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LITERATURE AND THE DISCOURSE OF SCIENCE: NINO RICCI'S DARWINISM¹

Abstract: Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), Brian Boyd's *On the Origin of Stories* (2009), and Nino Ricci's *The Origin of Species* (2008) are the books coming from different fields: natural science, literary criticism, and creative fiction. However disparate, these areas are not unrelated, and the aim of this presentation is to show how scientific discourse echoes in modern times opening new spaces for finding meaning in the otherwise random existence. Darwin's original theory of evolution is based on the principle of adaptation by natural selection, implying variation produced by genetic mutation of which Darwin, logically, was not aware. Brian Boyd takes an exclusively human characteristic, that of making art, and especially that of telling made-up stories, and examines its survival value, trying to prove that it is of great survival benefit. He even claims that we, as a species, cannot live without telling stories. At about the same time, Nino Ricci writes a novel about a morally and existentially disoriented Canadian in which he fictionalizes the origin of a new literary theory, linking narratology with evolutionary biology. Ricci's anti-hero Alex Fratarcangeli presumably conceives Evocriticism (as a fictional Boyd) or Darwinian literary criticism, writing his Ph.D. thesis and proving (though as a fictional character) that randomness, chance, haphazardness can give shape to a human life. In his prize-winning novel, Ricci shows the evolution not of the human species but of an individual, successfully fusing scientific and literary discourses.

Key words: Darwinism, Evocriticism, literary discourse, scientific discourse, Boyd, Ricci

1. Introduction: Repudiation of Theory

In his famous *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye makes a comment about the current state of literary criticism, at least in the Western thought more than half a century ago: "I suggest that it is time for criticism to leap to a new ground from which it can discover what the organizing or containing forms of its conceptual framework are. Criticism seems to be badly in need of a coordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole" (Frye 1957: 16). (Frye) This

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was Frye's turning away from the New Criticism whose close reading of the text dominated the field when Frye introduced his Archetypal Criticism. Aimed against ideology as the conceptual framework for literary criticism, Archetypal Criticism identifies myth and metaphor at the root of human imagination as giving insights for the act of literary interpretation. The lack of wide-spread influence Frye's ideas might have had is illustrated by the fact that *Literary Theory: An Anthology* (1998) by Rivkin and Ryan does not even list Archetypal Criticism. Theory with the capital T has prevailed and "I/t has isolated literary criticism from the rest of modern thought and alienated literary studies even from literature itself" (Boyd 384) (Boyd). Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Marxism, Post-Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Modernism, Feminism, Gender Studies, Historicisms, Post-Coloniality, Cultural Studies, Post-Post Modernism (...) marked in their swift succession the last few decades of literary criticism as if to prove Frye's contention that a new coordinating principle is still being searched for but not found.

The idea that Theory deprives literature of its essential values and turns it into a rarified activity divorced from the experience of reading receives its contemptuous phrasing in Frank Lentricchia's words. In his article "Last Will and Testament of an Ex-Literary Critic" he said: "Tell me your theory and I'll tell you in advance what you'll say about any work of literature, especially those you haven't read" (Lentricchia). Danuta Fjellestad explains Lentricchia's problem:

In the article, this "Dirty Harry of contemporary critical theory," as a reviewer once called Lentricchia, admits to having suffered for years from a kind of split-personality disorder. His secret "me-the-reader" kept experiencing "erotic transport" when reading books, while his public self, that of "an historian and polemicist of literary theory," was speaking about literature as a political instrument. His two selves, as he writes, were "unhappy with one another" (Fjellestad).

