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British and American Studies

**2022**

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British and American Studies

*A Journal of Romanian Society of English and American Studies*

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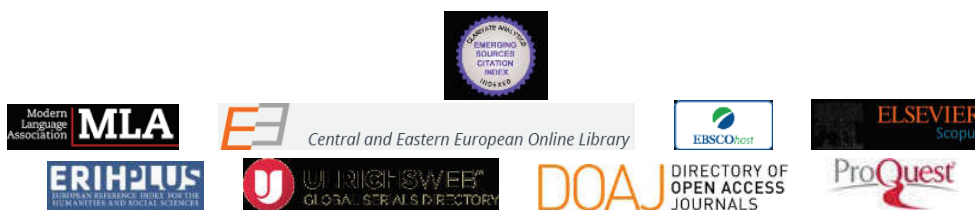
## Publisher

THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE,  
UNIVERSITY OF TIMIȘOARA

The language of the journal is English. Contributions from both Romania and abroad are welcome. Articles for publication should be sent to Prof. Hortensia Pârlog, Department of English Language and Literature, 4, Bd. Vasile Pârvan, 300223, Timișoara, Romania. They should be supplied both as a hard copy and electronically at [bas.journal@gmail.com](mailto:bas.journal@gmail.com)

© British and American Studies, vol. XXVIII, 2022

BAS. *British and American Studies* is indexed in the following data bases:



ISSN 1224-3086

e-ISSN 2457-7715

**Publisher** MARILENA TUDOR  
**Cover Design** DAN URSACHI  
**Cover Illustration** IOSIF STROIA  
**Layout** DORIN DAVIDEANU

**Editura Universității de Vest**

Calea Bogdăneștilor, nr. 32A, 300389, Timișoara  
E-mail: [editura@e-uvv.ro](mailto:editura@e-uvv.ro); Tel.: +40 - 256 592 681

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***LINGERING IN THE GOLDEN GLEAM***





**“NO MORE YIELDING BUT A DREAM”: POLITICS OF FICTION  
AS TROMPE-L’OEIL IN *THE TEMPEST* AND *HAG-SEED***

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**Abstract:** *The two Prospero(s) of this pair of literary texts authorize the history, (re)stage the tempest, play chess with the characters: by mirroring, repeating and eventually decentering, the play and the rewriting’s cyclical mechanism undermine their cores in terms of the legitimacy of power. By taking the main characters of both literary texts as prominent ruler figures, the present study aims to explore the ways in which they alter the perception of reality through a consistent mirror effect, with references to the uncanny ‘politics’ and Belsey’s appropriation of trompe-l’oeil to literary studies.*

**Keywords:** *Hag-Seed, trompe-l’oeil, the uncanny, The Tempest, Shakespeare*

## **1. Introduction**

Once wandering around the streets of a small town in Italy, Freud recalls, he finds himself in a narrow street where the windows of the houses are filled with “nothing but painted women” (1919: 11). Appalled by the scenery, he takes the first turn off this street in order to escape this disturbing vision. But the labyrinth-like narrow streets, totally alien to him, lead to the same street, which he tries to avoid once more. Nevertheless, he somehow finds himself in the same street for the third time. When Freud explains the uncanniness of repeating and recurring situations by drawing a line between “that sense of helplessness sometimes experienced in dreams” towards the end of “The Uncanny,” he shares this personal anecdote to illustrate the uncanniness of ‘the uncanny’ (idem: 10). Then, he concludes: “Other situations having in common with my adventure an involuntary return to the same situation, but which differ radically from it in other respects, also result in the same feeling of helplessness and of something uncanny.” (idem: 11).

As Freud explains, one of the sources of the uncanny is the cyclical motion of returning to the point of departure and, consequently, being exposed to the same image over and over again. The aim of my paper is to argue that both Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Margaret Atwood’s *Hag-Seed* reveal a similar kind of motion. Via mirroring most of what constitutes the subject matter of their respective texts, the play and the rewriting direct characters and audience alike towards encountering the same image. The conceptual framework in discussing the literary works will be the politics of fiction as trompe-l’oeil in the context of the uncanny. In this comparative reading, as I argue, the effect of trompe-l’oeil serves to augment the uncanny effect. The first part of my analysis will focus on the

relationship between the concepts of the uncanny and *trompe-l'oeil*, more specifically on how the effects of this pair of concepts are combined and demonstrated in the literary works under discussion. In the textual analysis part, the uncanny cyclical motion of Freud's statement, as I claim, finds its correspondence in the form of narration in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* through a consistent mirror effect and a distorted sense of reality. Both Prospero and Felix authorize the history, (re)stage the tempest, play chess with the characters: they mirror actions and characters within themselves and in their narratives. In the end, both of them get back to where they began, by completing their circular motion.

## 2. Slippery ground of reality: *trompe-l'oeil* and the uncanny

Originally being a visual art technique, the *trompe-l'oeil* is defined as "something that misleads or deceives the senses" (Merriam-Webster). Catherine Belsey (2008) introduces this concept in the fields of literature and psychoanalysis in her study "Love as *Trompe-l'oeil*: Taxonomies of Desire in *Venus and Adonis*". Named after the title of Louis-Léopold Boilly's 19<sup>th</sup> century painting, the technique is thought to have originated in an Ancient Greek story about two rival painters: Zeuxis and Parrhasius (Taws 2019). Zeuxis depicts the grapes in his painting in such a realistic way that even birds fly towards the picture. In response, his rival Parrhasius challenges Zeuxis with his painting of a curtain, which is depicted in such a way that even Zeuxis asks him to reveal what is behind it. In the end, Parrhasius becomes the winner. The curtain, in this respect, reflects the curiosity that the painting evokes. It becomes an object of mystery through the absence of what is behind it; in Belsey's (2008: 34) words, it "tantalizes".

In Belsey's account of appropriating the *trompe-l'oeil*, the concept is explained as the representative of a promise without fulfilment. In the context of *Venus and Adonis*, Belsey argues that the effect of *trompe-l'oeil* is demonstrated by "the promise of a presence that it also withholds" (ibid). Just like in Zeuxis' painting, where "the enticing picture of the grapes yields no pleasure for the stomach," Venus's desire and longing for Adonis' physical appearance remain unsatisfied all through the poem (idem: 35). In order to enjoy the *trompe-l'oeil* effect of the text, Belsey (34) stresses that we need to be deceived and, in turn, acknowledge our deception. In this way, it becomes possible to evaluate a text in itself as "a kind of *trompe-l'oeil*, moving undecidably between modes of address, and sustaining the desire of the reader in the process." (idem: 35). The sustained desire of the reader is left unsatisfied at the end by the sustained action of the narrative: after his/her willing deception, the reader is left with nothing but a spectacle that fails to gratify with an enclosing action. Thus, the narrative goes full circle with the beginning, without finalizing the action and satisfying Venus' desire. As Belsey (53) concludes: "Itself a *trompe-l'oeil*, moving between genres, unclosed, unfurnished with a final signified, *Venus and Adonis* sustains the desire of the reader-critic to the degree that it refuses to yield the gratification of a final meaning (...)."

As Belsey clarifies, the *trompe-l'oeil* in literature signifies certain characteristics of unfinalized narrative action and sustained promise on the reader's side. In this respect, the *trompe-l'oeil* in literature can be demonstrated as the narrative's cyclical motion by going a full circle between the beginning and the body of the action. In doing so, the narrative faces the reader with similar modes of address, with mirroring actions and characters. In these terms, the narrative turns in

upon itself through multiplying the same character traits and mirroring plot outlines: not progressively, but cyclically. This kind of cyclical motion blurs any lines between fiction and reality, while invalidating points of reference in fiction by doubling, repeating, and creating counterparts of characters and events.

### 3. “Ay, there’s the rub”: the mechanism of *The Tempest*

Through mirroring effects both in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*, this cyclical mechanism destabilizes reference points of reality in characters and actions. By the same token, the source of the uncanny is often explained as “intellectual uncertainty” since Jentsch’s (1997: 15) take on the subject. Furthermore, in Royle’s (2003: 134) clarification, the concept is associated with its “undo[ing] any certainty about what is real and what is not”. The uncanny feeling, in this respect, springs from the interweaving of imagination and reality in the narratives. By exposing the reader to similar situations in multiple characters, the play and the rewriting undermine the centrality and meaning of the main stories; thus, they lead to uncertainty and ambiguity in the reader’s experience.

My claim is that *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* can be discussed as texts woven onto the combination of *trompe-l’oeil* and the uncanny. Naturally, this is not to attribute intentionality to their respective authors, both creators of masterpieces who cannot and should not be suspected of such theoretical designs. Nevertheless, the consistent mirroring effect in both of them, accomplished via repetitions, parallels, and equivalent situations cannot be overlooked. Marjorie Garber elaborates on the pattern of *The Tempest*, underlining that the play’s mechanism is “to repeat, with a difference, all the main events of the past (tempest, usurpation, bondage, rule of the island). As they are repeated, each is interrogated, reversed, and undone.” (2004: 862). Through this mechanism, all the characters, events, and eventually the play in itself are decentred. In *The Tempest*, all action takes place under Prospero’s wand and for the sake of Prospero’s motivations: his motivations are clarified as his wish to take revenge on his brother, be reinstated in his seat of power, and marry his daughter into power. In order to achieve his goal, Prospero the magician goes to all lengths.

The play begins *in medias res*, so that anyone who encounters the text is an imposter to the play’s mechanism compared to Prospero. Even though the play starts with the storm scene, Prospero’s authorizing their history to Miranda in act I, scene 2 turns the wheels of the play’s mechanism. He presents the story of his betrayal in a literal description, as Kott (1964: 246) contends, “with a dry precision, as if in a history text-book; it has been unfolded like a formula, like a mechanism”. In this way, it becomes possible to trace and compare this formulation in subsequent mirror stories. In this scene especially, Prospero’s telling Miranda the story of their past is a way of vindicating and shaping their current reality. His authorization of the past becomes a way to manipulate the present; and he does indeed, manipulate the present through creating a slippery ground of reality, by mirroring characters and events in the conduct of his magic. There are numerous mirroring situations and characters within the plotline which are created via Prospero’s authoritative magic: Caliban and Prospero, Caliban and Ariel, Prospero and Alonso, Antonio and Sebastian, Miranda and Claribel, Prospero and Sycorax, Claribel and Sycorax, Ferdinand and Caliban; Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban mirror Prospero and Antonio. In the images of all these doubling and mirroring characters, one can find the remnants of the other one with slight

alterations. As Nicholas Royle (2003: 183) discusses the uncanniness of experiencing *déjà vu*, by referring to Havelock Ellis' definition on the subject:

the feeling of *déjà vu* involves 'the impression that the present reality has a double'. *Déjà vu* is the experience of the double *par excellence*: it is the experience of experience as double. There can be no uncanny, perhaps, without some experience of this duplicity. (183)

Thus, the notion of having doubles of the present reality undermines the "sense of familiar ground" in acknowledging the play (idem: 178). In encountering resembling cases in various characters, the reader experiences that peculiar feeling of *déjà vu*, in Freud's words, "of having had the same experience once before or of having once before been in the same place" (qtd. in Royle 2003: 181). In this respect, being exposed to the same image over and over again without finalizing any individual matter adds to the play's cyclical mechanism. Only after Prospero tells the story of his past, are the other stories introduced as a way of making parallels between characters. In this way, to give an example, Antonio's way of usurping Prospero's dukedom becomes strangely equivalent to Prospero's seizing control of the island from Caliban. On the other hand, Prospero's control over the island and its subjects through his magician-rulership mirrors Sycorax's administration in the past. Through all these mirrors, the play continuously offers counterparts, decentres itself and shifts its focus.

Another step in Prospero's creation of a slippery reality for the characters is through their senses. In order to operate his magic, Prospero distorts the way characters perceive themselves and each other. Miranda, who has never seen another human being except for her father and Caliban, mistakes Ferdinand for "a spirit" (I.2.410); Ferdinand, who has been cunningly placed on a different part of the island and 'directed' to fall in love with Miranda, exclaims in wonder: "Most sure, the goddess / On whom these airs attend!" (I.2.423-424). Ariel, by being able to raise tempests and control elements, is Prospero's "brave spirit" who is motivated by the hope of freedom (I.2.205). By the same token, in order to keep Ariel under his control, Prospero, the author of the story, refreshes Ariel's memory about Sycorax's evil nature and her misdoings in the past, by underlining what a wicked witch she was. Caliban, on the other hand, has been turned into a manual worker by the force of Prospero's magic, because they "cannot miss him" (I.2.311). Prospero never ceases to remind Caliban of his true nature consistently throughout the play, saying "A devil, a born devil on whose nature / Nurture can never stick" (IV.1.188-189). Thus, he manipulates Caliban's grasp of himself and his environment to the point where he is made incapable of perceiving any other treatment by others or an alternative force to function. To illustrate this, when he meets Trinculo and Stephano, Caliban can only conceive of himself and Ariel through their relationship to Prospero: "*a spirit of his*, and to torment me / For bringing wood in slowly." (emphasis added; II.2.15-16).

In parallel with these examples of perception, there is an ambiguity in the characters' sense of reality: all throughout the play, this ambiguity is constantly demonstrated via the dichotomies between consciousness/sobriety and sleep/drunkenness. As Prospero puts it in the unforgettable "our little life / Is rounded with a sleep", the play's circular shape is girdled with the state of sleep (IV.1.157-158). This notion connects to Garber's (2004: 861) observation that "the whole play takes place during the mariners' dream, the dream of the uninformed,

and the uninvolved". Thus, *The Tempest* mingles reality with imagination and the notion of reality gets contaminated by delusiveness. From the moment Prospero enchants Miranda to sleep after authorizing their history to her, the play enters the realm of that strange mixture of delusive reality. As in numerous scenes in the play, in Miranda's sleep (I.2), in the sleep of the nobles (II.1), and the drunkenness of the fools (II.2, III.2), the state of loose consciousness becomes a way for Prospero to work his magic and put his plan into practice. Immediately after Miranda's enchantment, Ariel arrives and delivers his updates on the storm. During the nobles' sleep, Antonio and Sebastian plot against Alonso's life and kingdom. Also, in their considerably less than sober state, Caliban, Trinculo, and Stephano decide to get control of the island by overthrowing Prospero, thus recreating the previous usurpation act in Prospero's life. Caliban advises his allies to depose Prospero in his sleep: "Why, as I told thee, 'tis a custom with him, / I' th' afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him, / Having first seized his books" (III.2.85-87).

During all these moments of 'unconsciousness', the play opens a way for disarranging reality and power. A significant moment for observing the transformation of Caliban to his former self via intoxication and the continuation of the cyclical motion occurs when Stephano makes Caliban drink wine to get him under his control. Thus, Caliban's sense of reality is altered, although his subordinate position would continue, albeit under a different master. Stephano mimics Prospero's pattern of behaviour towards Caliban at the beginning. Just like he served Prospero at his best, showed him the sources of water, picked up berries, and gathered wood for him, Caliban offers to transfer his services to the new master (II.2.153-157). This notion echoes Caliban's speech in act I, scene 2, stating Prospero's well-treatment towards him when he first came to the island (I.2.332-334/336). These parallel scenes demonstrate how easily the rule can change hands when one manipulates reality and follows some particular paths in acquiring and legitimizing power. Especially in the plot scene, when Stephano, Trinculo and Caliban conspire against Prospero's rule of the island, the play once again undoes and decentres itself by introducing a parodic double of *The Tempest* story. Hence, by representing an alternative, comic version of Prospero in the character of Stephano, the play opens a way to criticize and mock the story and revenge plan of Prospero. This mock coup d'état plan against Prospero mirrors other plans of overthrow in the play, e.g. Prospero's dispossession of Caliban, Antonio's taking over his brother's dukedom, Sebastian and Antonio's strike against Alonso's sovereignty, and Prospero's final taking back his dukedom from his brother, in alliance with Alonso. By mirroring, repeating, and eventually parodying, the play's cyclical mechanism undermines its core in terms of the legitimacy of power.

