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SPEECH, WRITING AND THE BODY
IN GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI'S *HOTEL ANDROMEDA*

Abstract. The aim of this article is to study Gabriel Josipovici's dialogue style in his latest fiction, *Hotel Andromeda* (2014), in order to prove that the dialogue form is used to problematize significant theoretical issues in his writing, namely the problem of speech, writing and the body. The fact that speech and writing are embedded in the text in exactly the same way is an interesting feature of Josipovici's novel which, against the long philosophical tradition originating in Plato's dialogues, implies the equality of both means of expression. It seems that the common denominator the author finds for both media is the body which he smuggles into literature through the extensive use of dialogue and the characters' fascination with the materiality of the written word.

Key words: Gabriel Josipovici; speech; writing; body; dialogue.

The list of labels that adhere to Gabriel Josipovici's name is truly impressive. He is introduced as a British novelist, short story writer, critic, literary theorist and a playwright. Since the release in 1968 of his first novel, *The Inventory*, he has published extensively and quite regularly, interspersing fiction with theoretical and critical reflections. Josipovici is the author of nearly twenty novels, three volumes of short stories, over a dozen of plays for stage and radio and a substantial body of non-fiction. Sadly, however, Josipovici's manifest versatility, impressive productivity and most of all the subtlety of insight fail to meet with deserved renown.

Josipovici's writing career began with a scandal. His collection of short stories entitled *Mobius the Stripper* won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1975. The prize, however, was soon withdrawn on the grounds that the author was not born a British citizen. Indeed, Britain had only been con-

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sciously chosen as home for her and her son by Josipovici's mother, Sasha Rabinowitch. Born in 1940 in Nice, Josipovici emigrated with his family first to Egypt (1950–56) and then to England to receive proper education. Naturally, his first language is French which he can speak fluently. For his writing, however, he chose English as “the only language [he] can write in” (Rotstein). Well attuned with the English language, he cannot say the same about the British readership. In an interview with Victoria Best Josipovici does not hide his disappointment: “I had been labeled an ‘experimental’ writer once and for all and routinely abused and dismissed in reviews or else ignored altogether” (Best). The apparent hesitation about how to approach Josipovici and his output seems to take its origin in the scandalous beginning. That is how the author himself relates the situation:

Insult was added to injury when the chair of the Society of Authors, which managed the prize, Antonia Fraser, wrote more or less accusing me of deliberate fraud and ended with the chilling words: ‘However, I am sure you will agree that the publicity you are getting more than makes up for the withdrawal of the prize.’ (Best)

From that moment on Josipovici's writing notoriously met with criticism and some of his books were released beyond Britain (*Only Joking*) before being taken up by home publishers. This unusual situation made Josipovici at once a winner and a loser and shaped the reading public's ambivalent reaction which seems to oscillate between attraction and caution.

It has to be admitted, however, that it is not only the infamous scandal to which the unfavourable atmosphere around Josipovici's person can be attributed but also the texts themselves which indeed call for both admiration and vigilance. The reason for this is Josipovici's style in which he shows preference for dialogue over the traditional narrative form. Deprived of the guiding voice of the narrator, Josipovici's texts become a challenge unattainable for many readers. In the only monograph of Josipovici's oeuvre written so far, *Echoes and Mirrorings: Gabriel Josipovici's Creative Oeuvre* (2000), Monika Fludernik explains her choice of subject by the need to provide a long-overdue critical appreciation of the writings of this sophisticated author (2). In the introduction to Josipovici's official website, she defends him from the denigration as merely an experimentalist and promotes his fiction in the following words:

Although Josipovici's early short fiction, which made him go first place in the Somerset Maugham Awards in 1975, is technically extremely versatile and innovative and therefore answers to the label from a formal perspective, the author's later fiction no longer obtrudes formal solecisms on the reader and should therefore be exempted from this type of criticism. (Fludernik, "Introduction")

Fludernik's monograph was published in 2000 and the website created around that time. Since then Josipovici has released more fiction (and criticism), for example *Infinity: The Story of a Moment* (2012) and *Hotel Andromeda* (2014). Interestingly, both novels are written almost entirely in dialogue. Thus, even though Fludernik is right in her observation that following the publication of *Mobius the Stripper* Josipovici's fiction invites more traditional narration, in his latest fiction the inclination towards dialogue compositions apparently returns. It becomes clear then that the aura of experiment has not vanished completely from Josipovici's writing. While Fludernik's defence of Josipovici from over a decade ago may not be entirely accurate, her words that immediately follow those quoted above seem to have a more universal value: "Josipovici has remained faithful to his artistic views with admirable tenacity and refused to be swayed by the popular vote" ("Introduction").