This 'critic's schizophrenia' is an indication of the unwholesome state of modern Theory which fails to integrate the reader within himself through the act of reading. Along with the critic, the reader is expected to be aware of his positionality as regards gender, class, race, and sexual preference, he is taught to accept that personal is political, and is not allowed to simply get engrossed in a book, to experience the erotic transport. The literary is reduced to the political, and the Western literary tradition seen as the central engine of racism, poverty, sexism, homophobia, and imperialism, as Fjellestad explains with dissatisfaction. However, she also quotes Ihab Hassan's article "Confessions of a Reluctant Critic," where he wrote: "For some decades now, theory has often ... dazzled, putting literature in the shadows. Students turn to theory like moths, their appetite for flames far greater than their appetite for poetry" (8). (Hassan). Though both critical of Theory, these two critics take different attitudes towards it: Lentricchia denounces it, becoming a literary enthusiast who mainly recites poetry in his classes while Hassan believes that Theory is still a way of interacting with literature and therefore finds it necessary. Both are honest, but Hassan seems to be more responsible towards the uninformed readers who may occasionally need guidance, especially if they are students of literature. To conclude

with Fjellestad, a critic / teacher should avoid excesses of critical enterprise and the luring luster and dazzle of literary theory in favour of respect for and responsibility to the readers / students. His duty is to help them acquire the vocabulary, and the mode of thinking by teaching / discussing literature in a spirit of pluralism which will not kill the innocent joy of reading but empower the reader. However, if an epistemological framework is indispensable, as it is, there is a view put forward by Brian Boyd that Theory has an alternative in a biocultural or evolutionary approach to fiction that he calls ‘Evocriticism.’

2. Brian Boyd: Evocriticism as a Research Programme

In his 2009 book *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition, and Fiction*, Brian Boyd advocates an evolutionary theory of art and fiction that he would not like to be labeled ‘literary Darwinism.’ Before explaining his ideas of art as adaptation and the evolutionary aspects of literature, it is interesting to understand why he ascribes such significance to terminological issues.

On the opening pages of his ambitious study, Boyd indirectly attacks Theory by claiming that the second aim of his book is “to offer a way beyond the errors of thought and practice in much modern academic literary study, which over the last few decades has often stifled – and has even sought to stifle – the *pleasure*, the *life*, and the *art* of literature” (Boyd 2009: 11). In his rejection of Theory, Boyd is quite close to Lentricchia and other critics who give primacy to the personal experience of art. On the last pages, Boyd re-confirms his resistance to Theory by volubly elaborating on the issue of its inadequacy. Although it insists that it is always political or ideological, Theory severs literature from life by foregrounding language, convention, and ideology and seeing human nature as entirely socially constructed. Boyd opposes the idea that human society is entirely shaped by culture and convention, and indignantly challenges the overbearing academic dominance of great figures such as Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, or Althusser. Seeing the world through the lens of one thought-system, be it Structuralism, Deconstruction, Post-Structuralism, or any other narrows the scope of art and falsifies the essence of man.

It is for this reason that Boyd prefers the term ‘evolutionary criticism’ to ‘literary Darwinism.’ However great Charles Darwin’s contribution to the science of man might have been, his insights and ideas kept developing and outgrowing their creator’s original concepts. Instead of a dogmatic theory which would make Darwinism similar to Structuralism and other theories, Boyd proposes “a widespread ... live and empirically accountable research program” (Boyd 2009: 388). He holds that “evolutionary anthropology, biology, economics, and psychology are research programs, not bodies of doctrine” (Boyd 2009: 388) or grand immutable theories. Like Freud or Marx, Darwin initiated a valid and fertile field of research that is far more encompassing than Freudianism or Marxism, and that has by now far outstripped his original propositions. Therefore, evolutionary critics need not be harnessed by the label ‘Darwinists’ since they are researchers within the programme



that keeps developing from the basic tenet of evolution based on the principle of adaptation by natural selection established by Darwin. It is unlikely that Darwin ever conceived of this principle being employed in literary criticism yet it is this latest development of his theory that makes it a research programme rather than a doctrine. Boyd makes this more than clear:

Evocriticism should not be easy, should not impose a template, should not arrive at a priori conclusions. It is a research program, not a set of prefabricated conclusions or all-purpose methods. It is open-ended at both ends, in terms of the evidence in literary works and the evidence about human nature or culture arriving from anthropology, biology, economics, history, psychology, and sociology. Evocriticism does not dispense with literary expertise, the sensitive response of trained readers. It does not replace expert readers with a standard checklist of evolutionary questions and answers, but opens up to good readers a new range of problems and possibilities (Boyd 2009: 391).

