary debut and published posthumously. This work is presented as an important exemplification of the processes of incorporation and the writer's nascent introjection at the time, resulting in, among other things, a uniquely emotional expression of the text.

Chapter II *To Write* deals with the issue of the author's autobiographical writing, as it has been already partly shown in the introduction. Autobiography and autobiographicality are discussed here in the light of the theses of Philippe Lejeune, who is referred to for both his contribution to the research on the genre of autobiography and the monograph he wrote on Perec. Lejeune's insights provide an important theoretical point of reference in this part of the thesis, while also serving as an interesting field for discussion and polemics related to the definition of the 'autobiographical project' in the writer's work itself. As a result of her endeavour, the author proposes a different understanding of the autobiographical writing, which, in Perec's case, goes far beyond the content of the literary text, equally encompassing its aesthetic layer. The very act of writing, which, in the context of Alexandre Gefen's conception, turns out to be a 'therapeutic act', is also considered to be closely linked to the category of autobiography. The works of Shoshana Felman, Dominick LaCapra, Leigh Gilmore and Cathy Caruth provide an additional methodological background, thus permitting looking at Perec's work from the perspective of postmemory and trauma studies.

To Remember, the third and final chapter of the thesis, addresses the possible memory relationship that one can have with the dead. In this part of the work, a significant emphasis is placed on the moment of the writer's recognition of his previous unconscious submission to introjection and incorporation. This moment, connected to his undertaking psychotherapy, is essential to determine the choice of conscious mourning at a later stage. The defining and working through loss practised by Perec in his adult life will resemble the model of infinite mourning proposed by Jacques Derrida. This form of mourning consists of an ongoing attempt

at dialogue with the deceased, carried out by means of infinite speech, which Perec identifies with a continued autobiographical project or a therapeutic act of writing. His literary work, considered the ultimate proof of the work of mourning, is demonstrated through various literary strategies, which often determine a formal 'scaffolding' of his texts. These strategies aim to avoid 'historical narration' (as defined by Émile Benveniste) about the dead and seek to maintain an ever-flowing 'discourse' in which their distinct subjectivity is being preserved. In the second part of the chapter, the author critically analyses the essay *Roussel and Venice: Outline of a Melancholic Geography* dedicated to the themes of melancholy and incorporation. This metaliterary text, in which Perec seems to interpret the work of Raymond Roussel, actually recounts his own experience of the mechanism of incorporation. As such, it illustrates many of the concealed autobiographical elements and strategies that are key to understanding the writer's work in the light of the mourning process.

In the *Conclusion*, the author summarises Georges Perec's œuvre from the perspective of the successive stages of the work of mourning and dealing with trauma, including incorporation, introjection and Derridean infinite mourning. Potential paths for further research on Perec's work in contexts that go well beyond the designated scope of the thesis are also discussed.