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Katharina Edtstadler, Sandra Folie and Gianna Zocco

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CHAPTER 12

The Myth of the Orient in Flaubert's *Voyage en Égypte* and Bachmann's *Das Buch Franza*

Walter Wagner

Abstract

This study compares and analyses hetero-stereotypes in Flaubert's travelogue *Voyage en Égypte* and Bachmann's prose fictions *Wüstenbuch* and *Das Buch Franza* in order to find out to what extent Flaubert resorts to stereotypical representations of the colonial Orient, and Bachmann perpetuates, transforms, or revises Flaubert's imagological discourse in the age of postcolonialism. Whereas Flaubert's sexist and racist narrative posits white superiority, Bachmann's protagonists subvert the male hegemonic stance of her French predecessor, insisting on white and male inferiority, causing just another stereotypization of race and gender.

Keywords

Bachmann – Flaubert – Egypt – Orientalism – gender

From October 1849 to July 1850, Gustave Flaubert travelled across Egypt to Sudan, along with his friend Maxime du Camp, visiting archaeological sites and gathering various cultural impressions which were published in his posthumous *Voyage en Égypte*. Accompanied by Adolf Opel, Ingeborg Bachmann went to the same countries in 1964, reaching Wadi Halfa—just like Flaubert—as the southernmost point and using Flaubert's travelogue as a guidebook (Westermann 1996, 6). Her experience resulted in the so-called *Wüstenbuch* (1964/1965), which was given up and served as material for "Die ägyptische Finsternis," the final chapter of the fragmentary novel *Das Buch Franza* (1965/1966).[1]

1 Neither *Wüstenbuch* nor *Das Buch Franza* contains any intertextual references to Flaubert. There is, however, a thematic parallelism with his novel *Madame Bovary* (1856/1857), insofar as both Emma and Franza, the protagonists, try to escape from an unhappy marriage.

In the light of this parallelism, this study examines hetero-stereotypes[2] in Flaubert's and Bachmann's descriptions of their Egyptian journey in order to find out: (a) how far Flaubert resorts to stereotypical representations of the colonial Orient, and (b) how far Bachmann perpetuates, transforms, or revises Flaubert's imagological discourse in the age of postcolonialism.

1 Biographical Background

From an early age, Flaubert (1821–1880) dreams about traveling to the Orient. In a letter to Ernest Chevalier dated January 14, 1841, the future novelist writes: "[…] it is quite possible that I'll leave to become a Turk in Turkey or a mule driver in Spain or a camel driver in Egypt" (Flaubert 1973a, 77).[3] What seems to be simple reverie turns into a vague project judging from a message dated August 14, 1844, which du Camp sent to his friend: "But the day will come, won't it, my dear child, when the two of us will leave. Then, together, we will really see that Orient you have dreamed of so much" (Flaubert 1973b, 792–793).[4] His craze about Egypt[5] (cf. Naaman 1965, 6) is supported by his physician Dr. Cloquet, who, knowing Flaubert's bad health, strongly advises him to travel to "hot countries" (Flaubert 1973a, 505).[6]

On October 22, 1849, the author leaves his hometown Croisset, and on November 4, 1849, he and his travel companion du Camp board a boat to Alexandria at the port of Marseille. From Cairo they travel upstream on the Nile, reaching the Sudanese town of Wadi Halfa on March 22, 1850. After leaving Egypt, they visit Palestine, Syria, and Lebanon, arriving back home on June 16, 1851.

Flaubert uses the notes taken in Egypt to write a travelogue which remained unpublished for several decades. A fragment entitled "La Cange" was released

2 Hetero-stereotypes are essentialist, shared, and simplistic images of other nations and cultures. Like all stereotypes, they are based on a "minimal collective knowledge which claims to be valid at any historic moment whatsoever" (Pageaux 1994, 63). My translation. Original quote (French): "savoir minimum collectif qui se veut valable, à quelque moment historique que ce soit." A more compact definition of the term is provided by Manfred Beller, who concludes that "fundamentally, stereotypes are fictions" (Beller 2007, 430).

3 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] il se pourra bien faire que je m'en aille me faire Turc en Turquie, ou muletier en Espagne, ou conducteur de chameaux en Égypte."