In order to help them acquire this new set of tools for literary criticism, Boyd acquaints the readers of his *On the Origin of Stories* with extensive (though often repetitive) explanations of the basics of evolutionary criticism.

3. Evocriticism: An Old Idea Reclaimed

Irish-born and now a resident of Auckland, New Zealand, Brian Boyd completed his Ph.D. at the University of Toronto in 1979. He is definitely not the father of Literary Darwinism, especially because he disapproves of the term, though he is among the first teachers and critics who enthusiastically and in deep conviction argue for a biocultural account of the human. Allegedly, the founder of Literary Darwinism is Joseph Carroll who published *Evolution and Literary Theory* in 1995, and *Literary Darwinism* in 2004, thus establishing the grounds for this relatively new approach to literary studies. A previous significant cornerstone of Literary Darwinism was the work of a Harvard biologist, E. O. Wilson, whose books *On Human Nature* (1978) and *Genes, Mind, and Culture: The Coevolutionary Process* (1981) were the foundation of the Dual Inheritance Theory, relating nature and culture, and promoting biocultural evolution.

However, it makes sense to go all the way back to Frye and the need he identified for “a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole” (Frye 1957: 16). His central hypothesis was that myth gives structure to literature, and that the story is at its centre. The evolutionary approach to fiction shares at least this much with Archetypal Criticism: it aims at providing a coordinating principle for the study of literature, it sees a literary work as a pattern of knowledge, and it makes us realize that fiction is central to human life. After all, what is myth if not a story. It seems that Frye was almost prophetic in 1957, turning to evolutionary biology for analogy or a model for literary research.

Brian Boyd published *On the Origin of Stories* in 2009, exactly 150 years after the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. His intention was

clear: to offer a new paradigm that would fundamentally transform the framework for literary study following in the footsteps of Darwin's theory of evolution. At one point he ambitiously expresses his desire: that "all literary criticism accepts that our evolutionary past provides a natural framework for understanding our Present" (Boyd 2009: 384). The old idea referred to in the subtitle is, obviously, the theory of evolution. Darwin's contribution to this ancient idea is the mechanism of natural selection²: "Natural selection is the preservation of a functional advantage that enables a species to compete better in the wild" (Darwin's Theory Of Evolution - A Theory in Crisis). Evolutionary critics apply the theory of natural selection as the basis of evolution to human nature and behavior and propose a biocultural approach to art and literature (Bérubé), "an account of fiction (and of art in general) that takes in our widest context for explaining life, evolution" (Boyd 2009: 11). The contribution of evolutionary critics in general is therefore the idea that art is a form of human adaptation, so evolutionary literary study explores the adaptive functions of arts and literature. Finally, Boyd's original contribution lies in the role he assigns to cognitive play that enhances pattern recognition as the source of art, and in foregrounding attention as the survival benefit of practicing arts and telling stories. Sue Bond as one of the reviewers of Boyd's book sums up what seems to be most interesting about it:

The subject is a terrific one: why is it that humans are the only species to have a sustained artistic impulse? Why do we exert so much energy to produce art, and specifically, tell made-up stories? Is art generally just a byproduct (as Stephen Pinker believes) of human development, something pleasurable we like to do but not really of any evolutionary benefit; or has it developed because it is actually of some benefit to our survival, and our dominance as a species? (Bond)