There are several questions that need to be asked in the light of Josipovici's chequered literary career: Why does he stick with the difficult dialogue form in his novels? Why does he object to being called "experimentalist" and still continue writing dialogues? Is the dialogue so indispensable that it cannot be relinquished? Does his understanding of experiment in literature differ from the way it is used in contemporary criticism? In this article I will try to ponder on Josipovici's style to understand his unabated attraction to the dialogue form. I will attempt to show the intrinsic link not only between form and content in Josipovici's writing, strongly emphasised by Fludernik in her monograph, but also between his fiction and theoretical statements. In other words, the aim of this study is to prove that Josipovici's dialogue style is used to problematize significant theoretical issues in his writing, namely the problem of speech, writing and the body. Josipovici's latest fiction, *Hotel Andromeda*, will serve as the basic research material for this study.

Hotel Andromeda is a story of a London art historian, Helena, who aspires to write a book on the eccentric American artist, Joseph Cornell. Her greatest struggle, however, concerns her relation with her sister, Alice, working in an orphanage in Chechnya. Through a series of dialogues with her

neighbours, Ruth and Tom, as well as Alice's friend, Ed, Helena strives to define herself and justify her luxurious lifestyle, including her writing, against the highly idealised image of her altruistic sister. The simplicity of the plot many readers may find discouraging. However, as it was suggested in the opening paragraph, it is first of all Josipovici's subtle insight that makes his writing worthwhile. What follows is an attempt at a careful analysis of the underlying complexities of Josipovici's novel.

When Philip Roth wrote his novel *Deception* in 1990, it was not well received. Composed entirely of dialogue, the book was reviewed in the *New York Times* as "a brilliant radio play for a minority audience" (Weldon). In the same way, Josipovici's *Hotel Andromeda* could be dismissed as a radio drama. Knowing, however, that Josipovici practiced the genre alongside with the novel, the question arises: Why should Josipovici want a radio play to pass for a novel? Dominated by dialogue hardly aided by the narrator's remarks, the first five chapters of Josipovici's book can indeed resemble a radio play. The next part, however, eponymously named "Hotel Andromeda", brings a change. From that moment, apart from discussing her private issues as well as Cornell's art with her friends, Helena decides to write her observations down. She does not know, however, how to approach her own writing. Whether to treat it as the study of Cornell or her own diary or both she cannot decide: "I talk to myself on paper. I scribble whatever comes to my head hoping it will take me somewhere."¹ The appearance of Helena's text leaves no doubt that Josipovici's composition is not meant to be staged or listened to with diary entries occupying more and more space as the book progresses. Interestingly, fragments of Helena's writing are broken with minor narratorial intrusions with "she says" replaced by "she writes". If, as Fludernik argues already in the title of her monograph, repetition and mirroring are the chief characteristics of Josipovici's writing, the reader can easily notice parallelism between the way speech and writing are represented in *Hotel Andromeda*. In order not to let the reader get confused in the exchange of comments, the identification tags "Helena says" and "The old lady says" are frequent in the opening chapters. Besides, the narrator occasionally describes actions which accompany speech: "She stirs her tea and takes a sip" or "The old lady presses the stub of her cigarette into the ashtray" (3). Further in the book, however, such descriptive parts become less numerous. In a similar

¹ Gabriel Josipovici, *Hotel Adromeda* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), 97. All quotations from Josipovici's novel come from this edition and will be hereafter marked in the text by page number in parenthesis.

way, Helena's writing is initially often broken with narrator's guides. Next to the basic interpolations "she writes," the reader can find longer narratorial remarks: "She stops. She looks up and gazes into the space. She bends her head again. She writes . . ." (39) until gradually, when they appear, the diary entries begin to take up the whole of the chapter.