4 My translation. Original quote (French): "Mais un jour viendra, n'est-ce pas, mon cher enfant, où, nous deux, nous partirons. Alors, ensemble, nous verrons véritablement cet Orient que tu as tant rêvé."

5 For Flaubert and Bachmann, Egypt represents the Orient.

6 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] les pays chauds."

in 1881, and in 1910 his niece Caroline Franklin-Grout published a version, purged of its erotic details, under the title *Notes de Voyages.* It was not until 1991 that Pierre-Marc de Biasi's modern edition of the original manuscript was released.

Apart from the manifold experience gained, this long trip to the Orient had positive consequences for the author. First, it helped Flaubert to recover his health, as he declared in a letter dated April 18, 1852, to Henriette Collier: "The Orient has cured my nerves" (Flaubert 1980, 74).[7] Another beneficial effect of his Egyptian adventure was the aesthetic renewal which, as a result, occurs in his subsequent writings. According to Antoine Naaman, this stay ushers in "a new stage in his artistic life" (1965, 35).[8] Manon Brunet, in turn, claims that during his visit to the Orient, Flaubert "metamorphoses his romantic imagination into poetic realism" (2001, 81).[9]

For Bachmann, the Orient is not a long-cherished dream but an opportunity that presents itself to her. While trying to get used to the city of Berlin, her new residence after Zurich, where she lives from 1963 to 1965, she gets to know the filmmaker and writer Adolf Opel, who invites her to accompany him on a journey to Egypt. Although the Austrian poet is in poor health, she is fascinated by this project. On April 20, 1964, she arrives by plane in Athens to meet her travel companion who is waiting for her. Eight days later, they board a ship to Alexandria where Flaubert and du Camp landed almost one hundred years prior. Bachmann and Opel follow the two Frenchmen's itinerary almost exactly, traveling to Cairo and then on the Nile as far as Wadi Halfa. They return to Athens on June 2, 1964, after spending a bit more than four weeks on the African continent.

Although Bachmann is worried at the beginning, the trip turns out to be a success, enabling her not only to regain her health but also providing her with new vital energy, as she confirms in a letter dated June 18, 1964, to Opel: "It was not only my most beautiful journey but so much more" (Opel 1986, 295).[10] And on June 23, 1964, she writes to him: "[…] I'm alive, I'm alive again … In addition, this incredible Egypt has a force which persists, the desert, which persists […]" (ibid., 295).[11] Bachmann's Egyptian journey also marks a turning point in

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7 My translation. Original quote (French): "L'Orient m'a remis les nerfs."

8 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] une nouvelle période dans sa vie d'artiste."

9 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] métamorphose son imaginaire romantique en une poétique réaliste."

10 My translation. Original quote (German): "Es war nicht nur meine schönste Reise, sondern soviel mehr."

11 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] ich lebe, ich lebe wieder … Dazu kommt, daß dieses unwahrscheinliche Ägypten eine Kraft hat, die anhält, die Wüste, die anhält […]."

her literary career. By 1964 she has published several radio plays, two volumes of poetry, and a collection of short stories. On returning from the Orient, she starts her "Todesarten-Projekt," a cycle of novels, only one of which, *Malina* (1971), will see completion.

The two texts which will be used here are *Wüstenbuch* and its extended version, *Das Buch Franza*, whose plot can be summarized as follows: Franza Ranna, who has been psychologically abused by her husband, the psychiatrist Leo Jordan, is trying to break out of her toxic relationship. When her brother, Martin Ranner, sets off on a study tour to Egypt, she goes along with him in the hope of recovering from her mental crisis. While crossing the desert, she is getting better. However, at the foot of the Great Pyramid of Giza, she is raped by a white man and dies shortly after.

2 The Myth of the Orient

In his seminal monography *Orientalism* Edward Said points out that there is not "such a thing as a real or true Orient" (1979, 322), making it clear that this widely used term does not constitute a scientific concept. As a cultural representation, the Orient refers to a discursive entity created by the Occident, resulting from the hegemonic relationship between the colonized and the colonizers and serving as a projection surface for the fears, longings, and desires of the white subject. As a trope of colonial literature, it has been used, abused, and disseminated by the European and American individual, generally male and middle class, that observes and dominates persons of colour, their society, and culture. According to Said, for most white people, a Black person is the epitome of alterity, an objectified human being, studied and discursively constructed by its pale counterpart, which is "never involved, always detached [...]" (ibid., 103). In order to subdue what is perceived as radical otherness, Orientalism resorts to "the stereotype, which is its major discursive strategy [...]" (Bhabha 1994, 94). These preconceived notions about other nations, races, or cultures are based on a number of attributes destined to describe national or racial difference regardless of contextual complexity. In Western literature, such perceived ideas about race are still common in describing nonwhite people of African origin, making little difference between an Arab and a Black African person who are both perceived as dark-skinned by the white narrator or author. What Bhabha says about hetero-stereotypes of Black people can therefore be used as a reference when comparing Flaubert's and Bachmann's portraits of Egyptian characters:

> The black is both savage (cannibal) and yet the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly and accomplished liar, and manipulator of social forces.
>
> IBID., 118

The hetero-stereotypical features mentioned by Bhabha are contradictory, combining negative connotations such as "violent," "lecherous," and "primitive" with mainly positive ones such as "obedient," "innocent," and "clever," reflecting the ambiguous logic of colonialism. Among the traits listed above the first two appear most frequently in our corpus and will be dealt with in detail, which does not mean, however, that Flaubert and Bachmann take an exclusively negative view of the Orient or avoid criticizing white travellers.

3 Violence

Flaubert's travelogue is full of descriptions of physical violence against humans and animals. One might argue that inhumane behaviour was quite common in the civilized French world of the nineteenth century. However, the harshness and frequency of scenes of brutality noticed by the author in Egypt seem to surpass what was accepted in the writer's home country. In a letter dated December 1, 1849, to his friend Louis Bouilhet, Flaubert talks about beating one's way through the crowd, a method used by important people: "In the streets, in the houses, at every opportunity, blows are dealt with sticks with excessive cheerfulness" (Flaubert 1973a, 538).[12] The French traveller witnesses another example of reckless behaviour toward people when a religious dignitary is riding his horse over a human carpet of 300 men lying next to one another: "The crowd immediately dissolves behind the horse when it has run past, and it's impossible to know if someone has been killed or injured" (Flaubert 2013, 646).[13] From a provincial governor, in turn, he learns how many blows it takes to punish or kill a human being (cf. ibid., 685).

12 My translation. Original quote (French): "Dans les rues, dans les maisons à propos de tout, de droite et de gauche on y distribue des coups de bâton avec une prodigalité réjouissante."

13 My translation. Original quote (French): "La foule se répand aussitôt derrière le cheval quand il est passé, et il n'est pas possible de savoir s'il y a quelqu'un de tué ou blesse."

As far as the harsh manners of the Egyptians are concerned, Flaubert notes in a letter dated December 2, 1849, to his mother, "the contempt they have for the human body" (Flaubert 1973a, 545).[14] The inherent inhumanity and cruelty of oriental society starkly contrasts with the extreme respect locals show for white people, as Flaubert explains to Bouilhet (cf. Flaubert 1973a, 537), a fact that may be explained by the hierarchical gap that existed between Occidentals, who were considered to be powerful in Arab countries, and Orientals in colonial times.

In Bachmann's *Wüstenbuch* and *Das Buch Franza*, the female protagonist Franza also witnesses physical violence during her stay in Egypt. As a guest at an Arab wedding, she is sitting next to a disabled individual with a distorted body. He is bald and dirty and considered to be a holy man and yet, among those present, some treat him as if he were not a human being: "Then some stepped on the cretin's thigh, because he was moving on the ground, and some trod on his hands, and so did the children who had brought him, he smiled and grinned" (Bachmann 1995a, 242).[15] Although the victim is treated badly by some adults and children, the narrator excuses their violent behaviour, declaring: "A human being in the dust, beaten and holy, kicked and ⟪offended⟫, not despised but unbearable to look at" (ibid., 242).[16] It is hard to understand why a person so brutally treated should not be "despised," as the narrator points out. However, this paradoxical conclusion could make sense from the perspective of Franza, who experienced physical and mental abuse by the sexist Leo Jordan. She calls her husband a fascist because she feels that he wants to annihilate her and compares him to Dr. Körner (cf. Bachmann 1995b, 314), a fictional former Nazi physician, who, after carrying out disturbing human experiments during World War II, left Germany to settle in Cairo where Franza visits him.