Boyd tries to answer all these questions within *Evocriticism* as the "widest possible explanatory perspective for literary studies" (Boyd 2009: 389), that can "investigate works at multiple levels, from the universal to the particular" (Ibid: 388), and that makes possible "genuine and valid interdisciplinarity, through a connected, coherent, cumulative and relentlessly self-critical body of knowledge" (Ibid: 386). The adaptive function of art, known in the theory of evolution as the survival value, lies in enhancing our survival skills: "Art develops in us habits of imaginative exploration, so that we take the world as not closed and given, but open and to be shaped on our own terms" (Boyd 2009: 124). Another reviewer, Michael Berube elaborates on this:

By refining and strengthening our sociality, by making us readier to use the resources of the imagination, and by raising our confidence in shaping life on our own terms, art fundamentally alters our relation to the world. The survival consequences may be difficult to tabulate, but they are profound. We have long felt that art matters to us. It does, objectively as well as subjectively. By focusing our attention away from the

² "It may be said that natural selection is daily and hourly scrutinising, throughout the world, every variation, even the slightest; rejecting that which is bad, preserving and adding up all that is good; silently and insensibly working, whenever and wherever opportunity offers, at the improvement of each organic being in relation to its organic and inorganic conditions of life" (Darwin 45).



given to a world of shared, humanly created possibility, art makes all the difference (Bérubé).

Boyd especially emphasizes the utility of fiction: “Storytelling sharpens our social cognition, prompts us to reconsider human experience, and spurs our creativity in the way that comes most naturally to us” (Boyd 2009: 384). In more simple words, we cannot live without stories, be they gossip or grand (religious, political) narratives. They offer strategic information that can guide our immediate decisions, or general principles useful for planning future actions, and thus enhance our survival and reproductive success by allowing us to hypothesize, to speculate, to anticipate. Stories give us an incentive to keep connecting with each other through empathy with fictional characters. Stories increase social cohesion by setting forth “the group’s shared beliefs, myths, symbols and history (real or legendary), creating a greater identity, a culture” (Miller). All these are evolutionary adaptations that mankind reached through the process of blind variation and selective retention: what proved useful was preserved, and the useless weeded out. The point that Boyd wants to drive in is “that natural selection has shaped the structure and function not only of our bodies but also of our minds (Boyd 2009: 3).

4. Creative Fiction and Evocriticism

Many reviewers of Boyd’s *On the Origin of Stories* found fault either with the book’s idea, or with its structure, or with the author’s style. What is perhaps most surprising is the general reluctance to accept the unity of knowledge, which Edward Osborne Wilson named ‘consilience’ in his famous 1998 book (Wilson). Boyd fully endorsed Wilson’s conception “that the sciences, the humanities, and the arts should be connected with each other, so that science (most immediately, the life sciences) can inform the humanities and the arts, and vice versa” (Boyd, *Getting It All Wrong*). A biologist like Darwin, Wilson has the perspective of hard empirical sciences. A literary critic, Boyd like Frye scans the field from the point of view of humanities. The third missing angle of this epistemological triangle are the arts, in this case fiction, and one of the books that fills the gap is Nino Ricci’s *The Origin of Species*. Contributing to the validity of the consilience theory, Nino Ricci shows that adaptive knowledge can be gained in different ways.

The title of Ricci’s novel that won the 2008 Governor General’s prize for fiction screams allusions to Darwin and the theory of evolution, which it in fact illustrates. Ricci is noted in Canada for his daring reworking of grand narratives. His trilogy that began with *Lives of the Saints* was followed by *Testament*, a novel in which he goes back to the life and works of Jesus Christ showing how one man can change history even without working supernatural miracles. Ricci believes that the next man who challenged fundamental notions of humanity was Charles Darwin whose insights are reconsidered today in many different fields, as shown above. Though the novel is set in modern-day Canada, the theory of evolution as presented by Darwin is not only a

backdrop but a prop that intrudes into the life of the characters on the fictional stage of the novel.