#### 4. "Who's there?": the mirror(s) of *Hag-Seed*

In terms of representation of the slippery reality, the scope of Atwood's rewriting carries its "vertical heritage", coming from the original play (Maalouf 2000: 86). By placing *The Tempest* mechanism all over the plotline and in different layers of the main character, the play's story is grasped by and scattered about the narrative. While we can elaborate on Prospero's character as a magician-ruler figure, Atwood represents Felix's character as a poly-Prospero in the rewriting. There are multiple Prospero(s) in the character of Felix: one can take him as a direct counterpart of Prospero as the conductor of the storm in the Shakespearean

text, but, at the same time, as both the director/instructor and the actor of *The Tempest* in the rewriting.

Atwood's rewriting of the play, *Hag-Seed* tells the story of *The Tempest* in all its layers. Just like the original play, the novel begins *in medias res*, with the prologue of the production with Fletcher Correctional Players. Felix, the main character, conveys the story of his past in fragments and in the narrative present. He is described as a lonely man who lost his wife, and then his daughter, Miranda. Felix used to be the artistic director of experimental productions, especially Shakespearean plays. When personal misfortune strikes, his closest colleague, Tony, offers to take the burden of dealing with the administrative jobs on Felix's behalf. While preparing for a production of *The Tempest*, Felix is deposed from his position under the fabricated pretext of having lost touch with reality. Behind this deposition plan are Tony and Sal O'Nally, the director of the Festival. While leaving the building, Lonnie Gordon, (the counterpart character of Shakespeare's Gonzalo in the narrative) gives the props of Prospero's character to Felix "as a memento," in a gesture evocative of Gonzalo's supplying magic books and instruments to Prospero for his survival and power (Atwood 2017: 26). After this, Felix starts putting together his elaborate revenge, which also serves as a means of resurrecting his daughter.

After leaving his job at the theatre, Felix finds himself an abandoned house. He takes a new identity, as Mr Duke, for the sake of "hav[ing] an alter ego (...) without his own melancholy history," and rents the place; he then spends his next twelve years with the ghost of his late daughter (idem: 37). During that period of time, he follows Tony and Sal online and initiates his laborious revenge. On his ninth year, he takes the job of drama teacher of the Fletcher Correctional Players at the prison, with the help of Estelle, the professor who supervises the programme. On his twelfth year, learning that that year's performance, *The Tempest*, will be attended by Tony and Sal, who have become Minister of Heritage and Minister of Justice, respectively, he considers this performance the perfect setting for putting his revenge plan into practice.

In the plotline of the rewriting, *The Tempest* mechanism is activated in the main character's different layers of composition, with Felix reflecting Prospero, in an excellent, creative example of the *mise-en-abyme* technique. Before the span of the narrative, the reader is indirectly informed by the narrative voice that Felix had lost his daughter while he was preparing for the production of *The Tempest*. His own Miranda, is thus figuratively lost in *The Tempest*, besides being literally lost to life. This loss triggers a desire to bend the rules of reality and resurrect the dead; the narrative voice announces that "He would create a fit setting for this reborn Miranda he was willing into being." (idem: 15-16). By restaging *The Tempest* in the following years, Felix aims to bring his daughter back to life, as well as to take revenge; this bears a strong similarity to Prospero's conducting the storm so as to give his daughter the life that she deserves and to avenge himself. Felix is betrayed by Tony, his most trusted, when he least expects it, just like Prospero is deprived of his position by his very brother, while engaged in his study of magic. Eventually, just like Prospero's life in the enchanted island, Felix loses his former position and is reduced to live in an abandoned house, under a fake identity. In planning revenge on his enemies by restaging *The Tempest*, Felix benefits from the identity of Mr Duke and is served by an inmate, 8Handz, with the technical illusory effects and Estelle with the bureaucratic issues; together they form the rewriting's composite Ariel.

The second layer of Felix's character composition is related to his being the director of the play both at Makeshiweg Festival and Fletcher Correctional Players and hence the conductor of the storm both in his personal and professional life. In the third layer, he is the actor of *The Tempest*, giving life to Prospero with the help of his prison acting company. Thus, the rewriting mixes the reality of the original play with illusion at different levels of Felix's character. Thus, on the one hand, Felix's character is wholly integrated into Prospero's within the scope of the rewriting, and he truly reflects Prospero's story at any given particular layer. On the other hand, the narrative's way of interweaving the play's story at different levels of Felix's character disturbs any "familiar ground" in the perception of his story (Royle 2003: 178). When the reader looks for the main body of the rewriting in terms of a direct counterpart to *The Tempest* story, that counterpart shifts its place all the time. Likewise, whenever one intends to grasp the story of the original play in the rewriting, it slips away and changes its place.

In line with this explanation, Jan Kott's analogy on the nature of Shakespearean drama corresponds to the mirroring mechanisms of the play and its rewriting:

Shakespearean dramas are constructed not on the principle of unity of action, but on the principle of analogy, comprising a double, treble, or quadruple plot, which repeats the same basic theme; they are a system of mirrors, as it were, both concave and convex, which reflect, magnify and parody the same situation. (Kott 1964: 237).

In this respect, the mirrors in the play and the rewriting can be evaluated in two distinct principles of convex and concave mirrors. Prospero's mirror is a convex mirror: by placing Prospero and his magic at its centre, it reflects the whole world of Prospero by enabling the audience to have a wider view of the island and its components as strange equivalents to each other. This convex mirror of Prospero's gives a broader view of the environment, as it enables one to see everything that encircles the one at the centre. In this case, the one at the centre, Prospero himself, is the constructor of the view with the help of his magic. In the image he constructs, all the other participants also mirror each other. On the other hand, Felix's mirror is a concave mirror: his mirror enables the reader to view his multi-layered character at an extremely close range. This kind of layering in Felix's character blurs the lines between imagination and reality in the narrative. Thus, Felix intertwines his character at the theatre and in real life by undoing any certainty in perception and reversing the points of reference in terms of the reality of his story. The more closely one looks at his image, the more the layers in his character get mixed with each other. In this way, the images he represents become indistinguishable from one another, and so do the various layers of character composition.

In line with the original play, the rewriting further maintains that slippery ground of reality through particular points in the plotline, as well as in its form of narrative. Different from Prospero's direct authorization of the history at the beginning of the play, Felix's past is conveyed to the reader through his fragmented account and an ambivalent omnipresent narrative voice, and with the help of analeptic and proleptic leaps. In the plotline of the rewriting, Felix's life in the abandoned house is accompanied by the ghost of his daughter. However, his way of apprehending Miranda's ghostly-figure is reflected accurately and down-to-earth, to the point of de-mystification and ambiguous treatment. This

representation of Miranda's dubious presence evokes the uncanny, as Jentsch (1997: 11) underlines, in its relation to "doubt as to whether an apparently living being is animate and, conversely, doubt as to whether a lifeless object may not in fact be animate". The animism aspect of the uncanny that Jentsch points out arises in the rewriting with the help of Felix's attributing a kind of liveliness to his daughter's ghost and is further supported by the narrative voice. In this way, the narrative voice does not vindicate or refuse Felix's attitude towards the figure of Miranda; therefore, the degree of uncanniness in her presence increases via this voice. As the narrative voice says: "He turns: Miranda's sitting at the table, a little pensively because she won't be seeing much of him now that it's January and the spring semester is about to begin." (Atwood 2017: 61). By conveying the description of Felix's environment as well as inner voice, the narrative voice neither explains nor rejects Miranda's ghostly presence, thus augmenting the uncanny effect. Through this voice, Miranda's ghost gains visibility, emotional capacity and physical motion: "Once he's tucked in and turned out the light, Miranda coalesces in the darkness. "Goodnight," he says to her. Does she brush the air above his forehead lightly with her hand? Surely she does." (119).

The slippery ground of the plotline reality is supported through each character's taking his role extremely personally in the production. Felix puts his vested interests to the forefront as his starting point in the production: taking revenge and resurrecting his daughter. To put his plan into practice, he chooses Anne-Marie Greenland, the actress selected to play Miranda in the previous production: "Through her, his Miranda would come back to life." (16). Thus, thorough Anne-Marie, Felix attributes a body to his daughter's ghost. Being the only female actress in his acting company, Anne-Marie is protected by Felix, in a fatherly manner. In the rehearsals of the acting company – similar to Prospero's shielding Miranda from Caliban or setting boundaries between Ferdinand and her before marriage – Felix worries about Anne-Marie's romantic relationships and intends to protect her from the potentialities of "[v]arious Calibans, scowling and muscular: earthy, potentially violent" (84). As she observes: "You're in character already," says Anne-Marie, grinning. "Playing my overprotective dad." (141). Felix's way of mingling imagination/theatre and reality here is beyond the concept of artistic immersion, due to his motivations and his way of holding onto reality. In Anne-Marie, he finds the lost body of his Miranda; and she is "released from her glass coffin... given a life." (41).

Also, Felix's way of connecting with his role is not limited to his profession. From the beginning, as the narrative details, there is no line of demarcation between his playing the role of Prospero in real life and in the theatre. Furthermore, in directing the play, Felix is ever-anxious about controlling each and every aspect of the production, plagued by the fear of possibly losing control; consequently, the piece of drama he puts on stage is not about demonstrating his professional talent, but about the very meaning of what he shapes his life around: revenge and resurrection. In this respect, his work in prison goes far beyond – or below, depending on the perspective of the critic - the purpose of rehabilitating the group of prisoners. Due to a slight alteration coming from his actors, Felix feels like his control over the play, hence his life, is slipping through his hands: "Ha. He's cutting me out, thinks Felix. Elbowing me aside. Making a bigger part for himself. How appropriate for Antonio." (155). Through this example and many others, he supports his way of merging his character with the textual identity of Prospero.



In view of all the above-mentioned examples of identification, the rewriting makes the line between life and theatre, reality and illusion, indistinguishable. Rather than decentralizing reality through offering parallels and counterparts in the plotline, as is the case with *The Tempest*, the rewriting accomplishes the reversal of the sense of reality through interweaving the play's story within the character of Felix and his world at different levels. Consequentially, one cannot discern the essence of the character independently from the play's mechanism. If we are to take *The Tempest* story as the main reference point of reality in the rewriting, *Hag-Seed* shifts its focus, decentres, undoes, and deconstructs that concrete ground by offering multiple stories as equivalent to *The Tempest*, without really creating and representing a counterpart story.

The aspect of *trompe-l'oeil* in terms of offering a promise without accomplishment is relatable to the play's and the rewriting's supplying a slippery ground of reality and not concluding the action in their respective texts: thus, they both lead their readers towards a kind of "intellectual [un]certainty," in Jentsch's (1997: 15) definition, in relating the mirroring characters and events in the plotline to a conclusion. On the audience's side, the mechanisms of the narratives lead to a certain feeling of *déjà vu* which defamiliarizes the reality of the image that they encounter. Eventually, like "the enticing picture of the grapes, yielding no pleasure to the stomach" in Zeuxis' painting, both narratives arrive at their points of departure (Belsey 2008: 35). Both Prospero and Felix deconstruct the ground of reality of themselves and other characters in order to be restored to their former power; however, they also both return to where they begin their journeys. In the end, the argument goes back to *trompe-l'oeil*, by the main characters' and finally the narratives' drawing a full circle.

In Prospero's case, his being the author of history shifts the characters' reality sense for his own sake - taking revenge by restoring himself to his powerful state. However, he ends up by mirroring his former betrayal by his brother. His collaboration with his enemy Alonso thus becomes a 'recoup,' rather than an act of revenge. Just like Antonio did in the past, he recoups his dukedom and loses his daughter, in parallel to Alonso's pseudo-loss of his son. Also, he signals his near-future death, saying "thence retire me to my Milan, where / Every third thought shall be my grave." (V.1.310-311). His return to Milan will not only bring him back to the point of departure, but also underlines the endlessness of the cyclical motion. Felix, on the other hand, ends his narrative by being restored to his former position in the Festival. However, neither the production nor reacquiring his status as festival director can resurrect his Miranda from the storm. The narrative voice expresses this sentiment at the end: "He gets his dukedom back, but he's not very interested in it any more. So, he wins, but he also loses." (273). The revenge plans of Prospero and Felix, in this respect, become "an intractable passion" like Venus' desire (Belsey 2008: 36). In line with this suggestion, staging the history of the world within textual spans, no matter how elaborate, signifies nothing. There is no appetite left either for the characters, or for the audience. After the willing deception, the reader is left with nothing but a spectacle that fails to vindicate and enclose the action.

## 5. Conclusion

In considering certain aspects of the two texts that have been the focus of this paper, my argument was to combine the concepts of the uncanny and literary *trompe l'oeil*. *Trompe-l'oeil*, in my argument, serves to explain the uncanny view of reality in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*. Through their mirroring mechanisms, the two texts decentre reality by exposing their audiences and characters to the same recurrent images. In terms of the conceptual combination between the uncanny and *trompe-l'oeil*, *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed* are brought together through their consistent mirror effects. In *The Tempest*, characters and events mirror each other: the play repeats and restages histories of the characters. In *Hag-Seed*, *The Tempest* story is mirrored within the character of Felix. In this way, the mirror effect in itself leads to experiencing the uncanny: therefore, characters and events shift their point of reference, and consequently, the line between reality and illusion/imagination gets blurred. Both the play and the rewriting, in this respect, gain a dream-like quality, in which both the characters and the spectator/reader cannot find their way out until Prospero's "charms are all overthrown," and he "sets [them] free" (V.1.319/338).

In this vicious circle, his magic decentres the play's universe, destroys any concrete ground of reality, and traps the characters and the audience to encounter the same image all the time. Prospero and Felix, as the prominent ruler figures of their texts, authorize history and reshape truth for their own vested interests. The image of the circle in these narratives, in this respect, eliminates the characters' free will. In this context, any possible allegiance to the main story events becomes impossible due to the impositions dictated by the protagonists. There is of course, a painful similarity here to the ever-changing and slippery ground of the modern world, where reality is sold to people by those who author history, pre-packaged and ready for consumption. Thus, the people of the modern world cannot hold on to a concrete reality except for that which is induced, imposed to them. In connection with the worlds that are created by Prospero and Felix, the rest of the characters, including us, as the audience, cannot grasp the familiarity of things as we used to. The sense of reality in *The Tempest* and *Hag-Seed*, in this way, becomes a way to approach our modern world reality: it is for us "to leverage their restless interrogation and reimagine them for our own world." (Smith 2019: 319).

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**“NOT THAT I LOVED CAESAR LESS,  
BUT THAT I LOVED ROME MORE”:  
THE POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP IN *JULIUS CAESAR***

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***Abstract:** Through a close examination of the notion of friendship and its intimate connection to politics, the present study aims to discover the intricate ways in which friendship is portrayed in relation to virtue, enmity, and politics in one of Shakespeare’s most politically-charged tragedies, “Julius Caesar”. With a systematic reading of the ancient inquiries on friendship, the study particularly investigates the Shakespearean idea of friendship through the Derridean dichotomy of the friend and its inevitable bond to the enemy.*

***Keywords:** Cicero, Derrida, friendship, politics, Shakespeare*

## 1. Introduction

Here lies a wretched corpse, of wretched soul bereft;  
Seek not my name. A plague consume you, wicked caitiffs left  
Here lie I, Timon, who alive all living men did hate.  
Pass by and curse thy fill—but pass and stay not here thy gait.  
Timon in *Timon of Athens* (V.5.70-75)

Having experienced the failure of the ideal friendship in return for his tremendous acts of generosity, Timon proclaims “I am *Misanthropos*,” and immortalizes the depths of his newfound hatred towards every member of humankind on his final epitaph (IV.3.54). *Timon of Athens*, a play that has been repeatedly considered unfinished or imperfect, perfectly portrays the fatality of the absence of friendship. Timon’s Icarusian fall from society is such a famous event that Cicero (2018: 147) specifically mentions his case in *De Amicitia*: companionship is inevitable in the way that “even a person so savage and fierce by nature that he shuns and loathes human society, like the legendary Timon of Athens, can’t stand not to have someone around him on whom to spew his poison”. His transformation from a man who is “not of that feather to shake off / My friend when he must need me” to a vengeful misanthrope who is “sick of this false world, and will love naught / But even the mere necessities upon’t” renders one of the most tragic downfalls in Shakespearean canon (I.1.104-105, IV.3.371-372). Timon’s final lines, after he finishes writing his epitaph and before he disappears to be never seen again, further emphasize Shakespeare’s interpretation of the idea of friendship in *Timon of Athens*. Timon mends his “long sickness / Of health and

living” through death, which is also his ultimate solution for the disappearance of the friend, who is actually “a knave and flatterer” (V.2.71-72): “Graves only be men’s works / and death their gain. / Sun, hide thy beams. / Timon hath done his reign” (V.2.102). Shakespeare’s plays, especially his Roman tragedies, support a similar structure of the intricate business of friendship and politics.