Given the cruelty Franza experienced at the hands of her white upper-class husband, the violence exerted by the Arabs may still seem harmless. Being dark-coloured, they contrast with the white man whom she implicitly makes responsible for the discrimination against women, for colonial crimes, and the Jewish genocide. Excusing Arab violence is therefore part of her self-healing strategy which depends on the dichotomous division of humankind into the

14 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] le mépris qu'on a pour la chair humaine."

15 My translation. Original quote (German): "Da stiegen dem Kretin einige auf die Schenkel, denn er bewegte sich auf der Erde fort, und einige traten ihm auf die Hände, auch die Kinder, die ihn gebracht hatten, er lächelte und grinste."

16 My translation. Original quote (German): "Ein Mensch im Staub, geschlagen und heilig, getreten und ⟪gekränkt⟫, nicht verachtet, aber unerträglich als Anblick." Conjectured words are given in double angle brackets.

sick civilization of the whites and the wholesome Arab world with its dark-skinned population and the desert with its healing powers.

It is precisely the antagonism between the bad white and the good Black races that explains why Franza proves to be indulgent toward Egyptians even if they mistreat women. This happens under her eyes when she arrives at the Cairo main railway station where she watches a local woman down on her knees with her hands tied up behind her back. There is a tall Arab man standing next to her, holding her long black hair with one hand while leisurely eating yellow grains with the other. In *Wüstenbuch*, the protagonist feels sympathy for the Arab because he is taking home his wife who bystanders think to be insane. In comparison with the humiliation and oppression Franza was exposed to by her Viennese husband, her female colleague in Cairo seems to be better off:

> I also know my murderer, who is standing on a platform or in his house, and am craving for proverbs because nobody comes to rescue me. And I am tied up and struck dumb because each scream would take me to the licensed mental asylums because they have long since made a rope out of my hair, and I am praying for the Arab, who might be better, who is taking his mad wife home and protecting her screams there.
>
> BACHMANN 1995A, 275[17]

While Leo Jordan is referred to as potential murderer, the rude Oriental is perhaps better in moral terms because he is not locking up his wife in a lunatic asylum—something that could have happened to Franza if she had stayed with her husband.

4 Sexuality

In Western perception, the Orient is a place of debauchery and unrestricted sexuality. This holds true especially for the author of *Madame Bovary* whose Orient, as Said points out, is "eminently corporeal" (1979, 184). Flaubert is fascinated by all manners of strange, perverse, and grotesque manifestations of

17 My translation. Original quote (German): "Auch ich kenne meinen Mörder, der auf einem Bahnsteig steht oder in seinem Haus, und giere nach Sprichwörtern, weil niemand mich retten kommt. Und ich bin gefesselt und bin verstummt, weil jeder Schrei mich in die konzessionierten Irrenanstalten bringen würde, weil man aus meinen Haaren mir längst einen Strick gedreht hat, und ich bete für den Araber, der vielleicht besser ist, der seine Irre noch heimbringt und dort ihre Schreie beschützt."

eroticism which he often describes in detail. Following the principles of his realistic poetics, he does not judge but seeks to convey with detached objectivity whatever titillates his erotic fantasies. The range of sexual incidents observed by Flaubert can no doubt compete with many pornographic films. One day, for example, he encounters a street artist having sexual intercourse with a female person in a bazar (cf. Flaubert 2013, 623). On another occasion, he watches a holy man, who is completely naked, urinating on a sterile woman and concludes his report with a sensational piece of information: "A (crazy) marabout died some years ago exhausted from being masturbated by all the women who came to visit him" (ibid., 624).[18] Then again, he tells Bouilhet in a letter dated December 4, 1849, that a young fellow was buggered by a monkey in public (cf. Flaubert 1973a, 542). Such anecdotes seem to confirm the hetero-stereotype about the sexual activity of Black men referred to by Frantz Fanon: "The Negro epitomizes sexual power beyond morals and prohibitions" (1952, 172).[19]

Flaubert and du Camp also gain pertinent experience in brothels and hammams where cheap sex is readily available. It is again his friend Bouilhet that Flaubert confides in to comment on prostitution in Egypt. In a letter dated January 15, 1850, he explains that intercourse among men is so common that "one talks about it with guests at the table" (Flaubert 1973a, 572).[20] Traveling for educational reasons, Flaubert and du Camp, by the way, make it their business to familiarize themselves with this type of practice while in the Orient (cf. ibid., 572).