Combining dialogue, narration (however minimal) and diary does not make Josipovici's *Hotel Andromeda* anything special in the history of literature. The fact, however, that speech and writing are embedded in the text in exactly the same way deserves closer attention. It makes speech and writing somehow equal and interchangeable. In the light of the fact that in the Western culture speech and writing have been traditionally viewed as different or even competitive means of expression, Josipovici's technical tactic and its alarming implications call for a deeper consideration.

The example of how to approach both media was set by Plato in his dialogues. The one in which Plato's views are expressed most clearly is *Phaedrus* in which Socrates disparages writing by advancing three main arguments. Firstly, rather than increasing our memories, writing produces forgetfulness. Secondly, once something is written, it floats around at random, and it may fall into the hands of those who may misunderstand or even distort what it says. Thirdly, the written word is incapable of answering questions, but is dependent on its author for support (Hyland 39). Speech, on the other hand, has been traditionally bestowed with all those qualities Derrida decries in *Of Grammatology*: it is natural, unmediated, prior to writing and it conveys the speaker's presence. Consequently, writing is at best merely a mediation or corruption of the pure presence of speech. It is thus deemed inferior and derivative of speech; it is empty, untrustworthy and open to misinterpretation. In Derrida's account, the story of Western thought from Plato up to the science of grammatology might even be said to be the story of the debasement of writing, and its repression in relation to speech (Bradley 8). The idea of authorial absence behind his text led to Barthes's famous dictum about "the death of the author" as well as Josipovici's admittance in one of the interviews that "we [writers] write more than we do" (Best).

Tracing the history of speech and writing and the relation between them would be too ambitious a project for this article. Plato and Derrida are chosen to serve as representatives of two contrastive viewpoints, bracing the debate from distant historical points, though, as it will become clear further in this study, their conflicting position should not be too easily accepted. However, even when we exchange the philosophical for more commonsensical

perspective, speech and writing still appear to us as two different activities. The solitary writing can be contrasted with communal and interactive speech. While speech is taught spontaneously in a love relationship between parents and children, writing is acquired as a skill, often implemented by an institution. Speech (casual) seems to be natural, spontaneous and immediate whereas writing requires logic, careful reasoning, time and effort. A written text is more permanent than speech, the quality which was appreciated even by Plato. On the other hand, however, when uttered in somebody's presence, and it rarely happens otherwise, the spoken words can be remembered and in this way become permanent, if not indelible. Barthes explains it in the following way:

A word cannot be retracted, except precisely by saying that one retracts it. To cross out here is to add: If I want to erase what I have just said, I cannot do it without the eraser itself (I must say 'or rather...' 'I expressed myself badly...'); paradoxically, it is ephemeral speech which is indelible, not monumental writing. (190)

As if in an attempt to reconcile the conflicting position of speech and writing, Walter Ong in his *Literacy and Orality* explains both modes of expression as interdependent, accentuating, at the same time, the enormous impact of the written word on human mind:

A deeper understanding of pristine or primary orality enables us better to understand the new world of writing, what it truly is, and what functionally literate human beings really are: beings whose thought processes do not grow out of simply natural powers but out of these powers as structured, directly or indirectly, by the technology of writing. Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when engaged in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single invention, writing has transformed human consciousness. (77)

Despite the dynamic and competitive nature of the relationship between speech and writing which resonates with hundreds of years of turbulent scholarly debate, Josipovici subtly suggests in his tiny novel that speech and writing are very much alike. At the onset of *Writing and the Body* he makes a small but consequential remark: "... writing and speaking ... are at the crossroads of the mental and the physical, the orders of culture and of nature" (1). In this series of lectures delivered in 1981 at University College,

London, Josipovici focuses on the person of the author—the body—struggling in a typically modernist fashion with his text in the process of writing which is in itself “uncertain, insecure, liable to come to a stop at any moment as the result of cramp, boredom, despair, or any one of a hundred unforeseen circumstances” (1). With time, his interest in the body as the factor determining not only the creative process but also, in a more general way, human perception of the world grew to finally result in a brilliant publication of *Touch* in 1996. In this longish essay Josipovici betrays a stronger conviction in the role of the body in human experience:

We think . . . of other people as occupying an objective space in front of us, and of our knowledge of them as being derived from our ability to see. But this is not in fact how we apprehend others. At least part of what enters into an apprehension of them is our common bodily and kinaesthetic reaction to a physical world which we both inhabit. For we are embodied, and it is our bodies which give us common access to the physical world; in other words we are participators, not spectators, and it is through embodiment that we participate. (6)

The coherence of artistic views, which Fludernik admires in one of the quotations above, shows very clearly in Josipovici's thinking about the body. It seems that this thought had been with him from the beginning of his writing career and determined his style, as it seems, forever. When setting to write his debut novel, *The Inventory*, Josipovici suffered from a serious writer's block. Each attempt at writing the opening paragraph turned into a failure in which the author's “own voice” was lost. It was only after abandoning description and replacing it with dialogue that he felt at home with his writing:

I wanted it [book] to be alive from start to finish, from the first word to the last. And in dialogue it could be alive, for what dialogue did was provide words where (in the fiction) the characters would be providing words. Why the words are spoken, how speaking them affects the situation and what they ‘mean’ can be left as open as in any encounter in real life. (Best)

It seems that what Josipovici did spontaneously in his first novel became consciously and fully theorised in *Touch*. If resignation from the dominant visual perception opens a human to a more comprehensive bodily experience, in exactly the same way the abandoning of description in favour of dialogic and “real” intercourse alters the perspective from the visual to the bod-

ily one. In “the country of the blind” (Jourdain), as the novels of Ivy Compton-Burnett were often called, other senses and a different experience of the other’s presence must prevail. It seems thus that the common denominator that Josipovici finds for both speech and writing in *Hotel Andromeda* is their origin in the physicality of the body. For the understanding of the relation between speech and the body in *Hotel Andromeda* it is necessary to have a closer look at the dialogue form again. In order to grasp how writing corresponds with the body, it is essential to examine the characters.

As it was mentioned above, speech has been traditionally associated with presence, and an immediate access to the speaker in person/body. That is the reason why it was so much valued by ancient thinkers for originality and authenticity. The dominant position of speech was seriously endangered with the popularization of writing albeit it was commonly perceived after Plato as a “mechanical, inhuman way of processing knowledge, unresponsive to questions and destructive to memory” (Ong 25). However, despite severe critique voiced in *Phaedrus* and *Seventh Letter*, Plato himself not only succumbed to writing but, as Ong argues, his entire philosophical thinking “was unwittingly a programmed rejection of the old, oral, mobile, warm, personally interactive lifeworld of oral culture” (79). Plato’s texts seem to have been written as yet unconscious reaction to the ambivalence caused by the spreading of writing. Consequently, it is reasonable to claim that the dialogue form he adopted must have addressed the contemporary tensions, as it happens, through numerous contradictions inherent in the genre itself. Therefore, the critics of Plato’s texts speak of “a hybrid form, oral discourse transcribed and transformed in writing” (Zappen 15) or “a series of interlocking and overlapping dualities” (Blondell 1). Plato’s dialogue form is thus a compromise between voice and silence, presence and absence as once written it becomes subject to “all of the uses and misuses of the written, the quoted, word” (Zappen 147). However, as pieces of powerful dramatic fiction the dialogues “manage to give us a strong sense of what it would be like to listen to a dialectical debate or even to participate in it” (Frede 201). Deeply grounded in the tradition of drama which employs literal embodiment as a way of facilitating our understanding of the text, Platonic dialogue encourages us to stage such embodied agents in our imagination (Blondell 48). By doing so the form of dialogue becomes the message itself:

Despite the evasiveness of this form, it manifests in its own way a rigorous intellectual honesty, by forcing us to acknowledge the inescapa-

ble embodiedness of human thought, since this embodiedness is inscribed in the dialogue form itself. Dramatic form thus becomes a medium for exploring the limits of transcendence, and the multiple tensions—between ideal and particular, mind and body, original and image, one and many, being and becoming, divine and human, deduction and persuasion, reason and emotion—which pervade the works of Plato. (Blondell 50)

Although temporarily distanced, Josipovici's *Hotel Andromeda* seems to share some characteristics of Plato's dialogues. In its dialogue form, the novel becomes such a hybrid form where the tensions between oral and written, present and absent are very strong. The prevalence of dialogue points also to the question of human body indissolubly united with voice. The issue of embodiedness as inscribed in the dialogue form seems to be the most interesting aspect of the correspondence between Josipovici's novel and Plato's writing. This problem, however, should be understood more radically in the case of *Hotel Andromeda*.