With these points in mind, the present study aims to discover the Shakespearean friendship in relation to virtue, nobility and enmity in one of his most politically-charged tragedies, *Julius Caesar*, through a close study of the notion of friendship and its intimate connection to politics. Revolving around the progressive reading of the texts on friendship by philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, and Cicero, the study particularly analyses the Shakespearean idea of friendship through the Derridean dichotomy of the friend and its inevitable bond to the enemy.

## 2. “O my friends, there is no friend”

In his extensive study *The Friend*, Alan Bray explores the political nature of male bonding from the twelfth to the seventeenth century and explains that “there has never been a time when male intimacy was possible in a space untouched by power and politics, however much was desired or rhetorically projected”. (Bray 2003: 11). Shakespeare’s recognition of the political and social dimensions of friendship presents itself overtly in his sonnets and plays, but a thorough look at the nature of these relationships discloses the fact that Shakespeare’s idea of friendship often bears little resemblance to the classical ideals of friendship that reigned in the Renaissance:

Shakespeare’s implicit scepticism of the classical ideal is based on two principles... social inequality and competitive rivalry. They are related because of characteristic assumptions in classical writing about friendship that Shakespeare constantly emphasizes: first, that friendship achieved its perfection only between virtuous social equals, and second, that equals who were capable of virtue were more likely to be noble than common. Since noblemen were all but defined by competitive ambition, as Shakespeare emphasizes in his plays that feature Roman stoicism, the space reserved for the classical virtue of friendship is all but eliminated. (Cox 2008: 3)

Likeness in virtue and nobility between friends is constantly emphasized especially in the writings of Aristotle and Cicero. In books 8 and 9 of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle (1962: 228) clarifies that “[i]f there is a wide disparity between the partners as regards their virtue, vice, wealth, or anything else, they are no longer friends or even expect to be friends”. He (idem: 230) further explains that this is why people who are inferior “do not expect to be friends with kings, nor do insignificant people expect to be friends with the best and wisest men”. The Ciceronian ideals of friendship specifically underline the same notion of the classical affirmation of social equality among friends: Laelius, the fictional speaker of *De Amicitia*, clarifies that “friendship is not possible except good people,” – it is such rare and “selective” a notion that “its affection joins together only two or at most a few people.” (Cicero 2018: 39). Consequently, Laelius concludes that since “virtue itself gives birth to friendship and nourishes it, so that without virtue friendship is not able to exist” (idem: 41). Shakespeare’s interpretation of friendship, however, suggests a deep suspicion of the classical

claims of equality and moral perfection. In one of his most famous references to friendship, Hamlet affirms his own autonomy when he portrays his idea of friendship by describing Horatio: “Give me that man / That is not passion’s slave, and I will wear him / In my heart’s core, ay, in my heart of heart” (III.2.76-78). This intimate friendship, however, is not sufficient to overshadow the social and political inequality between Hamlet and Horatio, since the nature of their companionship is firstly and foremostly underlined by Hamlet’s political superiority over Horatio.

Since Nietzsche’s writings onwards, the classical concept of friendship has transformed itself into its modern equivalent with an emphasis on the individual autonomy and the inevitability of enmity in relation to companionship. In his essay and book with the same title “Politics of Friendship”, Derrida emphasizes “the inseparability of politics from a concept of both the friend and its mirror image, the enemy” (Miller 2015: 176). Derrida repeatedly returns to the apocryphal saying of Aristotle, which is in fact considered to be recorded by Diogenes Laertius: “Oh my friends, there is no friend.” Subsequently cited by Montaigne, Nietzsche, and Blanchot, the adage is considered by Derrida (1993: 353) to be the perfect statement to represent the dichotomic nature of friendship: “On the two sides of a comma or a pause, the two parts of this sentence seem incompatible with each other, destined to annihilate themselves in their contradiction”. This innate contradiction and its consequent annihilation are what render the modern idea of friendship deeply intertwined with politics, hence its necessary component, the enemy:

The true friend, as the saying makes apparent, is the (all but) impossible exception... That rare true friend is portrayed throughout much of the tradition as a veritable second self, as the other of myself who reflects my self to myself. And yet my friend, as friend, remains other. And insofar as my friend remains other, he or she, as my second self, has the potential to call the integrity, the sufficiency, of my self into question. There is a potential violence in friendship: a violence that recalls the passion of love. (Miller 2015: 177)

This potential violence in friendship can be considered to be an echo of Socrates’ arguments on friendship and the threefold distinction between what is good, what is bad, and what is neither good nor bad in Plato’s early monologue *Lysis* (2005). On the other hand, what is common to the ancient idea of friendship and Derrida’s own interpretation is traceable through a similar view that Plato and Aristotle have on friendship, namely that “[t]o desire or feel affection for some person is always, at bottom, to have some reason that has a reference to the agent’s own welfare” (Annas 1977: 536). The friend’s welfare, however, integrates into the existence of the enemy and their public politics since “[t]he friend, we read, possesses the power of a love that threatens the boundaries of both the self and the community, even as it affirms them in their identity” (Miller 2015: 178). This is where the private notion of friendship is transformed into a topic in public politics. Derrida cites Cicero and his requirement of the notions of virtue and reason in friendship, and argues that “[r]eason and virtue cannot be private. They are not able to enter into conflict with the public matter. These concepts of virtue or reason are from the beginning tailored to the space of the *res publica*” (Derrida 1993: 211). This necessarily creates the ground for politics, where friendship represents the power of the other on the self, which represents the friend (*Freund*) and its

counterpart, its potential identification, the enemy (*Feind*). Cicero explores the same conflict in *De Amicitia*:

For he who perceives a true friend, it is as though he perceives a model of himself. Wherefore the absent are present, the poor are rich, the weak are strong, and what is more difficult to say, the dead live: so great is the respect, the memory, and the desire that follows after our friends. Hence for the ones death seems happy and for the others life is worthy of praise. (2018: 43)

Furthermore, in *What is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, Agamben retraces Derrida's logic for the negating notion of friendship. According to Agamben (2009: 26), "it is an analogous, and probably conscious, sense of discomfort that led Jacques Derrida to choose as a leitmotif for his book on friendship a sibylline motto...that negates friendship with the very same gesture by which it seems to invoke it: *o philoi, oudeis philos*". This statement however, necessarily contains its other equivalent, "one to all appearances almost identical, whose significance is nevertheless different and much less mysterious": 'He who has (many) friends, does not have a single friend'" (idem: 27). Agamben defends the fact that Derrida's usage of the motto in its original form indicates his intentions of at once affirming and revoking the idea of friendship, which was essential to his book's strategy.

### 3. "Friends, Romans, countrymen..."

It would be good to note that Cicero wrote *De Amicitia* in 44 B.C., right after Caesar's assassination, "a time of political turmoil, when one's friends only too easily became one's enemies, when true friendship was especially precious and rare, and when death lurked on every side" (Miller 2015: 180). As a theme that beautifully haunts most of Shakespeare's tragedies, this ambivalent notion of the possibility of betrayal weaves its way into the politics of friendship in *Julius Caesar*. In his thorough introduction to the play, Arthur Humphreys gives the following explanation:

Anthony's stress on Caesar's love for Brutus, so treacherously repaid, draws on scattered Plutarchan instances of affection. Straight from Plutarch are the glimpses of Caesar covering his face as Brutus prepares to stab, his fall beneath Pompey's bloody statue, and the details of the testament. But though Plutarch provides the bases, the brilliant strategies by which in the play Anthony wins against almost impossible odds, controlling each move until he reads the will to show 'how Caesar loved you', are the inventions of Shakespeare's dramatic imagination. (Humphreys 2008: 19)

Contrary to the Ciceronian ideals of friendship, Shakespeare constructs the play in such a way that the readers do not feel the need to condemn the conspirators in *Julius Caesar*, however distanced they may seem to the commonly-sought concepts like virtue and reason. Cicero explains that a friend should never ask another friend to commit a wrong deed; and even if s/he did, the friend should not follow the other: "Doing wrong for the sake of a friend never justifies that wrong. Remember that friendship is founded on virtue. If a friend expects you to do something evil, it is difficult for that friendship to continue" (Cicero 2018: 75). As a cautious approach to the turbulent politics of his day, Cicero repeatedly



emphasizes that when one asks a friend to betray his country, one commits a most disgraceful deed, and consequently sets the following “law of friendship”: “Never ask a friend to do anything shameful, and don’t do anything shameful if asked” (idem: 77). In *Julius Caesar*, the fear of Caesar’s tyranny over Rome is repeatedly emphasized before Caesar’s assassination:

Let no images  
Be hung with Caesar’s trophies. I’ll about  
And drive away the vulgar from the streets...  
These growing feathers plucked from Caesar’s wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men,  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness. (I.1.72-75)

The proposal of a conspiracy is brought about by Cassius’ “lament” that Brutus “have no such mirrors as will turn / Your hidden worthiness into your eye, / That you may see your shadow” (I.2.54-56). Since Brutus “cannot see himself / So well as by reflection, I, your glass, / Will modestly discover to yourself / That of yourself which you yet know not of” (I.2.65). This notion of the friend being the reflection, the mirror, the *alter egom* of a person echoes so loudly the classical idea of friendship that one might argue that Shakespeare must have read Cicero, who elucidates that “whoever looks upon a true friend looks, in a sense, at an image of himself” (2018: 47). This might be the reason why one of the *dramatis personae* is Cicero, who – contrarily – rarely contributes to any notable argument in the play, other than his prophesizing remark about Brutus’ plans of murdering Caesar, yet never being able to deny his deep love towards him: “But men may construe things after their fashion / Clean from the purpose of the things themselves” (I.3.34). Brutus repeatedly states that he has “no personal cause to spurn at him”, and admits that “to speak truth of Caesar / I have not known when his affections swayed / More than his reason,” but Caesar’s death is still inevitable (II.1.10-21).

Although Brutus finally succeeds in silencing the torment of his mind about the conspiracy, he still tries to justify his guilt through a complex praise of Caesar in the final moments before the assassination: he commands Caius that they should be “sacrificers” rather than “butchers,” and wishes he could “come by Caesar’s spirit / And not dismember Caesar!” (II.1.165):

...But, alas,  
Caesar must bleed for it. And, gentle friends,  
Let’s kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;  
Let’s carve him as a dish fit for the gods,  
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.  
...This shall make  
Our purpose necessary, and not envious;  
Which so appearing to the common eyes,  
We shall be called purgers, not murderers. (II.1. 170-180)

The reader further realizes that the planned murder of a friend coincides with the political purge of a tyrant when Brutus goes through his dilemma. In this dilemma, Caesar’s status as friend clashes with the enemy status of his political self in the eyes of the conspirators. Shakespeare further reflects the upcoming disaster through stage directions that specify thunders and the nightmares of Calpurnia;

Caesar states that “Nor heaven nor earth have been at peace tonight. / Thrice hath Calpurnia in her sleep cried out / ‘Help, ho! They murder Caesar!’” (II.2.1-3). Calpurnia’s detailed nightmares represent omens of the murder of the friend/enemy through the imagery of death, blood, and ghosts: “A lioness hath whelped in the streets, / And graves have yawned and yielded up their dead. / Fierce fiery warriors fight upon the clouds / In ranks and squadrons and right form of war, / Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol.” She continues that “[t]he noise of battle hurtled in the air, / Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan, / And ghosts did shiek and squeal about the streets” (II.2.20-25). Although Caesar is warned through different omens about the upcoming disaster, he chooses to read them in his own way, since “Caesar should be a beast without a heart / If he should stay at home today for fear” (II.2. 40-45). The famous *Et tu, Brute?* scene, which perfectly summarizes Caesar’s death at a betraying friend’s hands, is followed by the overtly political cries of Cinna, who exclaims “Liberty! Freedom! Tyranny is dead! / Run hence, proclaim, cry is about the streets!” (III.1.78). The image of the friend and the enemy becomes one in the character of Brutus, who states right after the assassination that they have done Caesar a favour by murdering him: “Grant that, and then is death a benefit. / So are we Caesar’s friends, that have abridged / His time of fearing death” (III.1.103). Although the political friend is finally murdered, his death does nothing more than emphasize his hauntological existence through its remembrance. Anthony mourns Caesar’s death next to his body, and questions how he will be able to side with the conspirators, knowing they have murdered his friend:

...If then thy spirit look upon us now,  
 Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death  
 To see thy Anthony making his peace,  
 Shaking the bloody fingers of thy foes,  
 Most noble! In the presence of thy corpse?  
 Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,  
 Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,  
 It would become me better than to close  
 In terms of friendship with thine enemies. (III.1.195)

Anthony prophesizes the return of Caesar’s ghost by speculating that he would be watching Anthony make friends with the conspirators; this return underlines the Derridean notion of mourning for a dead friend. The same theme of mourning constitutes the fictional setting of *De Amicitia*, in which Laelius, having lost his close friend Africanus a few days earlier, commemorates him through his recollections of their friendship. Brutus’ tone, when addressing the public after Caesar’s assassination, is also one of mourning, but it also contradictorily presents his Ciceronian defence of the political betrayal of his friend and governor:

Romans, countrymen, and lovers, hear me for my cause, and be silent, that you may hear. Believe me for my honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe...If there be any in his assembly, any dear friend of Caesar’s, to him I say that Brutus’ love to Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer – not that I loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more. (III.2.16)

He further states the risks of letting Caesar reign over Rome and questions the state of the country in a manner suited to the Ciceronian ideals of keeping friendship on

condition that the friend does not commit a wrong deed to his country: “Had you rather Caesar were living, and die all slaves, than that Caesar were dead, to live all free men?” But since the answer is supposedly clear, he continues: “As Caesar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him” (III.2.24). Thus, Brutus carries out the responsibilities of Ciceronian friendship.

#### 4. Conclusion

In her thorough study on *Timon of Athens* and the concept of friendship, Raducanu explains Timon’s words on the virtue of a friend as a “desperate plea for the infinite extension of a shared meaning of friendship, which he both hopes for and deeply doubts”:

We remember the apocryphal appeal: “Oh, my friends, there is no friend”. Timon’s address to the Lords is similar in that, to employ Derrida’s words: “it makes a sign towards the future: be my friends, for I love or will love you [...] listen to me, be sensitive to my cry, understand and be compassionate, I am asking for your sympathy and consensus, become the friends to whom I aspire”. Even if you now are only imperfect friends (one remembers the “imperfect speakers” who toyed with Macbeth’s search for the absolute truth), maybe, if you listen to my passionate plea, we can all reach the state of the Aristotelian *homonoia*, thinking alike, being one in thought. (Răducanu 2020: 147)

The politics of friendship, death, and mourning of the friend through remembrance are deeply intertwined in *De Amicitia* just as they are in *Julius Caesar* through the politics of murdering one’s own friend for the good of one’s country. This intertwined notion of the death of a friend governs Derrida’s “Politics of Friendship”; he concludes, through a close reading of *De Amicitia*, by stating that “A friendship, of the Ciceronian kind, would be the possibility of citing myself in an exemplary manner, by signing in advance my own funeral oration, the best, perhaps, but it is never certain that the friend will pronounce it standing on his own feet when I will no longer be” (Derrida 1993: 21). In his thorough analysis of Derrida reading Cicero, Miller (2015: 181) comes to the conclusion that “[p]erhaps then we should then take Derrida at his word too: there is a reason why Cicero leads off the *Politics of Friendship*. It too is a haunted text. Haunted by the friends who are no longer friends – “oh my friends, there are no friends!” – haunted by the friends who are no more”. Maybe that is why, not being able to cope with the death and the haunting presence of his friend, Brutus decides to take his own life with the same dagger which has murdered Caesar.