What the two travellers are particularly interested in is female prostitution of which they quickly gain expert knowledge, for having sex with dark-skinned women fulfils the promise of undreamed-of erotic adventures. In a passage of *Les mémoires d'un fou*, an early autobiographical novel, the first-person narrator alludes to this phantasmatically female Orient, mentioning that he is dreaming of "some dark-skinned woman with a fiery look who was folding me in her two arms and talking to me in the language of the houris" (Flaubert 2001a, 473).[21]

His fantasy not only comes true but is outdone by Kuchuk Hanem, a famous Egyptian dancer who is not a common prostitute but combines stunning beauty and refined manners with outstanding professionality. On meeting

18 My translation. Original quote (French): "Un marabout (idiot) mourut il y a quelque temps épuisé par la masturbation de toutes les femmes qui allaient le visiter."

19 My translation. Original quote (French): "Le nègre incarne la puissance génitale au-dessus des morales et des interdictions."

20 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] on en parle à table d'hôte."

21 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] quelque femme à la peau brune, au regard ardent, qui m'entourait de ses deux bras et me parlait la langue des houris."

her, Flaubert immediately falls prey to the charms of this "tall and splendid creature, whiter than an Arab woman […]" (Flaubert 2013, 659).[22] Significantly, her skin is lighter than that of other natives, which testifies to her superiority to other females and prostitutes. Both in his letters and his travelogue Flaubert praises the exotic beauty of Kuchuk Hanem "whose body becomes a work of art" (Lacoste 2003, 78).[23] After several trysts in her apartment where she enchants the two punters with a lascivious dance called *l'abeille* (the bee), Flaubert falls in love with the young sex worker whom he leaves with a heavy heart. Being naive enough to mistake routine service for real feelings, he jots down in his notebook: "She has thought about us a lot; she considers us to be her children and has not met a cawadja who is as kind" (Flaubert 2013, 700).[24] Calling someone as anticlerical and misanthropic as Flaubert the most amiable "cawadja" (Christian) may sound ironic if not completely inappropriate and yet manages to touch the clear-sighted traveller's heart who fails to understand that "the relationship with Negroes is a non-reciprocal one" (Mbembe 2013, 99).[25]

Interestingly, Bachmann's postcolonial Orient is also pervaded by an atmosphere of eroticism. We must, however, point out that this aspect is more obvious in *Wüstenbuch* where both Franza and her brother indulge in sensual escapades with local men. Martin meets Salam and Achmed, two Egyptians with whom he goes out and has fun with. Unlike the conservative Viennese society of the sixties, which forms the backdrop of the plot and where patriarchal gender roles dominate the relationship between men and women, Egypt enables sexual transgression, making conventional male–female sexuality seem obsolete: "The Orient, males for males, they are not gay, they take advantage of both opportunities instead, but we misunderstand this, it must be something else, this blurring of borders, of sexual drive which is there as an option" (Bachmann 1995a, 247).[26]

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22 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] grande et splendide créature—plus blanche qu'une Arabe […]."

23 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] dont le corps devient œuvre d'art."

24 My translation. Original quote (French): "Elle a beaucoup pensé à nous; elle nous regarde comme ses enfants et n'a pas rencontré de cawadja aussi aimable."

25 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] le rapport aux Nègres est un rapport de non-réciprocité."

26 My translation. Original quote (German): "Der Orient, die Männer für die Männer, sie sind nicht homosexuell, sondern sie machen von beiden Möglichkeiten Gebrauch, aber wir verstehen das falsch, es muß etwas andres sein, die Grenzverwischung, Triebverwischung, die als Möglichkeit gegeben ist."

In Egypt, traditional categories such as hetero- and homosexual are overcome in favour of individual choice and orientation. In an orgy that takes place during her stay the female protagonist not only explores her erotic potential but also takes symbolic revenge on her husband and all the petty bourgeois so proud of their moral hypocrisy:

> Now the three of them are in my room, I talk to them, of course, you have no common language but you talk in such a friendly way to one another. I say that I have slept already. Salah and Mahmed stop talking, only Abdu is still talking, they do not want a woman but more, the whole thing, something together, against one another, everything together, hashinin, being hempseed, I am no longer scared [...]. We are drinking water, we are three and one, are something against the Whites. Arab love, amour arabe, l'amour greque [sic!], the Greek one.
>
> IBID., 272[27]

The multiple occurrence of the adverb "together" in this passage from *Wüstenbuch* is a rhetoric device used by the female narrator to refer to the intended destruction of the traditional gender division and hegemonic sexuality still valid in patriarchal society.