The book opens with a collision between the main character, Alex Fratarcangeli, and his sick neighbour, Esther. In fact, the first word in the book is ‘the girl,’ referring to Esther, and suggesting to an experienced reader that she will play a significant role in the story, or in the life of Alex. She suffers from multiple sclerosis that will rapidly develop in the course of a few months leading to her death at the end of the novel. The last scene depicts Alex saying goodbye to her unresponding body in hospital, and leaving. The novel ends with the word ‘life’ whose symbolic expansiveness must have been intentional. These two words encompass almost 500 pages of superb narrative, incredibly rich with historical, scientific and psychological detail all related to the cultural context of Montreal in 1980s, besides some excursions to Sweden and the Galapagos Islands. However, the destiny of Esther from the very start points to the focus of Ricci’s novel: the impact of evolution on an individual on a daily basis. She seems to be a perfect illustration of the effect of the survival of the fittest mechanism, which is wrongly attributed to Darwin. It is a phrase coined by Herbert Spencer for what Darwin called natural selection. Esther proves to be unfit in biological terms as her disease prevents her from fulfilling her biological role. Of the four key natural selection factors, she satisfies the first one, survival to adulthood, though imperfectly since she dies in her thirties. Regarding mate access, mating success and fertility, however hard she was trying, Esther failed in sexually attracting Alex, and her reproductive success equals zero, meaning that in terms of the theory of evolution she failed and was doomed to extinction. In other words, since she was not well-adapted her genes would not be spreading in the gene pool, so that despite the high level of modern civilization, mankind still appears to be in the grip of merciless nature “red in tooth and claw.”

This line of the story would have been too simplistic if it had not been for the complicated story of Alex himself which shows the interplay of nature and culture. Ricci had a clear idea of his character which he explained in an interview (Marx):

I thought of Alex as a sort of everyman. He is just a guy trying to get by, to have a meaningful relationship, often behaving like a typical guy, starting relationships with women and ending them out of fear of commitment or whatever it is without intentionally behaving like a cad, yet somehow instinctively doing so. Someone at whom life has thrown a number of curve balls at this point, and in fiction you need conflict, to put the main character behind the eight-ball for things to happen.

In this case he is that unfortunate victim, but someone who brings a wide interpretative lens to his experiences, someone who is trying to see the big picture, someone who is trying to make sense of the contradictions he sees and tensions he sees in himself. He is trying, as many people are, to live the good life, but isn’t sure how to go about doing it.

Whatever Alex is trying to do with his life, he is an irritating character. He seems to be hopelessly incompetent, self-centred, confused, immature, directionless. He is incapable of making decisions, even insignificant ones like opening the door for Esther or not, talking to her or not, and when he does, he always regrets it, living



in a state of permanent dilemma about everything. The novel is actually taken up with his indecisions about the people he needs to meet, the steps he needs to take, the plans he needs to make to somehow get his life in order. It would be a typical pattern for a bildungsroman if he were not thirtyish, and therefore almost ridiculous in his clownish insecurities.

If Alex is an imperfect character, so is the world in which he lives. He moves from Toronto to Montreal in 1980s, and this urban setting is given considerable significance in the novel. The city is all confusion, starting with the state of Alex's building and the housing laws to the top politics of immigration to Canada, French language codification, HIV fever, and the global context of incessant local wars and catastrophes like Chernobyl. This is an imperfect world so that Alex's adaptation skills are constantly tested, and he does not seem to be a prime candidate for survival. E. O. Wilson says that while human nature is driven by biology, it is also always embedded in culture. Biologically speaking, Alex is a representative sample. Ricci hints at his good blond looks, big strong body, and general health which make him a desirable mate. By the age of thirty Alex should have fathered a few children with different women thus securing the future of his genes. However, it is his embeddedness in culture that complicates the natural course of things. Boyd defines culture as "the nongenetic transmission of behavior, including local customs and even fashions" (Boyd 2009: 25). The Canadian (or Western) cultural context expects Alex first to see to his education, get a good job and then start a family. As it is, Alex is stuck with his Ph.D. thesis, doing occasional teaching jobs, and avoiding serious relationships, in an existential limbo due to his fear of commitment. All this does not contribute to his chances of survival and reproduction.