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**THE SOLDIER AND THE SCIENTIST:  
A COMPARATIVE READING OF SHAKESPEARE'S  
*CORIOLANUS*  
AND IBSEN'S *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE***

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*Abstract:* In this comparative study, I shall discuss William Shakespeare's "Coriolanus" and Henrik Ibsen's "An Enemy of the People". The focus will be placed on the rift between the individual and the community, or between the 'right' of the one vs the 'might' of the many. Notwithstanding the different contexts, this is a conflict that in both plays generates a strong sense of social satire, followed by the unavoidable tragedy of the alienated individual.

*Keywords:* democracy, individual, multitude, satire, tragedy

## 1. Introduction

In 1936, A.E. Zucker connected Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* and Ibsen's *Brand*, describing the two protagonists as "spiritually so closely akin" (qtd. in Koht 1945: 85), in view of their shared despisal of the "multitude", albeit for different reasons. Coriolanus emphasizes the birth privilege that comes with the noble background, while Brand is a relentless promoter of the "leadership of advanced and clear-sighted individuals" (Koht 1945: 85). Koht (ibid.) refuted the Brand-Coriolanus similarities, but elaborated on Zucker's alternative theory, which situates Coriolanus and Dr Stockmann on the same axis. Harold Clarke Goddard (1960: 235) briefly noticed that, in *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen may have been inspired by *Coriolanus* and pointed out that centuries cannot "alter" the substance of "the eternal petty politician". The similarity between some aspects of the two plays was later noticed by Van Laan (1986: 302-303), who pointed out that Dr Stockmann's confrontation with his townspeople in Act IV faithfully mirrors Act III of Shakespeare's play, when, in a bid to become consul, Coriolanus is compelled to ask for the people's and the tribunes' votes in the marketplace. Stockmann's remarks on how his foes should be extinguished closely resemble Coriolanus' intention to erase Rome. Similarly, Knutsson's (1993: 169) close-reading of Dr Stockmann's tirade about "the humanity before him", reduced to the "status of mixed breed barnyard fowl and mongrelized dogs", culminating in the shouted beliefs that "a society based on lies – lies by his definition - should be utterly destroyed" also calls to mind Coriolanus' destructive outbursts. Dr Stockmann's various self-serving visitors in the final act who try to convince him to change his mind about the baths is similar to the emissaries who attempt to

change Coriolanus' mind about sacking Rome. Finally, but not least importantly, Stockmann's vague plans about emigrating to America recall Coriolanus' verbal correction of his banishment in the famous phrase: "There is a world elsewhere" (III.3.137).

Undeniably, in *Coriolanus*, the Roman tribunes together with some of the most hostile plebeians anticipate the plethora of politicians, landowners, and media representatives of the small provincial town in Ibsen's play. Between them, they thwart the individual, who is prevented from fulfilling his professional destiny and either tragically loses his life or reaches a stage of spiritual empowerment which compels him to stand alone and attempt to resist the hostile societal maelstrom. The present study will focus on this rift between the individual and the community, or between 'right' and 'might', drawing attention to the hazards of democracy, which may sometimes annihilate the individual and install the tyranny of the majority. Notwithstanding the different contexts, in both plays the conflict between the 'professional' (soldier or scientist) and the 'laymen' generates a strong sense of social satire, followed by the (more or less) unavoidable tragedy/fall of the alienated individual. As an introductory theoretical framework, the first part of this study will offer a brief survey of the problematic aspects of democracy as rendered in (primarily) Plato's *Republic*, Polybius, J.S. Mill and Oscar Wilde; the focus will be on displaying the faults of a system which may come into conflict with the individual and his abilities.

In the following sections, I will argue that Coriolanus and Dr Stockmann evade and transgress a contemporary 'politically correct' character assessment. Their passionate self-esteem mark them as social pariahs if valued by the standards of our (more or less) egalitarian era, but render them fine literary conceptualizations of virtues considered pivotal either at an earlier date (Sophoclean/Homeric in the case of *Coriolanus*), or incomprehensible to the laymen (the nineteenth century growing reputation of science/scientists in the case of *An Enemy of the People*). In rejecting the mainstream critical verdict on Shakespeare and Ibsen's protagonists, I do not simply advocate a nostalgic return to 'hero-worship'; instead, my confessed aim is to avoid what Whitman (1982: 47-8) aptly labeled:

a low brand of dramatic criticism...which offers solutions such as: If Oedipus had only controlled his temper better, he would not have come to grief; or, Othello could have saved himself a great deal of trouble if he had been less naïve. These tasteless vulgarisms...destroy the play rather than elucidate it.

## **2. From Plato to Wilde: or the conflict between the individual and the masses**

This section will pinpoint some of the most problematic (within the scope of this study) aspects of different forms of government. Classical antiquity places Plato as the first thinker to touch upon such issues. As the mouthpiece for the his master's political philosophy, arguably because of his emotional investment (the (in)famous execution of Socrates under Democracy), Plato is most critical of Democracy; thus, he perceives it as plagued by a stringent disparity between ideals and their actualization and as setting the stage for the tyranny either of one or the many. Therefore, he shows how the instauration of Democracy brought on by the revolt of the masses against the wealthy minority results in "excessive freedom"

(Plato 2000: 564a) which morphs into a generalized lack of duties and responsibilities: “Where there is liberty, then obviously each person can arrange his own life within the city in whatever way pleases him” (idem: 557b). Democracy also fosters an absolute lack of compulsion, for example, those competent to rule will not be called to do so, nor will the warriors be compelled to fight when the city is at war (idem: 557e). The force of whim comes to regulate behaviour: “[...] even if there’s a law stopping you holding office or being a member of a jury, there’s nothing to stop you holding office and being a member of jury anyway if that’s how the mood takes you” (ibid.). Most significantly, Plato emphasizes democracy as a system which supports the erasure of any hierarchical distinctions: “A father, for example, gets used to being like a child and being afraid of his sons”; “teachers are afraid of their pupils and curry favour with them”; “the young are the image of their elders and challenge them in everything they say and do” (idem: 563a); it is impossible to tell the ruler from the ruled, “whether in public or in private” (idem: 562e). Most significantly, Plato argues that the excesses of freedom enjoyed by man in democracy lead to the rise of tyranny:

What is the beginning of the change from a leader into a tyrant? Or is it clear that when the leader begins to do the same thing as in the myth which is spoken about the temple of the Lykaian Zeus in Arcadia ... how the man tasting human organs cut up with organs of other sacrificial animals necessarily becomes a wolf. (idem: 565e)

This particularly gory mythological example, used to signify the end of democracy, is to be read in the context of the establishment of radical equality (conceived as complete lack of hierarchical distinctions) and a climate in which animals and humans are treated in the same way. In this manner, people, convinced that they are not bound to respect gods, that they do not need gods, end up by committing degenerate acts of irreverent and distasteful anthropophagy. Furthermore, as Saxonhouse (1998: 281) points out, tyranny appropriates democratic principles and reveals the obscurity to which a government that disregards *eidê* (form) leads, once the vehemence of unleashed appetites, passions, and desires takes over. Interestingly, this resonates with Shakespeare’s own portrayal of the problematic aspects of democracy (and its potential to turn into tyranny) in *Troilus and Cressida*: “Then everything includes itself in power, / Power into will, will into appetite, / And appetite, as universal wolf, / So doubly seconded with will and power, / Must make perforce an universal prey/And eat up himself” (I.3.119-124).

Building on Plato’s views of democracy as a flawed form of government, Polybius (online) coined the term ‘ochlocracy’ (mob-rule), in the second century. He saw it as a degeneration of democracy, brought about by excess and disregard of the laws by the masses. Centuries later, John Stuart Mill’s 1859 *On Liberty* was also critical of the tyranny of the majority, with its accompanying “tyranny of the prevailing opinion and feeling” which he claimed “was more harmful and more difficult to be protected from than the individual tyrant’s rule” (Mill 1859: 7). In his notorious *The Soul of Man under Socialism*, Oscar Wilde also displays his highly critical views on democracy, which he considers the worst possible form of government, in fact assimilating it with tyranny:

There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the body. There is the despot who tyrannizes over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannizes

over the soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People. (Wilde1994: 1193)

As this succinct survey of the shortcomings of democracy has briefly emphasized, Plato, Polybius, Mill, and Wilde are thinkers who, albeit belonging to different chronologies and geographies, share remarkably similar views: they all see democracy's potential to degenerate into the tyranny of one or the many. In the following sections, I will reveal how Shakespeare's and Ibsen's protagonists – admittedly heroes that frequently test the limits of sympathy/empathy - are sacrificed to appease the clamouring voices of the multitude who ask for their demise.

### 3. Protagonists

#### 3.1. Shakespeare's soldier

Shakespeare's tragedy features the Roman general Caius Martius, whose soldierly merits gain him the cognomen Coriolanus after crushing the Volscians' army. The Senate nominates him for consulship, but he fails to win the people's vote (for the second time), so he is banished from Rome. Without a homeland and without allies, he finds unexpected refuge with his sworn enemy, Tullius Aufidius, general of the Volscian army. They become allies and plan to attack Rome. However, persuaded by his mother Volumnia, and by his wife Virgilia, Coriolanus abandons his revenge plans, spares Rome, but is killed by the Volscians, manipulated by his new-found ally in retaliation for his betrayal.

*Coriolanus* is the Shakespearean play which has most generated an unenthusiastic critical reception. Derek Traversi (qtd. in Wainstein 1993: 16) notices that "*Coriolanus* never satisfied the critics. Most of them have felt that it stands in some way apart from the main body of Shakespeare's work". Brecht's adaptation and criticism is seen by Scofield (1990: 324) as an attempt to "tidy-up" Shakespeare's play; furthermore, Brecht blames the "cult of the hero in 'bourgeois' drama", "particularly in Shakespeare" as the main responsible for "what was wrong with current drama both socially and aesthetically" (idem: 322). Even Harold Bloom, the contemporary critic best-known for his love of Shakespeare, acknowledges that: "That Coriolanus is not totally unsympathetic (whatever one's politics), [...] is a Shakespearean triumph" (qtd. in Hiltzik 2017). At this juncture, I would argue that all the above critical evaluations make distinctive demands on the readers: firstly, they require familiarity with Plutarch's considerably more obnoxious Coriolanus and with it a certain effacement of Shakespeare's 'adaptation'. Secondly, they imply that the conflict between the individual and the masses can only be solved on an egalitarian basis, with both parties willing to submit to a compromise-glorifying political game. I contend that this hypothetical agreement would not only displace the play as a tragedy, but it would unravel the protagonist's sense of identity and moral essence, which do not draw their substance from 'bowing' to the demands of the changing times and people.

Most obvious to readers familiarized with Greek epic poems and tragedies, Coriolanus belongs to the Homeric/Sophoclean family, which counts Achilles, Antigone, and Ajax among its members. In such literary masterpieces, the main conflict is that between the hero and the non-heroic community which, after preventing him/her from fulfilling his/her potential, turns against him/her in an act



of collective violence and kills him/her. Similarly to these other archetypal heroes, trapped in an unredeemable tragic situation, Coriolanus is also a victim of the clash between private integrity and communal duty. As Wainstein (1993: 21) points out, the most significant characteristic of the Sophoclean tragic hero is *arête*, a concept which goes beyond the limits of integrity, “perhaps best expressed as a comprehensive heroic distinction”, “an inherent condition and an absolute [...] an immutable state of being, a constant in dynamic and developing dramatic situation”, which enables the authentic hero not to surrender to circumstances “without significant, critical compromise and consequent loss of tragic stature”. In Coriolanus’ words: ‘Let them pull about mine ears, present me/Death on the wheel or at wild horses’ heels; [...] yet will I still/Be thus to them’ (III.2.1-6). As the fundamental virtue, born from the dark currents of a nonrational demand for absolutes, *arête* establishes an interesting rapport with the other features of the tragic hero. It preserves the Aristotelian *megalopsychia* (magnanimity), since Coriolanus is acknowledged by friends and foes alike as a generous war hero, constant in his refusal to reclaim for himself any of the battle spoils. On the other hand, *arête* problematizes *hamartia*, the other significant characteristic of the tragic hero. The fall, seen as the actualization of the personal *hamartia*, does not occur, since what is perceived as intolerable pride by all the others (his own mother included) to Coriolanus is, basically, constancy of character and refusal to embrace the temporary opportunity for political advancement at the cost of moral integrity. The Roman plebeians, on the other hand, justify their hatred of Coriolanus in view of his pride which, in their eyes, validates whatever punishment they decide to inflict on him.

As Cantor (1976: 34) argues, the patrician anger/pride opposes the plebeian appetite/eros and thus sets the tragic hero apart from the rest of Rome. Coriolanus, labelling the plebeians’ non-heroic demands as ‘A sick man’s appetite, who desires most that/Which would increase his evil’ (I.1.176-79), upholds an irreconcilable rift between health and pestilence. In this context, his attempt to recast the masses’ appetites as pride and employ it on the battlefield, in the service of the city, proves futile and the challenge dies unheeded: ‘Nay, let them follow. / The Volsces have much corn: take these rats thither, / To gnaw their garners. Worshipful mutiners, / Your valour puts well forth: pray follow.’ (I.1.249-250).

The powerful contrast between Coriolanus’ austerity, viewed as “spiritedness” (Cantor 1976: 37), and his fellows citizens’ conviviality, as “eros” (ibid.) reaches its peak after his banishment. Sicinius, one of the two tribunes/artisans of Coriolanus’s expulsion, remarks on the warrior’s wrong “remedies” in the time of “the present peace” and “quietness of the people”; without his austere presence, the tradesmen give themselves to “singing in their shops and going about their functions friendly” (IV.6.1-9). Interestingly, this idyllic depiction of daily life in a Rome without Coriolanus anticipates Tocqueville’s (2000: 661-665) remarks about people being actively engaged in the “pursuit of wealth and material comfort” and in the re-fashioning of courage as self-interest; this dominant feature of democratic societies, while generating peaceful virtues which enable the pursuit of wealth, devalue “intellectual and artistic excellence”, drawing most men “to commercial and industrial careers”. In this context, Coriolanus’ ‘excellence’ as a warrior is therefore disqualified by the emphasis on the economic factor. In Cantor’s words (1976: 34): “Coriolanus evidently is bad for trade in Rome since his proud austerity interferes with the “friendly functioning” of the city. If his pride is to be viewed as *the* Roman trait, Sicinius thinks that Rome would do well to

dispense with Romanness.” As a play, *Coriolanus* explores the collapse of the differentiation of the public and private interests. In times of war, “private interests must be sacrificed for the sake of common good [...]”; ironically, Sicinius’ account of the city omits at least one function, that of the warrior” (Cantor 1976: 33-35). Thus, *Coriolanus*, the trained professional, will be tragically prevented from fulfilling his function as the permanent defender of Rome by the “fickle mob”, sentenced him to death on page two of the play, in an episode which anachronistically recalls the later Stalinist show (non)trials.

Ironically, the sense of peace and friendliness shared by the Romans who feel free to indulge their appetites in the absence of the uncompromising soldier is but a temporary respite; Rome will find itself under threat of an invasion by its former defender (turned expelled warrior), and his Volscian ally. As Wainstein (1993: 269) argues, *Coriolanus*’ much-criticized resolve to go against Rome, and fight “against [his] cank’red country” (IV.5.88-92), is not an egotistical, malevolent act, but the Sophoclean hero’s typical response to blatant humiliation or injustice. Moreover, “the received Greek maxim”, to “benefit thy friends, and hurt thy foes” (Jebb qtd. in Wainstein 1993: 269) can no longer prevent *Coriolanus*’ Achillean, all-destructive wrath because he has no friends left; his final decision to spare the city at the cost of his own life is a response to a mother’s virulently political plea and a wife’s eloquent silence.

### 3.2. Ibsen’s scientist

As Meyer (1971: 500) explains, the plot of Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* had its origin in two actual incidents. Alfred Meisner, a young German poet whom Ibsen had known in Munich, told him how, when his father was a medical officer at the spa of Teplitz in the eighteen-thirties, there was an outbreak of cholera, which the doctor felt it was his duty to make known publicly. As a result, the season was ruined, the citizens stoned the doctor’s house, and forced him to flee the town.