For Franza, Egypt offers the utopian space where the male–female antagonism has become obsolete. Traveling across this male-dominated country, paradoxically, is a foreshadowing of the social revolution Franza is dreaming of and that will finally make woman and man equal partners, at least when it comes to pleasure. Thus, in the shadow of the pyramids, Martin's sister, who was abused by Leo Jordan, temporarily gains sensual satisfaction and reconciliation with the other sex.

5 Colonial or Postcolonial Self-Criticism?

Dedicated to a poetics of radical realism, Flaubert avoids expressing his opinion on Egyptian customs and traditions, nor does he pass judgement on the

27 My translation. Original quote (German): "Jetzt sind alle drei im Zimmer, ich spreche mit ihnen, man hat ja keine gemeinsame Sprache, aber man spricht so freundlich miteinander. Ich sage, daß ich schon geschlafen habe. Salah und Mahmed hören auf zu sprechen, nur Abdu spricht noch, sie wollen auch keine Frau, sondern mehr, das Ganze, etwas miteinander, gegeneinander, alles miteinander, hashinin, Hanf sein, ich habe keine Angst mehr [...]. Wir trinken nur Wasser, sind drei und einer, sind etwas gegen die Weißen. Die arabische Liebe, amour arabe, l'amour greque [sic!], die griechische."

role of whites in this country. Nevertheless, the observations that he makes are significant. Visiting the famous Temple of Kom Ombo in Higher Egypt, for example, he discovers the names of fellow countrymen engraved on the façade without commenting on this act of vandalism. Like other European tourists, Flaubert tries to smuggle antiquities out of the country although this is illegal. In a letter dated March 13, 1850, to Louis Bouilhet, he mentions the difficulty of carrying out this plan: "We do not give up hoping, even if it is difficult, to be able to export (commercial expression) a mummy" (Flaubert 1973a, 609),[28] an obstacle they intend to overcome by resorting to bribery.

If the author does not overtly condemn the colonial attitude which he adopts when it pleases him in his travelogue, he allows himself to be self-critical in his correspondence. On inspecting the Hypogees of Thebes, Flaubert becomes aware of the damage caused by foreigners and it is again to Bouilhet that he breaks the news on June 2, 1850: "It is badly devastated and damaged, not by the weather but by the travellers and scholars" (ibid., 634).[29] He claims that it is people like him, that is, wealthy white men from Europe and the United States, who are to blame for the destruction of the ancient site. Anticipating the disastrous impact of tourism on the Orient, Flaubert clairvoyantly tells Théophile Gautier in a letter dated August 13, 1850: "Soon the Orient will exist no more. We are perhaps the last contemplators" (ibid., 663).[30] Despite this insight, he does not question his own colonial superiority complex, which becomes manifest in an early diary note: "I do not think that the emancipation of Negroes and women is something very beautiful" (Flaubert 2001b, 752).[31] When it comes to the issues of race and gender, the writer, after all, sticks to the conservative perspective common among males of this epoch, who considered people of colour and women in general to be inferior to white men and therefore unworthy of being granted all civil rights.

Bachmann subverts Flaubert's hegemonic stance in her fictional travelogues by challenging white authority. To this end, she draws upon two narrative strategies. On the one hand, she enables Franza to show solidarity with the Egyptians, and on the other hand, she makes the narrator voice harsh criticism of the alleged superiority of the white race and its colonial model.

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28 My translation. Original quote (French): "Nous ne désespérons pas, quoique cela soit difficile, d'exporter (expression commerciale) quelque momie."

29 My translation. Original quote (French): "C'est très ravagé et abîmé, non pas par le temps, mais par les voyageurs et les savants."

30 My translation. Original quote (French): "D'ici à peu l'Orient n'existera plus. Nous sommes peut-être des derniers contemplateurs."

31 My translation. Original quote (French): "Je ne vois pas que l'émancipation des nègres et des femmes soit quelque chose de bien beau."