Josipovici refrains from classifying his fiction in any way. If asked, however, he is inclined to think of himself as a realist (Stawiarski). The term realism has been variously defined but, fundamentally, in literature it denotes a truthful depiction of life (Cuddon 773). Since this portrayal is done through language and language can only imitate language, the representation of speech comes closer to pure mimesis where the fact of the words being mediated by some teller is as minimal as possible (Rimmon-Kenan 108). Having abandoned description and relying almost exclusively on dialogue, Josipovici creates characters whose sole attribute is their speech. Therefore, the imagined embodiedness of the participants of dialogue, encouraged in the case of Plato's dialogues, cannot be understood as a mere visualisation of the characters in the case of Josipovici's fiction. It seems that Josipovici's protagonists are not supposed to be imagined in body but experienced as a body. It is possible to conclude, thus, that the realism Josipovici's writing strives for is the realism of the physical body, which, in its radicalism, seriously strains the boundaries of literature.

As it was suggested above, the dialogue form, which by its very nature draws attention to the embodiedness of human thought and human being in general, points to yet another contradiction involved in Plato's writing—that between the dialogue form which entails embodiedness and the attempt to express the philosophy transcending the human realm:

The form in itself is thus an acknowledgement of the impossibility of that to which its central characters so often seem to aspire—a condition transcending the multiplicity of the material world. The thinker so renowned for the rejection of what we—though not he—would call the “real world,” the world of the senses and of physical embodiment, unflinchingly represents the conception of transcendence as rooted in the very soil of that world. To put it another way, the most notorious defining feature of Platonism is expressed by Plato in a self-defeating form. (Blondell 50)

Thus, in the case of Plato the dialogue form appears as erratic and incompatible with the proclaimed idealism of Plato’s philosophy. On closer inspection, however, what seems to be a fault can turn into a merit as the form of dialogue serves both to explain Plato’s philosophy and indicate its limitations; it provides both clarification and critique.² In a similar way, Josipovici resorts in *Hotel Andromeda* to an error to prove the propriety of the dialogue form for the embodiedness he wants to advance. What is more, the programmed mistake which, as it seems, he consciously commits imposes transcendence where the reader feels it is completely out of place and unacceptable.

The dialogue between Helena and any of her companions is invariably interrupted with the same narratorial remark “she/he says.” This pattern of objective or neutral narration is broken just once when in her conversation with Ruth the reader is given access to Helena’s thoughts: “Now she’s going to say it’s like childbirth, Helena *thinks*” (97, italics mine). Having read almost hundred pages of dialogue (interspersed with diary entries), the perceptive reader will react to this alteration with indignation which will be caused by one of two things, or both. Firstly, the suspicion will arise that Josipovici, an accomplished author known for the refinement of form, has committed a cardinal mistake. Secondly, the reader will instinctively object to the unfamiliar feeling of peeping into Helena’s mind. Presented largely through her speech and thus known only from the outside, Helena gains some sort of transparency as a glimpse of her consciousness is unexpectedly made available for the reader. As I mentioned before, this power of transcendence that

² Cf. “On my interpretation, Derrida’s reading of Plato is not a simple externalist critique. Rather, Derrida is keen to stress the internal complexity of the Platonic text, which in its ‘doubling’ strategies, already performs a kind of deconstruction on philosophy. Thus, for Derrida, Plato is at least in some important respects a precursor of the *avant-garde*. The philosophical status of Plato’s text is not univocal. To a great extent, Plato already plays out the questioning of philosophy from a nonphilosophical site. Plato would thus be both inside and outside philosophy” (Irwin 51).

the reader is granted is not necessarily welcome with enthusiasm, especially that this trick is never repeated further in the novel. It seems justifiable to claim that this solitary and thus provocative example of inconsistency in Josipovici's novel is meant to raise the reader's awareness of the fact that the dialogue form of the novel makes him experience and automatically accept Helena's bodily resistance to transcendence which the traditional omniscient narration takes for granted.