Ibsen’s play, an example of environmentally inflected literature, features Dr Stockmann, a scientist who, after discovering that the water of the baths in his town are teeming with dangerous bacteria, decides to inform the people about it, to protect the public health. As the baths are an important source of revenue for the town, their closing until necessary improvements are made will be very costly and require the raising of taxes. At first, several of the town’s leading men, like Hovstad, the town paper’s editor, and Aslaksen, the head of the Householders’ Association, support the Doctor and his discovery. Nevertheless, the Doctor’s own brother, the Town Mayor, manages to swiftly turn the entire town against him; thus, Dr Stockmann is left to face the reactions of a public, whom he reprimands in an impassionate sermon, for the corruption and the ignorance plaguing the complacent majority. Alone, jobless, and homeless, carrying the burdens of a *pater familias*, the Doctor is paradoxically reinvigorated by this ‘banishment’ and decides to start a school in which to educate the poor.

Neither a comedy nor a tragedy, Ibsen’s drama inspired various critical readings; “a realistic social problem comedy” (Van Laan 1986: 99), “a genuine comedy of uncommon merit” (Knutson 1993:174), an intricate network of classical allusions, as revealed by “Athenian details beneath the imagery of modernism” (Johnston 1979: 109). Although not without merit, the critical view of the play as

comedy should not exclude a different perspective. As Vaan Laan (1986: 101) notices, Ibsen's plays demonstrate "a non-explicit, deep-structural allusion suggesting contemporary middle-class action is as legitimate for tragedy as the more heroic action of the famous tragic drama it implicitly echoes".

Zwart (2004: 349) also supports this darker reading of the play, when he notices that the protagonist is moulded on the archetype of the whistle blower, a scientist who "quickly finds himself transformed from a public benefactor into a political outcast by those in power"; the drama is thus a canvas on which the ethical and epistemological are cleverly interwoven, stressing the difficulties of communicating scientific (microbiological) data to the general public. In his sanitized adaptation of Ibsen's play, Arthur Miller (1977: 9) similarly emphasized the rift between the trained professional and the laymen, drawing attention to the story "of a scientist who discovers an evil and, innocently believing that he has done a service to humanity, expects that he will at least be thanked". In the absence of the recognition of the hero's abilities, which is replaced by mass-ostracization, the fragile foundations of democracy are exposed, generating the poignant question: "what does one do in a democracy when the majority is wrong - totally, incontrovertibly, unquestionably wrong?" (Lambert 1965: 628). Ibsen's play does not provide a practical solution to this dilemma, but it bears testimony to its existence, thus avoiding – similarly to Shakespeare – the ideological trap of lionising vulgar populism.

As previously mentioned, Ibsen's protagonist is initially willing to share his scientific discovery with his townsmen in the hope that he will convince them of the necessity of closing the baths down. This rather naïve (although laudable) enthusiasm is justifiable in the context of the play's publication date. As Zwart (2004: 353) pertinently argues, by the nineteenth century "the typical literary profile of the physician had recently changed", leaving behind Molière's so-called men of science, actually "buffoons", obsessed with "grand, obsolete theories and academic disputes", and redundant translations of the obvious diagnosis into scholarly Latin. The nineteenth century novel, with some notable exceptions such as Charles Bovary, had redressed this caricatural aspect of the physician who "had come to play a much more serious role", that of a specialized individual, able and entitled by his training to detect and perceive truths and minutiae that escaped the unqualified eye.

Although written in the climate of growing trust in the trained professionals' expertise, Ibsen nevertheless opts for capitalising on the resilient reticence of the laymen to accept the verdict of the scientist. Thus, before long, Dr Stockmann learns that his professional/ethical convictions are planting discord within the community and that his findings (plain, clear and scientifically neutral) are either manipulated by or manage to antagonize the whole political spectrum. His brother, the town Mayor, wishes for a "good summer" when, he hopes, the increasing number of visitors taking the baths will make him quite a profit. Hovstad, the radical journalist, sees the scientific discovery as a "favourable opportunity of emancipating the humble, down-trodden Masses!" Thus, water pollution stops being a "scientific observation" and becomes "political metaphor" instead (Zwart 2004: 356). The left-wingers see science as a means to advocate for the cleaning of society's 'polluted swamp', whereas the right-wingers, interested in maintaining the *status-quo* (and the money that goes with it) perceive Stockmann as "an educated hooligan who misuses his data and scientific prestige to satisfy his desire for anarchy and turmoil" (ibid.).

Stockmann himself demonstrates a curious incapacity/unwillingness to compromise. This is perhaps excusable in the context of his profession: convinced of the correctitude of his (verified) reports, he fails to see how facts can be bent into interpretation and turned into a game of dishonest political hermeneutics. Hence, he follows into the footsteps of Coriolanus, his Shakespearean predecessor and, equally exasperated with the political machinations that he refuses to become a part of, manages to alienate many readers and critics with the “elitist strain of his speeches” (Lindholdt 2001: 55). Although there is no way of knowing how much of Shakespeare’s own views are articulated by his Coriolanus (Keats’ ‘negative capability’ comes to mind), in Ibsen’s case the rapport between author and character is better documented. The Norwegian playwright confessed his half-hearted allegiance to his character’s views: “Dr Stockmann and I get along so splendidly with one another; we are so much in agreement on so many things; but the Doctor is more muddle-headed than I am [ . . . ]” (qtd. in Van Laan 1986: 102).

Undeniably, Dr Stockmann is one angry scientist whose irate speeches idealize Social Darwinism and go as far as suggesting eugenics:

The common people are nothing more than the raw material of which a People is made. (Groans, laughter and uproar.) Well, isn’t that the case? Isn’t there an enormous difference between a well-bred and an ill-bred strain of animals? Take, for instance, a common barn-door hen. What sort of eating do you get from a shrivelled up old scrag of a fowl like that? Not much, do you! And what sort of eggs does it lay? A fairly good crow or a raven can lay pretty nearly as good an egg. But take a well-bred Spanish or Japanese hen, or a good pheasant or a turkey—then you will see the difference. Or take the case of dogs, with whom we humans are on such intimate terms. Think first of an ordinary common cur—I mean one of the horrible, coarse-haired, low-bred curs that do nothing but run about the streets and befoul the walls of the houses. Compare one of these curs with a poodle whose sires for many generations have been bred in a gentleman’s house, where they have had the best of food and had the opportunity of hearing soft voices and music. Do you not think that the poodle’s brain is developed to quite a different degree from that of the cur? Of course it is. It is puppies of well-bred poodles like that, that showmen train to do incredibly clever tricks—things that a common cur could never learn to do even if it stood on its head. (Uproar and mocking cries.) (Ibsen, act IV)

True to the point, such deeply discriminatory and disparaging remarks occur when Dr Stockmann is repeatedly prevented from delivering his speech and inform the citizens about his scientific discovery. The scientist’s cynical contemplation of his fellow citizens’ understanding of existence as ‘un-examined life’ (in Aristotelian terms) reduced to the satisfaction of necessities, his hurt disillusionment with the community at large, which repeatedly proves unable and unwilling to accept the latest scientific discoveries and digest the unpleasant truths that they frequently reveal, irrupt in potent expressions of crusading individualism turned into all-destructive ire. The consequences are disastrous: the Stockmann family are turned out of the house, the Doctor, labelled as ‘enemy of the people’, is dismissed from the spa, his daughter, Petra, loses her teaching position, and his other two children, after being manipulated to start a fight at school are sent home. Moreover, his loyal friend Horster, ‘guilty’ of having hosted the meeting turned sour, also loses his captainship.

Somehow inconsistent in view of his tirades against the townspeople, Stockmann's method of coping with ostracization by opening a school is Aristotelian in nature:

In *Politics* VII-VIII Aristotle recommends that public education should be available to all people. The type of education that he envisions achieves more than the ability to read and write; accordingly, it extends to teaching the way to recognize beauty in the world coupled with gaining some grasp of how the universe works. The fruits of such type of schooling will be revealed in the willingness of young people to make apt decisions, to be able to judge and categorize wisely which will enable them to participate as decision-makers in the citizen assembly and judicial system, ultimately as holders of public office. (Horniak, 2019)

#### 4. Conclusion

Coming to us from different literary worlds, set apart by time and space, Coriolanus and Dr Stockmann share a significantly similar destiny: both are compelled to face the verdict of the majority who declared them *personae non-gratae* and dictated their physical annihilation or their social ostracization. As twenty-first century citizens, we are fully convinced of the benefits of democracies, which largely outweigh their drawbacks: however, Shakespeare and Ibsen, through their obnoxious and outspoken protagonists, at odds with the contemporary dictate of 'political correctness', remind us of a different truth: that the majority is not always right, and that even the individual who theoretically is the farthest removed from the destructive rage of the masses, either by his privileged high-birth or by his objective knowledge of scientific facts, is sometimes in dire need of public protection.

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**SPATIAL RECONFIGURATIONS OF POWER:  
FROM SHAKESPEARE'S *THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR* TO  
VERDI'S *FALSTAFF* STAGED BY THE METROPOLITAN OPERA,  
NEW YORK (2013)**

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*Abstract:* This article focuses on the peculiar setting – the kitchen – chosen for the revenge scene in Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff* (Act II, scene 2) by director Robert Carsen for his production at the Metropolitan Opera, New York (2013). I examine side by side Arrigo Boito's libretto and the corresponding scenes in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* in order to highlight the textual clues that may support Carsen's choice. Against the background provided by a brief historicisation of the emergence of the modern kitchen and its association (originally) with bourgeois women, I discuss Carsen's revenge scene, by recourse to gender theory, as a masquerade of femininity, i.e., a mockingly exaggerated performance of gender.

*Keywords:* Falstaff (Verdi and Boito), gender, kitchen, masquerade of femininity, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Shakespeare), Robert Carsen

## 1. Introduction

In Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (henceforth *MWW*), a gluttonous squire past his prime, Sir John Falstaff, fancies two married women of Windsor, to whom he writes – simultaneously – love letters, for he thinks himself – or rather thinks that *they* find his pot belly – irresistible (*MWW* I.3.57-61, I.3.64-6, II.2.96-100). (Actually, through the women, Falstaff aims at their husbands' purse, as he confesses to his followers, Pistol and Nym (I.3.51-52, I.3.67-70), and later to Ford himself, disguised as Master Brook (II.2.250-254).) The two bourgeois women think otherwise, though (II.1.1-3, 18-19, II.1.49-50, 57-58). Insulted by his presumption as well as dishonesty – for they discover the CC-ed love letter (II.1.61-70; II.1.73-75) – Mistress Ford and Mistress Page, aided by Mistress Quickly (the servant of the French physician, Dr Caius), promise to revenge themselves:

MISTRESS PAGE [to herself]. How shall I be revenged on him? for revenged I will be! – as sure as his guts are made of puddings. (*MWW* II.1.25-27)

MISTRESS FORD [to MISTRESS PAGE]. How shall I be revenged on him? I think the best way were to entertain him with hope, till the wicked fire of lust have melted him in his own grease... (II.1.59-61)

MISTRESS PAGE [to MISTRESS FORD]. Let's be revenged on him. (II.1.85)

Dismayed by her husband's jealousy, Mistress Ford does not shy away from making a fool of Master Ford either:

MISTRESS PAGE. Is there not a double excellency in this?

MISTRESS FORD. I know not which pleases me better, that my husband is deceived, or Sir John. (*MWW* III.3.168-170)

Shakespeare's comedy features in comic key, if anything, a gender clash generated by men who vent unabashedly, through either jealousy or lechery, their patriarchal conviction that they enjoy proprietorial rights over women. The women will therefore make fools of such foolish men (*MWW* IV.2.32-34): what the "merry wives" devise relative to Falstaff in Act V literally makes a spectacle of men's horny ego.

In 1889, a nearly octogenarian Giuseppe Verdi and life-long admirer of the Bard accepted to compose an opera to a libretto based on *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as suggested by his librettist and fellow composer Arrigo Boito (Hutcheon and Hutcheon 2015: 29-30; Della Seta 2004: 83-84). *Falstaff* world premiered at the Teatro alla Scala, in Milan, on 9 February 1893; it premiered in London and Paris in 1894 and in New York in 1895, yet its success at the Metropolitan Opera came only with Franco Zeffirelli's Met debut in 1964.

It is no novelty that Verdi's *commedia lirica* adapts characters and incidents not only from *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (performed prob. 1597), but also from *Henry IV, Part One* (performed prob. 1596) and *Henry IV, Part Two* (written prob. 1596-97). Boito borrows from Shakespeare's chronicle plays the dissoluteness of Sir John and his larger-than-life character (and great girth). What concerns me here, however, is neither Verdi's opera qua opera nor Boito's adaptation of Shakespeare for the opera stage (Della Seta 2004: 84-85; see also Wills 2011: 165-172), but its new production at the Metropolitan Opera by Canadian director Robert Carsen. Carsen's *Falstaff* at the Met is actually a co-production with the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, where it premiered in 2012, the Teatro alla Scala, Milan, 2013, De Nederlandse Opera, Amsterdam, 2014, and the Canadian Opera Company, Toronto, 2014. Carsen's is the first new Met production of *Falstaff* since Zeffirelli's.

In Carsen's *Falstaff* (which opened at the Met on 6 December 2013, conducted by James Levine), Verdi's *commedia lirica* is set in the late 1950s. Removed from Shakespeare's/Boito's Henrician times to a not so distant past (for the contemporary opera-lovers), "when England was coming out of its post-war depression" (Carsen, in "*Falstaff* 2013-14 New Production Preview", [online]), *Falstaff* shows the rigid distinctions between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie fading away (Freilich 2013). This paper examines the directorial choice for Verdi's Act II, scene 2, set in Alice Ford's "obnoxiously beautiful" (Salazar 2019), "garish Formica kitchen" (Davidson 2013) designed by Paul Steinberg. Nothing in either Shakespeare or Boito directly invites Carsen's choice, save Boito's cooking verbs used first by the women (Act I, scene 2) and then by Falstaff (Act II, scene 2) to describe his (respectively envisaged and lived) torment.

## 2. The texts

Let us first parse the texts which prompted Robert Carsen to choose the kitchen as the setting for Act II, scene 2, where Falstaff is seeing Alice Ford in the



hope of having sex with her. He will be pulled a prank on by Alice and her acolytes – Meg Page and Mrs Quickly, and only marginally Nannetta (Mrs Ford’s daughter in Boito, but Anne Page in Shakespeare) – by way of revenge. In Shakespeare, the action of both Act III, scene 3 and Act IV, scene 2 (with its ludic revenge ‘encore’) is set indoors, in “[t]he hall of Master Ford’s house” (*MWW* III.3 stage direction, IV.2 stage direction). Boito adapts from Shakespeare exclusively the episode featured in Act III; its setting – according to the opening stage direction – is virtually identical to Shakespeare’s: “una sala nella casa di Ford” (Verdi 2009: 760).

Trapped in the Ford house, Falstaff can only escape the jealous husband by consenting that Alice and the other ladies hide him in the laundry basket (covered up with the Fords’ dirty linen), ordered – unbeknownst to Falstaff – to be emptied into the Thames. Here are Shakespeare’s Mrs Ford’s instructions to her servants:

MISTRESS FORD: Marry, as I told you before, John and Robert, be ready here hard by in the brew-house, and *when I suddenly call you, come forth, and – without any pause or staggering – take this basket on your shoulders: that done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among the whitsters in Datchet-mead, and there empty it in the muddy ditch, close by the Thames [sic] side.* (*MWW* III.3.8-14)

When the time comes, the servants take the basket away, ignorant of its contents, thereby also fooling Ford (*MWW* III.3.137-150), who loses the wager on the well-foundedness of his jealousy. *Falstaff’s* Act II, scene 2 follows Shakespeare’s Act III, scene 3 fairly accurately. The servants having dumped the basket contents out of the window in the Thames, the four women laugh triumphantly and reveal their prank to Ford (Verdi 2009: 768).