The female protagonist's orientalization already starts back in Austria when Martin regards her as "his barefoot savage woman" (Bachmann 1995b, 149).[32] Subscribing to a magical worldview and considering herself a tribal woman, she distances herself from modern rational civilization and thus sides with people of colour who were conquered and whose lands were plundered by white colonizers: "[…] I am a Papuan woman. You can only really steal from those who live magically, and for me, everything is meaningful" (ibid., 232).[33] By drawing a parallel between the domestic abuse which she had to deal with at the hands of her husband and which Andrea Allerkamp aptly calls "her internal colonization" (1988, 165)[34] and the exploitation of the colonized societies, Franza demonstrates her solidarity with the latter.

It is in Egypt, however, that her interior assimilation of oriental ways changes her appearance with her skin peeling off and turning brown. Considering herself a victim of male colonization, Franza strongly identifies with the Orientals, who share a common history of white domination, therefore feeling at home in Egypt. Her dark tan may be interpreted as another sign of solidarity and sympathy with the Arabs from whom, however, she fails to hide her ethnic origin.

Bachmann's Egyptian prose undermines the stereotype of the superior white race with which Franza no longer wishes to be associated. In this context, group sex with two Egyptians marks her attempt to escape the bloody history linked to the colour of her skin and allows her to bridge both the gender and the racial divides. In contrast with Flaubert, who is only interested in gaining a maximum of erotic pleasure, for Franza, having sex with Arabs turns into an act of reconciliation between woman and man as well as Black and white. This optimism is only possible because the protagonist shows a strong tendency to generalize, as Monika Albrecht notes: "[…] Bachmann's character Franza is not interested in differences when she forms analogies, instead she somewhat forcefully seems to want to join her story and everyone else's story'" (1998, 82).[35]

In an effort to wipe out her racial identity, Franza severely attacks the white race, punishing herself in an act of counterracism: "[…] les blancs arrivent. The whites arrive. […] they have seen me through, for I belong to an inferior race"

32 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] seine barfüßige Wilde […]."

33 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] ich bin eine Papua. Man kann nur die wirklich bestehlen, die magisch leben, und für mich hat alles Bedeutung."

34 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] ihre innere Kolonisation."

35 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] Bachmann's Franza-Figur ist bei ihrer Analogiebildung nicht an Unterschieden interessiert, vielmehr scheint sie ihre 'Geschichte und die Geschichten aller' etwas gewaltsam zusammenzwingen zu wollen."

(Bachmann 1995b, 34).[36] This passage is inspired by the Rimbaldian[37] motif of the whites arriving and spreading fear among the Africans. In Rimbaud's *Une saison en enfer*, the poet sharply judges Western civilization, turning racial hierarchy upside down and forcing the white man to acknowledge, just like Bachmann's heroine: "It is quite obvious that I have always been of an inferior race" (Rimbaud 2009, 248).[38] The technically superior master of the Blacks, the white colonizer, turns out to be morally inferior to those he dominates thanks to his clever mind and the weapons he recklessly uses: "The whites arrive. The canon! I submit to baptism, dress, work" (ibid., 251).[39]

The striking intertextual reference to Rimbaud can be explained by his anticolonial attitude, which makes him a welcome ally in Franza's rejection of white male hegemony, with the latter being responsible for the colonization of the female body and the exploitation of alien territories. Both *Wüstenbuch* and *Das Buch Franza* aim at revealing the wrong done by the whites on the African continent. In these two texts, the Egypt of the early sixties becomes the historical geographical background of Bachmann's anticolonial discourse. Although Egypt is independent, the economic and cultural invasion of the country due to Coca Cola and the activity of foreign petrol companies goes on unhindered. Hence, the picture of the colonial situation given by Rimbaud is still valid in Bachmann's postcolonial narrative, filling Franza with indignation (cf. Bachmann 1995b, 231).

Martin's sister also notices the old colonial attitude among the visitors of the Egyptian museum of Cairo where Western tourists stare at the mummies lying in sarcophagi and coffins. Disgusted by their voyeurism, she, not entering the exhibition hall, vomits on the floor. The narrator's critique of white hegemony contains a certain degree of simplification and does not take into account the role of women supporting the colonial system. Besides, it overlooks the fact that archaeologists did not only plunder Egyptian heritage sites but also contributed to preserving cultural heritage which otherwise would have been

36 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] les blancs arrivent. Die Weißen kommen. […] sie haben mich durchschaut, denn ich bin von niedriger Rasse."