If, however, the reader in his imagination is aware of Helena as a body, we cannot be sure whether she takes into consideration her own physicality. Actually, she seems to live in total denial of her body. In one of the interviews Josipovici confesses about the mechanisms of how he structures his stories. He says that he likes to depict in his fiction characters which could be placed at opposite ends of a spectrum. This rule seems to apply to *Hotel Andromeda*. Helena and her sister Alice seem to occupy such opposing ends with the former concerned primarily with the mind and intellectual work and the latter associated with feelings and the body. The opposition could be otherwise symbolically represented by the house in which Helena lives. She occupies a flat right above Tom, a professional writer, who, in the hope of developing a relationship with Helena, constantly teases her with the following pleas: "Give me a kiss" (34) or "Come and sit on my lap" (15). Ruth who stands for elderly wisdom lives in a flat at the top of the house: "Up here one breathes, says Helena" (79). Helena is thus symbolically stuck in between those two extremes: Ruth's sagacity and Tom's sexual attraction, the mind and the body. In the absence of her sister, it is in relation to her neighbours that Helena tries to negotiate her own being in a series of talks. However, it is not only talking that she resorts to. She also decides to write and lets her writing take the form of yet another dialogue: between herself and Joseph Cornell, as well as his peculiar box constructions. Helena admits that it is not merely her professional interests that draw her to Cornell's art but some more private motifs. That is how she formulates her definition of art:

I grew up thinking about art as 'the beautiful,' she writes, but I have come to understand that that is not what art is at all. Art is what manages to express that which lies buried so deep inside us that we can never find the sounds or images or words for it and so could never have access to were it not for others, artists. That is why they mean so much to us. That is why Cornell means so much to me. (40)

A critical assessment of Cornell's art, Helena's writing serves also as self-analysis or a writing cure. The healing power of writing in psychotherapy lies in the fact that it gives the patient a chance to voice his anxieties. In feminist criticism the writing cure refers to the situation when a woman writer regains power and control over her life through her writing, asserts her presence as well as formulates some sort of "textual signature" (Alsknin 78). Moreover, by its very nature, writing encourages a greater discipline of thought, logic and reasoning, all the reasons for which writing is discouraged in psychoanalysis where there is a danger that it will obliterate the primal oral account (Paiking 49). All these therapeutic aspects of writing apply to Helena. It is possible, however, to suggest one more reason for her compulsive scribbling. Writing in Helena's case is also a physical action on a par with speech, a sign of being alive and being a body. The writing body is never to be forgotten in *Hotel Andromeda*: "Biting her lower lip till it hurts, she presses on" (38).

Helena's fascination with Cornell and his art can be explained by the simple fact that they are both afflicted with the same deficiencies. Cornell's case of negation of the body is even more conspicuous than Helena's. Interestingly, in her study of Cornell Helena is able to diagnose him instantly: "[he] never felt at home in his body" (92). She cites one of Cornell's friend's who describes him in the following way: "I always had a feeling that if I shook him he would pulverize into dust, like old paper" (98). Trying to decide about the style she should adopt when writing about Cornell, Helena encounters the following dilemma: "He is an absence, beyond speech. Before and after it. To make him the centre of a narrative would be to distort him even more than would writing a conventional critical study. He was never at the centre. Always at the side. If he was anywhere" (53). The impression she has of him is that "he has no inside to enter, to convey to others, or rather, his inside is made up of feelings and impressions which never crystallise into anything that could say 'I' or be designated as a 'he'" (81). The reasons for Cornell's denial of the body can be manifold. As Helena speculates it was Cornell's difficult family situation that brought the alienation on him: "That reality—of his own body, of his absurd and overbearing mother, of his beloved brother doomed never to be able to walk or speak properly—became even more oppressive when his father . . . died when Cornell was fifteen" (111). His father's premature death made the boy responsible for the malfunctioning family and marked the moment when his nightmares and his withdrawal began. This perplexing situation turned Cornell in-

to a faithful follower of Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science. "The power of thought" is what this religion proclaims. The message is simple: "Admit the existence of matter and you admit that mortality (and therefore disease) has a foundation in fact. Deny the existence of matter and you can destroy the belief in material conditions" (114). The body becomes for Cornell a mere temporary necessity. The way he conceived of the death of his mother and his disabled brother is that "they escaped the prison of the body" (115).