In Shakespeare’s Act IV, scene 2, which Boito ignores, Falstaff consents – implicitly – to further face-losing through cross-dressing as the bulky aunt of one of the maids, lest he risk facing a doubly angry Ford (*MWW* IV.2.58-86). (Unsurprisingly, the disguise ploy proposed by Mrs Ford reveals the women’s revenge-lust (see also III.3.181-189).) Cross-dressing was unavoidable in an age – such as Shakespeare’s – of all-male casts; his texts further play on this when (usually) female characters must disguise themselves. Even so, Shakespeare’s contemporaries must have roared with laughter to see *MWW’s* two women – albeit crossed-dressed male actors – script-directing Falstaff to disguise himself as a loathsome old auntie, unwelcome to the Fords’ house, whose ‘trespassing’ unleashes Ford’s violent anger. How would cross-dressing have impressed the audience in the late 1880s-early 1890s, all the more so as Falstaff/the ‘witch’ gets a sound beating too? In opera, cross-dressing typically concerns trouser roles for sopranos (e.g. Cherubino in Mozart’s *Le Nozze di Figaro*), mezzo-sopranos (e.g. Nero in Handel’s *Agrippina*, Siébel in Gounod’s *Faust*, Nicklausse – the Muse’s trouser role – in Offenbach’s *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, Hansel in Engelbert Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Octavian – soprano or mezzo-soprano – in Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier*) and contraltos (e.g. Orpheus in Gluck’s *Orpheus and Eurydice*). (Interestingly, though, the Met’s English-language production of *Hänsel and Gretel* directed by Richard Jones, originally created for the Welsh National Opera and the Lyric Opera of Chicago, cast a tenor in the mezzo-soprano Witch role.)

My observations, alongside strictures specific to the genre’s performance, may conceivably suggest why Boito did not also adapt Shakespeare’s vengeance

scene in Act IV. They cannot, however, nor are they meant to, explain why neither Shakespeare nor Boito, unlike Robert Carsen, *chose* the *kitchen* as the setting for the vengeance scene. Carsen's kitchen in *Falstaff*, I submit, furnishes a taken-for-granted place for the women to avenge their hurt pride by humiliating Falstaff along gender lines and turning him into *dirty linen* in literal, not just metaphorical, terms.

At this juncture, looking at Boito's *cooking vocabulary* – in-existent in Shakespeare – in the revenge exchanges may be instructive. Kitchen-related imagery first appears in Act I, scene 2, when the women plan their revenge on Falstaff:

MRS. FORD (to DAME QUICKLY): Seek thou the ruffian at his inn, and offer to arrange a private appointment with me.  
 QUICKLY: Excellent notion!  
 ANNE: Cunning contrivance!  
 MRS. FORD: Thus and thus only, to our snare we may entice him.  
 ANNE: And then...  
 MRS. FORD: And then a pretty trick we'll play him!  
 QUICKLY: Without the least compunction.  
 ANNE: The monster!  
 MRS. PAGE: The impudent old rascal!  
 MRS. FORD: *The mountain of tallow* [*È un monte di lardo*]!  
 MRS. PAGE: He merits no compassion –  
 MRS. FORD: He's a glutton who squanders all that he has in gorging.  
 ANNE: We'll *souse* him in the river.  
 MRS. FORD: *We'll roast him at a fire.* [*Lo arrostitremo al fuoco.*]  
 ALL: Delightful, enchanting!  
 MRS. PAGE (to DAME QUICKLY): We count on you to play your part full featly. (Verdi and Boito 1893:n.p., Verdi 2009:755; Beatty Kingston prefers Shakespeare's 'Anne' to Boito's 'Nannetta')

The modern translation used by the Metropolitan Opera in the English subtitles (translator not mentioned) relishes in verbs of cooking:

NANNETTA: We'll toss him in the river.  
 ALICE: And *roast him on a spit*.  
 ALL: *We'll boil him and toast him, we'll simmer and roast him!*  
 (The Met: Live in HD: *Falstaff* by Giuseppe Verdi 00:28:11-00:32:03)

Here is how Falstaff describes his suffering from excessive heat, hidden as he is in the laundry basket, in Boito's Act II, scene 2, in the ensemble part:

FALSTAFF (*sbucando colla faccia*): *Affogo* [*I'm stifling / I'm poached*]!  
 QUICKLY (*ricacciandolo giù*): Sta sotto.  
 MEG: Or questi s'insorge. . . .  
 QUICKLY (*abbassandosi e parlando a Falstaff sulla cesta*): Se l'altro ti scorge sei morto.  
 FALSTAFF (*rispondendo sotto la biancheria*): *Son cotto* [*I'm cooked*]!  
 MEG: Sta sotto!  
 FALSTAFF (*sbucando*): *Che caldo* [*How hot it is*]!  
 QUICKLY: Sta sotto!  
 FALSTAFF: *Mi squaglio* [*I'm melting*]!  
 QUICKLY: Sta sotto! . . .

MEG: Il ribaldo vorrebbe un ventaglio.  
 FALSTAFF (*supplicante, col naso fuori*): Un breve spiraglio [*A small chink / a narrow opening*]  
 Non chiedo di più [*I'm not asking for more*].  
 QUICKLY: Ti metto il bavaglio  
 Se parli [*I'll gag you if you talk*].  
 MEG (*ricacciandolo sotto la biancheria*): Giù!  
 QUICKLY (*come sopra*): Giù! (Verdi 2009:766; my trans. in square brackets)

FALSTAFF (*thrusting out his face*): *I'm stifling!*  
 QUICKLY (*pushing him down*): Lie quiet, lie quiet!  
 MRS. PAGE: Be careful, they're prying! . . .  
 FALSTAFF: *I'm frying!*  
 QUICKLY and MRS. PAGE (*together*): Keep under! Lie quiet!  
 FALSTAFF: *I'm stewing! I'm melting [Mi squaglio]!* Alack, I shall die if I may not take breath!  
 QUICKLY: Keep under, keep under! Unless you keep quiet you're doomed to death! (*covers Falstaff up with the dirty linen*)  
 MRS. PAGE (*ironically*): Strange, that nobody offers to fan him!  
 MRS. PAGE: Be quiet! To laugh were to make them suspect us:  
 Unless we are careful they'll surely detect us.  
 A husband who's jealous,  
 A swain over-zealous. (Verdi and Boito 1893:n.p.)

The Met's English subtitles render the Falstaff–Quickly–Meg dialogue (here only a part thereof) thus:

FALSTAFF: *I'm roasting.*  
 QUICKLY: Stay down...  
 FALSTAFF: *I'm boiling.*  
 MEG: ... or *you're cooked!*  
 FALSTAFF: Oh, the heat, *I'm roasting!* (01:13:22-01:14:15)

Unsurprisingly, in Act III, scene 1 Boito's Falstaff complains to Dame Quickly, in culinary terms, about the ill-treatment he received in the Ford house:

FALSTAFF: Con quel tufo! – E quel caldo! – Un uom della mia tempra,  
 Che in uno stillicidio continuo si distempra!  
 Poi, quando *fui ben cotto [cooked]*, *rovente [red-hot/burning]*, *incandescente [incandescent]*,  
 M'han tuffato nell'acqua. [...] (Verdi 2009:770; my trans. in square brackets)

FALSTAFF: What a ferment? [*sic*] What a smelting!  
 A man of my complexion  
 As *butter prone to melting*,  
 A chronic *liquefaction!*  
 When *I was hotly stewing and seething* and fiercely glowing, in the river they plunged me! (Verdi and Boito 1893: n.p.)

The Met subtitles read:

FALSTAFF: . . . With dirty linen . . . in that heat!  
 A man like me, *melting like butter.*  
 And once *I was toasted, basted and roasted* . . . (01:24:42-01:25:56)

In the Met subtitles, Falstaff's "butter" simile invokes the image of *basting*, viz., "pour[ing] liquid or melted fat over food that is cooking", especially over meat in order to keep it moist (*LDOCE* Online, "baste"), with himself as both melted butter and roasting meat. Arguably, Boito's imagery may be building on Shakespeare's women's description of Sir John when they contemplate revenge: for Mistress Page, Falstaff is a "greasy knight" (*MWW* II.1.97-98), with guts made of *puddings* (II.1.27); for Mistress Ford, he is a *whale* thrown ashore at Windsor (II.1.57), whom "the wicked fire of lust" (II.1.60) will conceivably "melt[] . . . in his own grease" (II.1.61).

Yet, apart from Shakespeare's 'grease' imagery for Falstaff and Boito's cooking vocabulary, why should Carsen have preferred the 'kitchen' to a 'room' ("the hall" / "una sala") in the Fords' bourgeois house? Had the kitchen, by the late 1950s, when Carsen sets his *Falstaff*, become the earmark of femininity, or at least of that femininity associated with Shakespeare's "merry wives"?

### 3. The kitchen and the performance of femininity

Nowadays "[t]he *idea* of the kitchen exerts a powerful hold on the English imagination, evoking images and thoughts of hearth and home, family and domesticity" (Freeman 2004: 1, original emphasis). This perception might explain Carsen's choice, I suggest, in terms of an *ideological ready-made* not only for the anglophone world, but perhaps for the Global North. Furthermore, "the kitchen is a repository where consumption practices . . . , politics, culture, religion, familial and social relations intersect in a most taken-for-granted way" (Scicluna 2017: 58). Indeed, Carsen's *Falstaff*'s kitchen is a place of *sociality* (see Meah 2014: 671) in various realisations, some more tense than others, and of sociality-related *consumption practices* (see Meah 2016), but especially an arena for contestation of familial and social relations. For instance, the friends meet in the kitchen: the Ford house topography has the kitchen as the second best (back) entrance, in good English tradition. As Alice is stirring something creamy in a large bowl (much later taken up by Mrs Quickly), her friend Meg pours white wine into the glasses; soon, Mrs Quickly also joins them for a little gossip and a sip, which leads to concocting the revenge plan against Falstaff. Nannetta joins them to bemoan her father's decision to marry her off to Dr Caius. *Bulky* Falstaff himself – in a red riding suit (to echo, ironically, the *Little Red Riding Hood* soon *to be wolfed down* by the wolf?) – enters the kitchen, looking for Alice, unaware of the trap set for him. Now alone, she is lighting the candles on the round table where they will dine – actually, where Falstaff will devour a sizeable leg from the roast turkey *he* has removed from the oven. Falstaff has no qualms about the rendezvous locale, but rather contemplates the prospect of having sex with Alice, whom he gently pushes onto the island worktop. (I have been unable to verify in archives whether having sex on the kitchen table was an at least occasional pastime in the late 1950s! However, forced sex on the kitchen table in the late 1950s can be documented, e.g. homosexual child rape ("William Frank's Story", online). Yet, postwar marriage handbooks advising women routinely associated sex and cooking (Neuhaus 2001: 107-111).) Too bad Mrs Quickly enters (as instructed) to warn that Ford is coming home to storm the house for Falstaff! Soon enough, a Valkyries' ride is unleashed by mad Ford and the entire township, unsuccessfully hunting down Falstaff, who is safely, if chokingly, hidden in the laundry basket.

In Carsen's production, the women busying themselves in the kitchen, once Ford is in, do not simply *perform their gender* (Butler 1999: 141-180) – here *cooking and tidying* – in compliance with patriarchal expectations and Boito's libretto. Rather, they *overdo* it deliberately and mockingly by *masquerading* femininity neither in sexual terms (Irigaray 1985: 27, 62), nor through verbal mimicry (*mimétisme*), viz., “playing with mimesis” (idem: 76-77) through “miming/reproducing a language that is not own, masculine language” (idem: 137), but by caricaturing gender-role expectations (idem: 152) and thus gender identity (cf. Tseëlon 2001: 2-3). Mrs Quickly and Meg *feign* stirring in the bowl and cooking, which affords them a veneer of acceptable/respectable companionship and sociality, when Ford and his ‘militia’ barge into the kitchen, or even the respite to spy on Ford. Later, Mrs Quickly and Meg enjoin each other by turns to feign tidying up the kitchen stormed by Ford, in accordance with the libretto: “Facciamo le viste / D’attendere ai panni” (“Let’s make it look like we’re tending to the clothes”; my trans.). The theatricality of Carsen’s scene surpasses Boito’s:

QUICKLY (*accanto alla cesta, a MEG*): Facciamo le viste

D’attendere ai panni;  
Pur ch’ei non c’inganni  
Con mosse impreviste.  
Finor non s’accorse  
Di nulla; egli può  
Sorprenderci forse,  
Confonderci no.

MEG (*accanto alla cesta, a QUICKLY*): Facciamogli siepe

Fra tanto scompiglio.  
Ne’giuochi il periglio  
E’un grano di pepe.  
Il rischio é un diletto  
Che accresce l’ardor.  
Che stimola in petto  
Gli spirti e il cor. (Verdi 2009: 766)

QUICKLY: Now let us be busy, the linen arranging,

And give him a chance his position of changing.

MRS. PAGE: Let’s pile the clothes on him, and thoroughly hide him,

Lest some irretrievable ill should betide him!

QUICKLY: Till now his suspicions have led him astray.

Defeat us he shall not, though vex us he may!

MRS. PAGE: The risk of a jest is the liveliest part,

It raises the spirits and gladdens the heart! (Verdi and Boito 1893:n.p.)

The two women’s is a *boisterously contrived spectacle of expectable – and respectable – femininity*, not the ‘experience’ of everyday femininity qua domestic drudgery (They are *merry wives* indeed!). Where best to *stage* this *masquerade of female domesticity* – intended to deceive men – than in *the kitchen* for credibility’s sake? (However, offstage such masquerade may easily backfire and show women prone to mischief every time they perform their gender ‘correctly’).

An overview of the historical fortunes of the kitchen, its *en-gendering* (de Lauretis 1987: 38) – i.e., gender-related creation – as women’s province, may provide the background against which to gauge Carsen’s setting choice. A caveat: both the originators of Falstaff (the character) – Shakespeare, as well as the two

nineteenth-century composers – and the Met production’s cast render *Falstaff* (the opera) a bourgeois, white-race affair by default, if with a jarring difference from offstage life. In the latter, white middle-class women in the Global North have felt – or have been theorised as implicitly feeling – oppressed and captive in the kitchen (Meah 2014: 674-676; Scicluna 2017: 55-56, chaps. 3, 5-8). (By contrast, both for lower-class non-white women in the Global South and for minority and immigrant women in the Global North, the kitchen is their realm of empowerment and creativity in juggling everyday life’s hardships (Meah 2014: 676-679) – or of struggling with squalor (Bowen et al. 2014).) Furthermore, with men’s recent growing involvement in the kitchen in the Global North, women appear to perceive their power and expertise – in their one and only realm – threatened as *occasional* male involvement qua fun and competitiveness elbows *routine* female drudgery aside (Meah 2014: 681-684).

Yet, how did the kitchen become associated with women, as their indisputable domain, (nearly) irrespective of class? Elite eighteenth- and nineteenth-century households prior to the Industrial Revolution relegated the kitchen – and the domestic servants staffing it – to a doubly invisible position: the kitchen out of sight, in basements or at the back of houses, and both kitchen and domestic activities out of mind, clearly demarcated from “the polite parts of the house” (Eveleigh, qtd. in Scicluna 2017: 61) – but for the odours emanating from the kitchen into the house. Conversely, in both urban and rural lower-class households, the kitchen could often be “the only living space available” (ibid.). With the Industrial Revolution, whose pollution affected the urban environment in unprecedented ways, ideas of comfort – viz., the house as haven – started to permeate the middle-class imaginary of ‘home’. Yet, as “the idea of domesticity as a general good became associated with the physical home as a symbol of rest and love”, the figure of the woman emerged as the default protectress of this home (Scicluna 2017: 62), due to her segregation at home, away from any sort of physical but especially moral pollution in the public sphere. The outcome of industrial-revolution-rooted capitalism, with its clear-cut separation of the public and private spheres, was the making of the housewife, first “as an ideal of the bourgeois classes” and during the late nineteenth and the twentieth centuries as “the dominant female model” (Lutz 2007: 187; see Bock and Duden 1977). The ‘angel in the house’, moreover, became associated with an idea of cleanliness that reflected on the kitchen in physical terms of hygiene, yet also, metaphorically, on hierarchical class construal within and without the home (Scicluna 2017: 63-64). Industrial, socio-political and ideological developments led to the turn-of-the-century dwindling numbers of male domestics and after WWI also female domestics, with a time lag en-gendered by the stereotyped association of (lower-class) women with the home and with caring and nurturing activities (idem: 64-65).