Chance has a significant place in the theory of evolution. "Enormous complexity, Darwin showed, could happen through a process that appears almost random" (Boyd 2009: 33). However, not all evolution is adaptation—there are other factors, such as nonbiological "chance" events (asteroids, volcanoes, climate or geological change) or genetic drift" (Boyd 2009: 34) that can equally affect one's survival prospects. In the novel, these are the social policies and practices Alex has little influence upon as well as his chance meetings with various persons. While he cannot apply any selection criteria regarding external factors like regulations and laws, epidemics and technological catastrophes, he does have some power over the accidental meetings and relationships he may establish. Besides many people he encounters daily in his classes, at parties, in the streets of Montreal, three persons he met by chance ultimately give shape to Alex's life: Esther, Ingrid and Desmond.

Desmond is a discredited British Darwinian biologist whose revenge plan led him to the Galapagos Islands where Alex became his unwitting accomplice. The tragedy of this man who drowns in the sea in order to save the plant samples proving genetic drift remains a secret in Alex's memory for many years, though it was evidently under Desmond's influence that Alex starts observing the world in Darwinian terms. He is quite cynical about it, always finding the darkest aspects of Darwin to interpret his experiences, so that even falling in love is seen as a trick of nature to secure multiplication.

Ingrid is a beautiful woman who picks him up in Sweden obviously for his sexual attractiveness. What he believes is a casual repeated affair with her in the course of a few years becomes the axis of his life when he learns that he fathered a child. The boy is already five when Ingrid finally writes a letter about him to Alex. That is how a chance meeting will fundamentally change his future life.

Esther, despite his unwillingness, becomes a close friend who will help him find evolutionary focus for his dissertation on their first meeting. She makes him talk so telling her the story about his thesis he grasps its elements and moves from the dead point. Esther also teaches him the value of life through her own struggle and empowers him to go and meet his son which will be the beginning of his mature life.

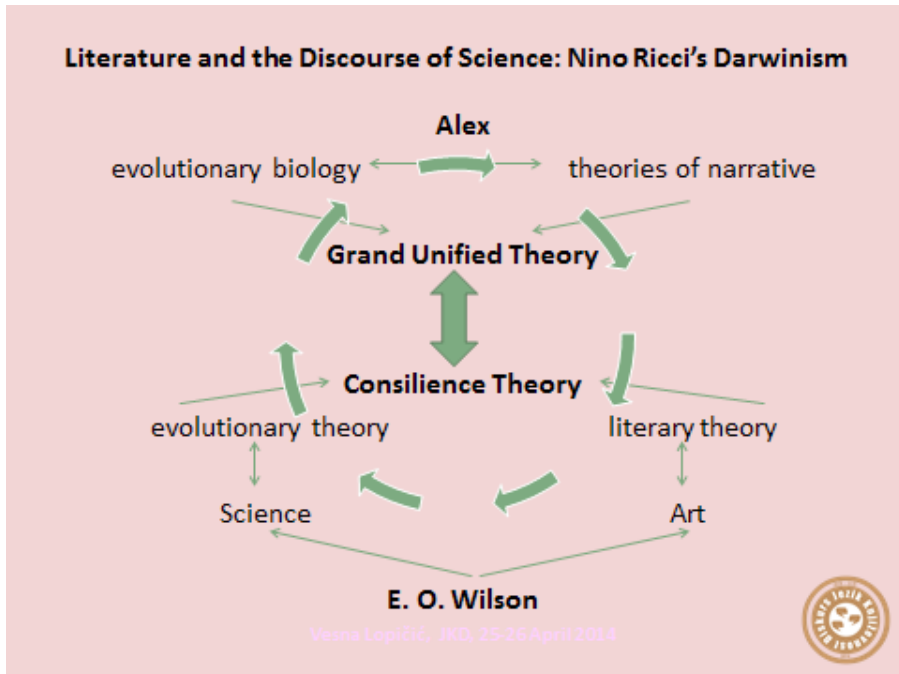
As Dawkins insists, “Darwinism is *not* a theory of random chance. It is a theory of random mutation plus *non-random* cumulative natural selection” (Boyd 2009: 33). By analogy, out of all accidental meetings, Alex benefits most from these three so that his selective retention of these experiences accumulates success and he begins living the good life.