Intimidated by her sister's affectionate involvement with the war-orphans in Chechnya, Helena positions herself in relation to her sister as a distant other. Trying to assert her individuality, she preoccupies herself with intellectual work. The fact, however, that the troubled relationship with her hero-sister keeps returning in her conversations with Tom, Ruth and Ed signifies that she does not feel comfortable at this far extreme. In the same way, Cornell denies the materiality of his own existence in reaction to his mother's expectations of comfort and his brother's disability. Overwhelmed by the power of the mind, both Helena and Cornell desperately try to reconnect with their bodily, physical existence and in order to do so they both resort to writing as if the materiality of the word were to enhance or even replace their own.

Although she cannot boast a wide readership, Helena keeps on writing one book after another. Her motivation seems to be not so much entering the critical debate but trying to define herself in the deficient life she lives. In a similar way, Cornell continues to keep a diary throughout his life: "He never put pen to paper to make drawing, but he constantly did so to write—to confide to his notebooks, write to friends, scribble notes for himself for later inclusion in his extensive folders" (89). However numerous, the entries are not revelatory or particularly insightful. Most often they relate simple facts or dietary details of a given day. Helena judges them severely as "banal and sentimental" or "dead on the page" (89). Yet, Cornell's writing seemed to be of great importance for him, especially the largest file called GC 44, which accumulates memories of the turbulent year 1944. Many a time did he reshuffle the notes contained in this enormous file, yet to no effect. The order he tried to impose or discover on the pages was always missing. Cornell's unsuccessful attempts can be explained by the simple fact that the value of his writing lies not in its explanatory potential but in its physical existence. Like Virginia Woolf, and many others before and after her, Helena and Cornell want to feel real and preserved in and through their writing. The sen-

tence Woolf wrote in her diary nearly a year before she killed herself might conclude Helena's and Cornell's efforts: "I'm aware of something permanent and real in my existence. By the way, I'm rather proud of having done a solid work. I'm content somehow" (Tidwell 107).

To conclude, I would like to quote once again from Josipovici's *Touch*, which, as it was suggested before, provides the theoretical foundation for Josipovici's fiction and *Hotel Andromeda* in particular. It concerns mirrors and how they alter our perception of ourselves in the world: "I do not see my body in the ordinary course of things as I see it in the mirror. It is not an object laid open to my gaze, as it is in the mirror, but that which looks, feels, moves. The world exists for me not because I see it but because I am a part of it" (18). In a similar way, the protagonists of Josipovici's dialogue novels are not described passively in a mirror-like fashion but they are given to the reader as embodied actors, interacting and participating. Their physicality, though unattainable on paper, is sought for in speech and writing. As we can see, the dialogue form serves Josipovici to broach significant theoretical issues in his fiction and, in the case of embodiedness, issues which literature can hardly embrace. When judged from this perspective, Josipovici's fiction, studied on the example of *Hotel Andromeda*, seems truly experimental. However, considering the fact that "Bakhtin reads the Socratic dialogue as a primitive or preliminary form that led to the novel" (Zappen 51), should we not treat Josipovici's dialogue novels as orthodox and essentially traditional?

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MOWA, PISMO I CIAŁO
W POWIEŚCI GABRIELA JOSIPOVICI *HOTEL ANDROMEDA*

Streszczenie

Celem artykułu jest analiza dialogowego stylu pisarstwa Gabriela Josipovici w jego najnowszej powieści *Hotel Andromeda* (2014), w celu udowodnienia, że użycie formy dialogowej ma za zadanie ujawnienie istotnych kwestii teoretycznych, takich jak relacja między mową, pismem i ciałem. Interesującym aspektem powieści Josipovici jest fakt, iż mowa i pismo (fragmenty pamiętnika) zostały wprowadzone do tekstu w sposób identyczny, implikując w ten sposób, wbrew wielowiekowej tradycji zapoczątkowanej przez Platona, równorzędność obu środków wyrazu. Wspólnym mianownikiem dla mowy i pisma w utworze Josipovici zdaje się być ciało, przemycane do literatury za pomocą dialogu oraz głębokiej fascynacji fizycznością pisanego słowa wśród bohaterów powieści.

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Słowa kluczowe: Gabriel Josipovici; mowa; pismo; ciało; dialog.