37 According to Dirk Göttsche, the intertextual references to Rimbaud "discuss the history of violence of European colonialism in Africa in close proximity to Frantz Fanon's critique of neocolonialism […]" (Göttsche 2013, 268). My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] thematisieren die Gewaltgeschichte des europäischen Kolonialismus in Afrika in deutlicher Nähe zur Neokolonialismuskritik Frantz Fanons […]."

38 My translation. Original quote (French): "Il m'est bien évident que j'ai toujours été de race inférieure."

39 My translation. Original quote (French): "Les blancs débarquent. Le canon! Il faut se soumettre au baptême, s'habiller, travailler."

lost in the wars that have shaken the Middle East. Finally, claiming that tourists "steal from the dead" (ibid., 290)[40] is polemical insofar as they represent an important economic factor in an emerging country such as Egypt. However, one must not forget that Franza is not searching for truth but revenge on the whites in the Orient where, ironically, she is raped by a white male individual, dying soon afterward.

6 Conclusion

Flaubert embodies the ideal type of the culturally and economically superior male white colonizer who believes in white supremacy without seriously questioning it. He travels to the Orient, trying to stay objective and yet the choice of scenes and details proves that he subtly resorts to common negative heterostereotypes of Arabs as violent and oversexualized, thereby confirming their cultural inferiority. In other words, he does not take a fresh look at the alien civilization but checks if his real experience of Egypt corresponds to "the Orient read and dreamt about before the journey" (Brunet 2001, 76).[41] Apart from acts of cruelty and scenes of public sex, which Flaubert is particularly eager to find and depict, he searches for the fulfilment of erotic desires. The latter are triggered by the phantasmatic vision of the dark-skinned oriental woman, the incarnation of exotic eroticism and provider of unique sensual pleasures. This romantic image remains intact since the only females with whom he becomes intimate are prostitutes and hence professionals, as if Flaubert wanted to make sure not to be disillusioned by the Orient. After all, "travel writing often reveals much more about the traveller than about the depicted areas […]" (Meier 2007, 447).

Bachmann's Egyptian prose joins aspects of gender and postcolonial discourse. Both *Wüstenbuch* and *Das Buch Franza* aim at denouncing patriarchal ideology and colonialism as a result of the white superiority complex. Drawing on her personal experience as an Austrian woman abused by her callous husband, Franza identifies with the Arabs by means of indiscriminatingly "equating racism and sexism" (Albrecht 1998, 65).[42] Her oriental discourse is antithetical to Flaubert's because, unlike him, she insists on white inferiority. Where Flaubert subtly mocks Egyptian manners and people, Bachmann's

40 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] Leichenschänder […]."

41 My translation. Original quote (French): "[…] l'Orient lu et rêvé avant le voyage […]."

42 My translation. Original quote (German): "[…] Gleichsetzung von Rassismus und Sexismus."

protagonist idealizes them. Whereas the French traveller insists on cultural difference, Franza seeks to build solidarity with the Arabs, identifying with their role as victims. Paradoxically, in a country whose society traditionally discriminates against women, she feels free and experiences the promise of sexual emancipation. Although deconstructing Flaubert's male colonial discourse, the Austrian writer, just like her French predecessor, seems to fall into the trap of stereotype construction, as Sarah Lennox points out: "But by continuing to project white fantasies on non-European characters, she does not completely avoid the racial structures which her writings seek to question" (Lennox 1998, 15).[43] However, this biographical reading of Bachmann fails to take into account the fact that both *Wüstenbuch* and *Das Buch Franza* tell the story of the protagonist and not of the author, who might have wanted to show her readers how Franza's unhappy marriage has led to her distorted view of the Orient.

All in all, Franza's sweeping condemnation of white male dominance, which she holds responsible for the discrimination of the female as well as the colonial subject, no doubt transcends Flaubert's blunt racism and sexism but remains, despite its critical potential, a reductionist contribution to the oriental discourse of twentieth-century literature.

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43 My translation. Original quote (German): "Doch indem sie weiterhin weiße Fantasien auf nichteuropäische Figuren projiziert, entgeht auch sie nicht ganz den rassistischen Strukturen, die ihre Schriften in Frage zu stellen versuchen."

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