Ricci’s craft relates theory and fiction on two levels. On the one hand, Alex is a scholar who is looking for a way to link evolutionary theory to theories of narrative“ (Ricci, 9) in order to create a Grand Unified Theory (Ricci, 6). It is in fact identical to E. O. Wilson’s Consilience Theory, unifying literary theory and evolutionary biology, art and science. Despite the help of his all too human supervisor and his own academic rigour, Alex is inefficient until he talks to Esther. Then, it all clicks and he realizes that fiction has an adaptive evolutionary function to which Boyd devotes a whole chapter of his book. On the other hand, while his intellect is trying to bring order and discover pattern among multiple disciplines, his private life suffers from randomness and chance. Ricci is explicit about Darwin killing God:

Not a masterwork, really: a hodgepodge, a mishmash, a mess. Things wore down; they turned against themselves; they sat crammed in their flimsy body bag like so much underwear and socks packed in a hurry. There was no artist, really, that was the problem. *No plan*. This happened, then that; something worked, then it didn’t (Ricci, 464).

Alex realises that in the absence of God, and against the backdrop of evolutionary blind chance, he has to take control over his life by applying his personal selection criteria. Darwin’s *non-random* cumulative natural selection in his case means that though he became a biological father by chance, he will choose to become a dad to his son.

Ricci seems to be saying that life and theory need to go hand in hand, that art and science should not be separated, and that “the meaning of it was simply that it was there” (471), it standing for the whole experience of man’s life. His novel is a tribute to Darwin: “What held the whole caboodle together, of course, was Mr. Darwin: Narrative, like everything else, was a strategy. Get it right, and, like Scheherazade, you survived.”



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KNJIŽEVNOST I NAUČNI DISKURS: DARVINIZAM NINA RIČIJA

Sažetak

O poreklu vrsta (1859) Čarlsa Darvina, *O poreklu vrsta* (2009) Brajana Bojda i *Poreklo vrsta* (2008) Nina Ričija knjige su koje dolaze iz različitih oblasti: prirodnih nauka, književne kritike i lepe književnosti. Ma koliko raznolike one su povezane, te je cilj ovog rada da pokaže kako naučni diskurs odjekuje u moderna vremena i otvara nove prostore za pronalaženje značenja u našoj inače nasumičnoj egzistenciji. Originalna Darwinova teorija evolucije zasniva se na principima adaptacije putem prirodne selekcije i podrazumeva varijacije izazvane genetskim mutacijama o čemu Darwin, logično, ništa nije znao. Brajan Bojd polazi od jedne isključivo ljudske osobine, stvaranja umetnosti, te posebno umetnosti pričanja izmišljenih priča, i proučava njenu vrednost za preživljavanje u pokušaju da dokaže da je pripovedanje od ogromnog značaja za preživljavanje ljudske vrste. On čak tvrdi da mi, kao vrsta, ne možemo da živimo bez pričanja priča. Negde u isto vreme, Nino Riči piše roman o moralno i egzistencijalno dezorijentisanom Kanadaninu u kome fikcionalizuje poreklo jedne nove književne teorije i povezuje naratologiju sa evolutivnom biologijom. Ričijev antijunak Aleks Fratarkangeli navodno razvija Evokritiku (kao neki fiktivni Bojd) ili darvinovsku književnu kritiku, dok piše svoju doktorsku tezu i dokazuje (preko svog književnog junaka) da nasumičnost, slučajnost, arbitrarnost ipak mogu dati formu ljudskom životu. U ovom nagrađivanom romanu Riči prikazuje evoluciju ne ljudske vrste već pojedinca i istovremeno spaja naučni i književni diskurs.

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