## Mavis Gallant: ‘Rue de Lille’ – John Updike: ‘Rabbit, Run’

Both Mavis Gallant in her short story ‘*Rue de Lille’* and John Updike in an extract from his book *‘Rabbit, Run’* use a topic of a fragile, married woman. Although Rabbit´s wife Janice and Juliette, passed “heroine” of ‘*Rue de Lille’*, are both affected by unhappy marriages, they are opposite to each other not only because of their personal characters, but also thanks to the ways the authors present them and their fragility to a reader.

Even though Janice is relatively young, Rabbit sees his wife as an old woman with thin hair and wrinkles at the corners of her mouth. According to his opinion, she is imperfect in many ways. She is stupid, lazy, clumsy, even irresponsible. The storyteller in Gallant´s story, Juliette´s husband, has a completely different view of his wife. Unlike Janice, Juliette died in her sixties and she was still seen by her husband as a girlish woman with her soft and grey hair tied by a satin ribbon. Next to Janice, she seems to be a perfect wife – quiet, supportive and really loving, as her husband thinks.

Both women clearly grew up in different social conditions in different times and different places, but they got married quite young with men, who are trying to prove to themselves that they are better than (or at least as good as) their wives. As conclusion, Janice and Juliette are forced to live in unhappy marriages and maybe even feel desperate about these relationships. They show this desperation to their husbands in different ways. Janice is more a simple and mentally unstable girl who can be cheeky as well as hurt and tired. On contrary, Juliette seems to be still quiet, still listening to her husband and playing her part as a good wife.

In spite of all these facts Juliette and Janice seem to be afraid of losing their husbands. In my opinion, a motherhood has a very important role in this case. Janice gave birth to the son Nelson and she is pregnant again. It is understandable that she is afraid to be a single mother without her husband and therefore no secure income. She appears to be aware of her situation that she is dependent on Rabbit. Juliette did not have any children and even though she may have not been content in her relationship, she (at least in some way) must have loved her husband. She is relatively independent with a good job, but she still must have waited probably a long time for her husband to divorce from his first wife and marry her.

In think that the view of both husbands on their wives´ fragility is connected simply to their illusions. Rabbit lives with Janice, he sees her mistakes, “stupidity” and misery every day, he lost his illusions about his wife and her beauty, which vanished with years they spent together. On the other hand, the storyteller of ‘*Rue de Lille’* gained his illusions again after his wife had died, he probably remembers only good things which happened during their marriage and created picture of some kind of “saint”.