Modernity-driven attempts at rationalisation of housework in the nineteenth century successfully imposed a new time awareness – and timing – of household activities, as well as the spatial specialisation of functions first in upper- and middle-class households and gradually in most others (idem: 66-67). Early twentieth-century attempts to render the kitchen more scientific, in the spirit of modernity, “culminated in the idea of the kitchen as a workshop” powered by Taylorism (viz., the capitalist principle of *efficiency*) and often associated with the woman (idem: 67). The most impactful Taylorist kitchen was the Frankfurt kitchen (or continuous kitchen) designed by Austrian architect Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky in 1926 for working-class families, yet unaffordable to them (Freeman 2004: 39-

41). It “emulated the assembly line of the modern factory” (Scicluna 2017: 69) in both shape – a galley kitchen in its original design – and size-cum-purpose: this tiny kitchen was designed to “only accommodate one person at a time” – the working-class woman – for cooking purposes, thus excluding “communality” (idem: 70). Those who could afford this (soon to be called) fitted kitchen, the middle classes, didn’t embrace it from the outset, but needed the preliminary stage of “the Commodious Cupboard” (Freeman 2004: 42), viz., “individually crafted, free-standing kitchen cupboards suitably divided to accommodate an array of food and a variety of household tools and utensils” (idem: 43). By contrast, in the US, H. Creston Dohner’s “Day After Tomorrow’s Kitchen”, commissioned by the Libbey-Owens Ford Company in 1943, successfully persuaded the public about “the desirability of kitchen efficiency on which the fitted kitchen was premised” (idem: 45). The 1950s’ economic boom – and wealth surge – allowed more and more Americans to purchase fitted kitchens such as Dohner’s; by the 1960s, British houses had also introduced fitted kitchens (idem: 26).

With the emergence of gas for cooking, hence an availability of multiple heat sources in the house, both the design of British homes and overall domestic activity underwent radical change; a sharper spatial separation of activities ‘removed’ the kitchen from the centre of family life, despite resistance to the latter (Freeman 2004: 37). Variations in kitchen design evolved accordingly: in the 1940s, the kitchen-living room arrangement with a low-partition wall enabled families to eat away from the kitchen without thereby being fully separated from the housewife busy in the kitchen; after World War II, the kitchen-diner graced many of the new houses (idem: 37-38, 44-49).

Furthermore, the overall improvement in housing conditions in post-war Britain, despite widespread poverty (Roberts 1995: chap. 2), went in tandem with “the increasing use of domestic appliances, which also influenced [gender-specific] housework routines” (Scicluna 2017: 71). With the removal of Purchase Tax in 1957, Britain witnessed greater affordability of kitchen utensils and white goods, regarded “as necessities and not luxuries since they were used daily in every home” (idem: 73).

Yet, the interwar period also witnessed a *middle-class house reinvention*, which rendered the *kitchen* the *hub of conviviality* with family and friends too (Moran 2007: 106-107), the very opposite of the Frankfurt kitchen, allegedly designed for the working classes. With the gentrification of London (1955-1980), for instance, the “new middle classes” would “have ‘a few friends round for a meal’” eaten “unceremoniously in a knocked-through kitchen-diner” rather than for a “formal dinner party with several courses” in “a ‘stuffy’ separate dining room” (idem: 107). (Carsen’s Falstaff in the kitchen was round the corner.)

Modernity’s house once assimilated to an efficient machine, its ‘general manager’, originally the middle-class housewife, became the protagonist of the social *myth* “that home was the only place to fulfil oneself” (Turnaturi, qtd. in Scicluna 2017: 68), presumably as an efficient, if unpaid, worker. Ironically, the patriarchal mantra “a woman’s place is in the kitchen” does not come from time immemorial, as many perhaps assume implicitly. Nor is the kitchen as women’s ‘empire’ an *indisputable* site of feminine dis/empowerment: women have “appropriate[d] kitchens for a range of purposes, including remaking and subverting gendered roles and resisting gendered discourses” (Meah 2014: 675). Indeed, the kitchen as an “ideological battleground” (Meah 2016: section I) does beg for attention.

#### 4. Conclusion

“[I]ncreasingly represented as a place of sociality” (Meah 2014: 671), the *modern* kitchen can convincingly provide the background to the events of Act II, scene 2 in *Falstaff*. Not only do Carsen’s women meet in Alice’s kitchen; they sip wine, chatter, cook, and plan their revenge on Falstaff, as casually – or ‘naturally’ – as if they were meeting to eat in Alice’s drawing room or, as in Act I, scene 2 in Carsen’s production, in the classy dining room of the Garter Inn. Unsurprisingly, Carsen’s Falstaff enters the house through – and remains in – the kitchen, until dumped in the river.

Yet there is more to Carsen’s setting. Whether by design or inadvertently, it suggests, I contend, that the modern kitchen is an – perhaps the – unacknowledged *lieu de mémoire* in the everyday *performance* of the *collective memory of patriarchy* per se. As the kitchen em(-)places gender hierarchy, gender roles and female dis-/self-empowerment through daily routine, it en-genders a subtype of collective memory – subsumable to the woman’s-place-is-in-the-kitchen cliché – never theorised as such, for ‘collective memory’ is itself a patriarchal construct.

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## THE AVATARS OF SHAKESPEARE'S OPHELIA IN INTERSEMIOTIC TRANSLATION

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***Abstract:** The article starts from the premise that, as Shakespeare's plays in general have been a continuous source of inspiration for visual artists, Sir John Everett Millais' iconic painting of Ophelia drowning (Ophelia 1851-52) has been a landmark for modern and contemporary artists – painters, engravers, photographers, sculptors. Of all Shakespearean characters, Ophelia seems to have captured the imagination of artists worldwide more often and more powerfully, Getty images recording no fewer than 5,240 distinct images of Hamlet's unfortunate bride. Of the multitude of artifacts whose source is Millais's painting, this paper focuses on a number of visual re-interpretations from both an intersemiotic translation perspective and from that of a translation which is done through an intermediary element.*

***Keywords:** intersemiotic translation, translation through an intermediary, Shakespeare's Ophelia, visual re-interpretation*

### 1. Introduction

It has become widely accepted by now that any act of translation, be it interlinguistic or intersemiotic, is a hermeneutic act and not merely a mechanic transfer of content between two languages or between systems operating with different sets of signs (see, for example, Clüver and Watson 1989, Stolze 2017, Stefanink and Bălăcescu 2017, Venuti 2019, etc). The translator – a linguist, a painter, a photographer, a singer or a film producer – filters the content (and form) of the original through his/her own understanding and reacts to it emotionally, closely influenced by a multitude of factors, ranging from coordinates of his/ her personal profile to elements pertaining to the wider translation context, like when, by what means, under what constraints (if any), for whom or for what purpose the translation is made. Besides the translator's skill, intuition and inventiveness, it is all these factors that determine the final translation decisions as well.

When translation presupposes the transfer of the original source directly into a target product, there is only one level of interpretation that constitutes its departure point. When, however, there is an intermediary element involved, the levels of interpretation multiply with each step taken towards the end product. Thus, the understanding of the meaning of this end product, of the central message it conveys may be said to rely on the reconstruction of the meaning of both the intermediary and the original source, as the two never totally overlap. Unless each stage in this more complex kind of translation process is taken into consideration, the significance attributed to the end product may be dramatically altered.

As Clüver and Watson (1989) observed, understanding this significance depends on whether the fact that the end product is the result of translation (through an intermediary) is known or not, in other words, on whether it is considered a translation or an original in itself, so much so in the case of intersemiotic translation. Visual intersemiotic translations of literary works “demand that the viewer be familiar with the literary model, otherwise their representational content will remain largely inaccessible” (Clüver, Watson 1989: 79). Familiarity with the intermediary, be it another text or an artifact, plays an equally important role, we may add, in the reception of the final product of the intersemiotic translation process.

What follows is our admittedly subjective hermeneutic exercise in some specific cases of intersemiotic translation through an intermediary, in an attempt to offer evidence for what we have stated above.

## 2. The starting point

Shakespeare’s plays have been a constant source of inspiration for writers worldwide, who sought, traditionally, a way to legitimate their own work through the Bard’s established authority and, more recently, a way to criticize this very establishment and the Western cultural canon. Similarly, since the eighteenth century, many visual artists have connected their work with the Shakespearean dramatic text. In the late 1700s, British painters used the already famous comedies and tragedies to contribute to the development of a national school of painting, which went hand in hand with the articulation of a growing national awareness and the need to stabilize national identity and specificity (Dias 2013). After these early initiatives, best represented by the first major painting exhibition organized in Britain, the Boydell Gallery (1789-1805), the dialogue between the Elizabethan text and visual imagery grew more and more intense, painters and, later, photographers, including their own agendas in the selection of Shakespearean episodes. A conspicuous nineteenth-century example is the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose members embraced Shakespeare for the escapism his plays’ time and settings provided. They also used the Bard’s plays in a more subversive manner, so as to address contemporary social issues, such as gender relations. A recently published paper (Percec 2020), which draws on the bibliography about the female muses of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, argues that painters like Daniel Gabriel Rossetti, Sir John Everett Millais, or John William Waterhouse found the Renaissance to be a suitable background for their post-Romantic projections (illustrated with the help of lavish, vividly coloured costumes and flowery décors), while tackling themes their contemporary Victorians found uncomfortable and disturbing. Among them, the role played by women in the family and society was a constant source of anxiety or controversy. The Pre-Raphaelite painters indirectly addressed taboo topics, like women’s agency and the status of the fallen woman, under the guise of classical, atemporal tragic plots.

One of the most iconic paintings of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood is the depiction of Ophelia drowning in Sir John Everett Millais’s *Ophelia* (1851-1852). We argue here that, as Shakespeare’s plays, in general, have been a constant source of inspiration, Millais’s *Ophelia* has been a landmark for nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first-century painters, engravers, photographers, and sculptors. This may not come as a surprise as, of all Shakespearean characters, Ophelia’s plight seems to have captured the imagination of artists worldwide more often and more

powerfully, Getty images recording nowadays no fewer than 5,240 distinct images of Hamlet's unfortunate bride (<https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/ophelia>). But Millais's striking combination of beauty and horror (his painting shows a young and elegantly dressed woman only a few seconds away from death) has substantially contributed to the consecration and perhaps even the standardization of the visual representation of this scene in Shakespeare's play.

### 3. Beauty and decay: Millais's *Ophelia*

Departing from Millais's painting, the paper discusses how later visual artists, especially photographers, in portraying Ophelia, may have responded more to the Pre-Raphaelite image than to Shakespeare's tragedy, the former thus becoming an intermediary in the intersemiotic translation from the original text into these visual transpositions. It also hints at how the various visual re-interpretations of (parts of) the Shakespearean text position themselves in a web of interconnectedness.

The young girl's fate challenged the Victorian sensibilities more than any other historical and cultural periods, with its emphasis on the ruined woman. A repudiated fiancée, Ophelia's only way out of her tragic fate may be – indeed, as Hamlet callously tells her – the convent (“Get thee to a nunnery: why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?” III.1.122-3). The equally final alternative, offered liberally by many Victorian moralists, is death. Both “choices” are inevitable, even if her ruin was not the result of her own sins. Unmarriageability, no matter through whose fault, brings about disgrace and ostracization, considered by the Victorians to be worse than death both for the victim and for her extended family. This is the assumption from which Millais starts, but his depiction of the heroine is softened by his Romantic inspiration (Fig. 1). The result is a chaste, elegant scene, with the graceful girl floating on water like a mermaid or a nymph, among flowers whose symbolism was detailed by Shakespeare in the original play and then enhanced by the Victorians:

There is a willow grows aslant a brook,  
That shows his hoar leaves in the glassy stream;  
There with fantastic garlands did she come  
Of crow-flowers, nettles, daisies, and long purples, (IV. 7.167-70)

Millais's Ophelia is dressed in bridal clothes, which, for an observer like Linda Hawksley (2017), said as much about the tragic heroine as about Lizzie Siddal, the model whose affair with a fellow painter, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, made her notorious. Their eventual marriage was short and unhappy, though, because Siddal was suffering from tuberculosis, depression and laudanum addiction, which soon caused her death.

Laurence Roussillon-Constanty (2019) argues that Millais's painting is provocative because it blends several artistic genres, being, alternatively, a portrait, a landscape and a still life. As a portrait, it is clearly less Elizabethan and more Victorian, emphasizing the vulnerable condition of the abandoned woman or even of the madwoman. If the malady of the nineteenth century was tuberculosis, also called the white plague, the “female malady”, to quote a famous feminist title (Showalter 1987), was hysteria and mental insanity, both recurrent motifs in Victorian fiction.

Ophelia's face and body in the painting almost blend with the background, water and forest, contributing to the typically Pre-Raphaelite escapist effect. But, if the human part of the painting dwells in ambiguity (Is she an enraptured bride or a suicidal lunatic? Is the expression on her face agony or ecstasy?), the vegetal part is strikingly accurate. Laurence Roussillon-Constanty (2019) calls the viewers' attention to the details of the tree trunk, the moss, the flowers, considering the painting a genuine botanical study. Despite these careful finishing touches, the entire composition is remarkably frozen, like a still life.

In this, the painting responds to Shakespeare's own decision to keep the girl's madness and suicide off the stage, Ophelia's last moments in the play being only second-handedly reported by Queen Gertrude. This indirectness is doubled by abstraction, literary and mythological references, which all circumvent the powerful taboo subjects of insanity and voluntary drowning:

Her clothes spread wide,  
And mermaid like awhile they bore her up,  
Which time she chanted snatches of old lauds (IV.7.176-8)

Thus, Millais's painting displays little emotional involvement and empathy, allowing for multiple interpretations. Artworks that are inspired from the 1852 *Ophelia* certainly rise to the occasion provided by this occasion for interpretation.

#### 4. Solving ambiguities. Early responses to Millais's *Ophelia*

As argued above, John Everett Millais's painting has intrigued artists ever since the nineteenth century. Photographers have chosen to depict their own versions of Ophelia more or less deliberately responding to Millais and, in general, to the Pre-Raphaelite compositions evoking mysterious women, fallen women, vulnerable women, and situations that caused anxiety or restlessness among viewers, because of the way they tackle taboo subjects like sexuality, madness, suicide, etc. Female insanity was ranking high among artistic preoccupations, because it reflected the concerns of a very conservative society about containing the weaker sex's potential for disruption, for assumed or involuntary rebellion. This was also due to the developments in psychiatry, even before psychoanalysis came to dominate clinical practice.

Julia Margaret Cameron's 1867 *Ophelia* (Fig. 2), the first known photographic study of the Shakespearean character, started her artistic career photographing patients in mental asylums. Laurence Roussillon-Constanty (2019) discusses Cameron's work as a response not only to Shakespeare, but also to Millais, thus bringing to the fore elements of both the original drama text and the intermediate painting as influencing her photograph. A young, disheveled woman, Cameron's model is dressed in full mourning, in stark contrast with Millais's white gown, the flowers in the Pre-Raphaelite painting being replicated here, in a synecdoche, by a budding white rose at her neck.

Many late nineteenth and early twentieth-century artists combined their aesthetic curiosity about the Shakespearean heroine with their scientific interest in mental disorders. If Millais hides the protagonist's mental distress behind a rich décor, Dante Gabriel Rossetti's painting entitled *The First Madness of Ophelia* (1864) (Fig. 3) focuses, as its name suggests, on the observation of the character's state of mind and its manifestations. An intriguing detail in this composition is the

fact that those who witness the girl's deranged behaviour look more like doctors curiously examining a patient in a hospital, than like kin and friends worrying about the consequences of Hamlet's actions. Ophelia's serenity in the painting is supported by the flowers she is holding, like a bride's bouquet, even if, in fact, this detail hints at the first signs of her madness. In the play, the young woman is enumerating a long list of flowers for Claudius and Gertrude's ears, whose significance differs dramatically, ranging from the columbines symbolizing ingratitude, to the rue, a token of repentance:

There's fennel for you, and columbines. There's rue for you, and here's some for me; we may call it herb of grace o' Sundays. You must wear your rue with a difference. There's a daisy. I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died. (IV, 5, 184-9)

Portrait painters and photographers influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, in the 1890s-1910s, make Ophelia's madness less symbolic and more clinical. The details they share are a forlorn look or hollow eyes, with deep, dark circles, unkempt hair and a white gown which has nothing in common with a bridal dress, but rather with the shifts worn by inmates in psychiatric facilities. Georg Falkenberg's *Ophelia* (1898) (Fig. 4), for example, a black and white portrait, shows the woman (who looks far more mature than Ophelia's years) holding a handful of flowers and weeds, which seem to have been torn randomly. Millais's original pattern is hinted at by the forest in the background, but these trees are bare, a far cry from the Pre-Raphaelite rich vegetation. This is not a Victorian angel, but a modern woman, suffering from the neuroses of her own time.

Ernest Hébert's *Ophélie* (1910) (Fig. 5), another black and white portrait, is more reminiscent of Cameron's sepia photograph, the background being completely dark. If Cameron uses a white rose to suggest Ophelia's innocence, echoing the "rose of May" Gertrude evokes in the play, Hébert adds the white mallow, not mentioned in the Shakespearean text, which adorns, more gracefully than in Falkenberg's portrait, the girl's blond hair. The mallow is known for its curing properties, but it is hard to tell whether Hébert chose it deliberately or not. Unlike the Pre-Raphaelites, who, no matter how disturbing the subjects they tackle may be, choose not to confront their viewers directly, since the suffering Ophelia is always looking away, coyly or absent-mindedly, portraitists who present the Shakespearean character's tragic fate as a study in madness have their models stare right into the viewers' eyes. This pose signals, literally as well as metaphorically, that the girl's condition should not be ignored, as both Shakespeare himself and the Victorian painters did, adorning it with flowers and songs, while her suicide was kept safely off the stage, being only discussed by other characters. The models looking at the viewers are provocative, charging the composition heavily both with anxiety or guilt and with unexpected eroticism.

## 5. New archetypes

### 5.1. Gregory Crewdson's *Untitled (Ophelia)*

The visual artists' new responses to the Shakespearean text and to the Pre-Raphaelite choices of interpretation and transposition reach a climax in the twenty-first century, with an avalanche of media addressing Ophelia's madness and subsequent drowning. An example which, like Millais's painting, already serves as

an archetype for photographers is Gregory Crewdson's 2001 digital chromogenic print *Untitled (Ophelia)* (Fig. 6). First of all, the American photographer's composition is the most obvious postmodernist pastiche of Millais's *Ophelia*, adapting the nineteenth-century work to contemporary discourses of gender and power relations, while being the most explicit about the taboo subjects of madness and suicide. The snapshot is taken indoors, in a typical American middle-class suburban living room, but the composition is clearly reminiscent of Millais, because the floor is flooded with water and a young woman is floating on it, on her back, her figure diluted and blurred like in the 1852 painting. This is not, though, the clear water of a brook, but a murky, unnatural pond inundating someone's house. Its darkness can only be regarded as a metaphor of the woman's mind, troubled, "incapable of her own distress" as Gertrude described Ophelia in the play (IV.7.179).

Crewdson produces a surrealist artwork in the strictest sense, offering a nightmarish version of reality, as well as a glimpse into a distressed human mind – an impression confirmed by the details the photographer adds to the composition, as necessary clues. On the table behind the lying (or dying) woman, there is a jar of sleeping pills, a glass of water, and an ashtray full of cigarette butts. The model is wearing a nightgown, her slippers and robe abandoned carelessly on the stairs, and a blanket negligently thrown on the sofa. The fact that the woman seems to have been reading a Nora Roberts paperback romance makes this Ophelia more Bovaric than Shakespearean, a character made unhappy by her incapacity to live in the real world and by her desire to escape into a fictional, parallel reality. But the promise of love from the book, coupled with a wedding photo on the bookshelf, brings us back to the original tragic plot, where lost and unrequited love was the source of the young woman's demise. The entirely inorganic décor of the living room contrasts with Millais's painting, only a glass lotus-shaped ornament on the coffee table working as a cynical commentary on the flower symbolism critics have made so much about in both the Shakespearean text and the Pre-Raphaelite painting. A hidden critical perspective is added by the picture of an elderly man, hanging on the wall in the background. This *mise en abyme* is Crewdson's response to the presence and influence of the father figure, and of male authoritative figures in general, in Shakespeare's tragedy, who deepen Ophelia's crisis and victimization.

Last but not least, Crewdson's composition draws our attention to the ambivalence of Ophelia's death: a suicide presented by Gertrude as an accident. Here, the reasons for the woman's death may be multiple. Firstly, she might have taken an (accidental) overdose of pills, which made her unable to resist drowning when the house was flooded. This is obviously another nod to Millais and his model, Lizzie Siddal, whose death, after an overdose of laudanum stirred equally numerous controversies. While she had been taken laudanum for years on the doctor's prescription, the loss of her baby may have increased her depression and brought her on the verge of suicide (Hawksley 2017). Secondly, Crewdson's composition may be interpreted more metaphorically if the dark waters on the floor stand for Lethe, the river of oblivion and death into which humans sink inexorably.

## 5.2. The Vogue pictorial

The second photographic series is a 2012 *Vogue* pictorial which features no fewer than 18 photographers responding to the fate of the Shakespearean heroine. The catalogue is introduced as follows:



By now *Photo Vogue* has reached 19,722 users and hundreds of thousands of uploaded pictures. It seems incredible, but I often find myself remembering the style of some users and recognizing them when I approve the pictures. The same way I can highlight what the most recurrent themes are. Among these surely one of the most represented is the Shakespearean tragedy of Ophelia, daughter of the chief counsellor of Denmark, victim of her own madness after being rejected by Prince Hamlet. Ophelia embodies the essence of purity and innocence, perhaps a metaphor of the fragility of adolescence, whose death for love becomes an aesthetic manifesto, today, like yesterday, as in John Everett Millais's iconic pictorial representation. And in the silence of Shakespeare's text (the girl's death is not shown on stage but it's inferred from one of Gertrude's lines) the very essence of representation lives off, leaving the artist free to interpret the unspoken with images. The tragedy of Ophelia has continued to influence artists in every field, from film to painting, from music to photography up to science: a satellite of Uranus, in fact, bears her name. So here it is, in a beautiful photo gallery, the contribution of Photo Vogue artists to the narrative of the drama of this heroine of love. (Glaviano 2012)

Valeria Trasatti's *La morte di Ophelia* (Fig.7) is closest in composition to Millais's painting. It contains similar chromatic features and layout: a girl dressed in white, floating, flowers in her hands. While both Shakespeare's and Millais's brook was, technically, running water, the Pre-Raphaelite painting had an obviously more static quality. In Trasatti's photograph, the waterfall in the background and the water foaming about the model's recumbent body convey a more dynamic character to the entire composition, suggesting a transition, a passage from one phase of life to another, or even from life to death. Hinting at Millais, but taking the composition one step further in abstractness, is Brooke Golightly's *Through All My Shame* (Fig. 8), which uses darker, but warm, earth colours, symbolizing nature, femininity and fertility, in stark contrast with the sterility of the ensemble. The river bank in the background is barren and muddy and everything behind it is blurred and indistinct, increasing the sense of abstractness. The anonymity of the character (whose face is not part of the foreground and whose features are barely discernible) is also in opposition with the particular detail of her nakedness, the bare breasts, exposed by a dress that has been lifted up to her neck, hinting alarmingly at sexual violence. This impression is supported by the very explicit title, which adds a critical commentary to Ophelia's tragic victim position. Indeed, the Shakespearean text which introduces the theme of madness, with Ophelia singing bawdy songs, to the queen's dismay, or Hamlet alluding to her lap have been interpreted by scholars as indicative of the unfortunate bride's loss of innocence, possibly by force (Cinpoes, Volceanov 2010: 39, 244). Golightly seems to visually adapt the scene in which Hamlet makes a covertly indecent proposal to his fiancé, which she gently rejects at first, and then accepts, in submission and confusion:

HAMLET: Lady, shall I lie in your lap?  
 [Lying down at Ophelia's feet.]  
 OPHELIA: No, my lord.  
 HAMLET: I mean, my head upon your lap?  
 OPHELIA: Ay, my lord. (III.2.110-13)

Cristina Robles' *Ophelia* (Fig. 9) adds concrete, mundane details to the drowning scene, such as the circles on the water surface, which suggest a rainy day, therefore an unfriendly climate. The symbolic hostility of nature brings

physical discomfort to the character, in addition to her mental torment. Robles adds yet another flower to the vegetal list that, ever since Shakespeare, has been growing. The water lily, in her hair and around her body, is reminiscent of Queen Gertrude's description of Ophelia's last seconds in the water, "mermaid-like" (IV. 5.177), as this flower's Greek name is *Nymphea*. The water lily symbolizes chastity, but, given the places where it grows – in all types of waters, and in spite of adversity, it is often considered to indicate the circle of life.

Brittney Love's *Ophelia* (Fig. 10) makes Shakespeare's story contemporary by presenting the girl drowning in a swimming pool rather than in a river, a domesticated nature which is in sheer contrast with the character's uncontrolled self and inner nature, but also an artificial nature in contradiction with the wild, unspoiled natural backdrops of traditional visual ensembles. This photograph is a nod to Crewdson as well, who was the first to give the story of Ophelia drowning a "desperate housewife" connotation. This desperate housewife is, however, generic, because the model's face is completely invisible.

A black and white photograph is Magdalena's *Ophelia* (Fig. 11), which may take its cue not from Millais directly, but from photographers and portraitists like Cameron, Falkenberg, and Hébert. This photograph has a curiously static quality and the make-up on the model's face may comment on the young woman's lack of agency, her inability to control her life, dictated by others, making her nothing more than a painted doll.

An interesting contribution to the *Vogue* pictorial is provided by Olivia Gird's *Lost Stories* (Fig. 12), which seems to be a follow up of Crewdson, with the destabilizing presence of the books, asymbolic for the Bovaric counterpart of the modern suburban woman. In this photograph, two books are sinking in the pool, together with their owner's body. They are open, as if Ophelia had been reading just before she decided to take her own life. If nowadays a woman's (or anyone's) reading, even in unconventional settings, is regarded as an activity within the range of unsurprising social behaviour, in the nineteenth century, the patriarchal society was worried that fiction could harm women by putting strange ideas in their heads and encouraging them to adopt subversive attitudes towards family and the community. This message is most clearly explained in Flaubert's 1857 novel, where the wife's betrayal and the woman's ruin are "inspired" by the romances she keeps reading. Her unhappiness and final punishment are presented as the result of the woman's failure to reconcile the romantic fantasies of books with her own reality. Gird's photograph, like Crewdson's, suggests there is yet another degree of subversiveness in Ophelia's character and another taboo is broken, before all the others become visible: that of the young woman reading books. If we think of Shakespeare's tragedy, the scholarly attitude is, in fact, not hailed in Hamlet either, Polonius and Claudius regarding it as a sign of his weakness and incapacity to rule like a true king.

## 6. Conclusion

Translation is, as we began this article by pointing out, a form of interpretation. Faithfulness in translation may be approached based on this belief and on the belief that "translators must aim at rendering not necessarily the intention of the author (who may have been dead for millennia), but the intention of the text – the intention of the text being the outcome of an interpretative effort on the part of the reader, the critic or the translator" (Eco 2003: 5). This view of

faithfulness, applicable to interlinguistic translation, is perhaps even more soundly validated in intersemiotic translation, as in the case of the latter, the “relation of coherence with the enunciative choices of the source text” (Dusi 2015) may be established within much broader limits. In other words, more flexibility may be allowed when considering a certain result of intersemiotic translation a reasonably faithful transposition of the original than in the case of a target text obtained via interlinguistic translation. Our hints at Millais’s *Ophelia* as an acceptably true to the original transposition of Shakespeare’s character in *Hamlet* have hopefully demonstrated this.

In translation through an intermediate medium, be this translation interlinguistic or intersemiotic, faithfulness to the original, understood as indicated, is constructed in successive stages, following a rather mathematical formula: if the end artifact/s is/are faithful to the intermediate and the intermediate is faithful to the original, then the end artifact/s is/are faithful to the original. We believe that our analysis of the interrelated visual re-interpretations of Millais’s *Ophelia* and our pointing out their connection both with this painting and with Shakespeare’s original text have succeeded in offering proof of the validity of this reasoning.

However, since, as we have kept emphasizing, any translation act is an interpretative act – subjective by its very nature –, the challenge that remains is to establish the grounds on which the above mentioned coherence with the enunciative choices of the source text may be assessed as pertinent, beyond each interpreter’s intuitive approach.

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<https://www.gettyimages.com/photos/ophelia>

## ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. Sir John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851-1852  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-ophelia-n01506>



Fig. 2. Julia Margaret Cameron, *Ophelia*, 1867  
<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/ophelia-study-no-2-julia-margaret-cameron/zgGAz6MDL96QBA>



Fig. 3. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The First Madness of Ophelia*, 1864  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dante\\_Gabriel\\_Rossetti\\_-\\_The\\_First\\_Madness\\_of\\_Ophelia.JPG](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dante_Gabriel_Rossetti_-_The_First_Madness_of_Ophelia.JPG)



Fig. 4. Georg Falkenberg, *Ophelia*, 1898  
[http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Falkenberg.Ophelia.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Falkenberg.Ophelia.html)



Fig. 5. Ernest Hébert's *Ophélie*, 1910  
[http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare\\_Illustrated/Hebert.Ophelia.html](http://www.english.emory.edu/classes/Shakespeare_Illustrated/Hebert.Ophelia.html)



Fig. 6. Gregory Crewdson, *Untitled (Ophelia)*, 2001  
<https://publicdelivery.org/gregory-crewdson-twilight>



Fig. 7. Valeria Trasatti, *La morte di Ophelia*, 2012  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157534>

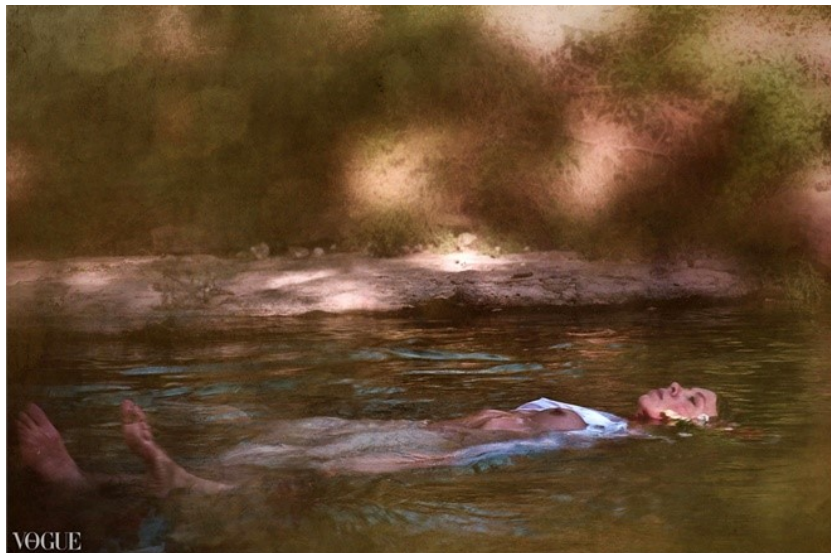


Fig. 8. Brooke Golightly, *Through All My Shame*, 2012  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157534>





Fig. 9. Cristina Robles, *Ophelia*, 2012  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157534>



Fig. 10. Britney Love, *Ophelia*, 2012  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157534>



Fig. 11. Magdalena, *Ophelia*, 2012  
<https://www.vogue.it/en/people-are-talking-about/art-photo-design/2012/01/ophelia-from-photovogue#ad-image157534>



**COLERIDGE'S NOTION OF THE WILLING SUSPENSION  
OF DISBELIEF: THE CASE OF *THE RIME OF THE ANCIENT  
MARINER***

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***Abstract:** In order to approach the question of aesthetic illusion in poetry and stage performance, the paper centers on Samuel Coleridge's view of imagination by providing an interpretation of one of his most important poems, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner. The poem offers a unique platform for examining what Coleridge defines as "the willing suspension of disbelief", the phrase thought to be the poet's most important critical formulation.*

***Keywords:** aesthetic illusion, dramatic illusion, Samuel Coleridge, willing suspension of disbelief*

## **1. Introduction**

The notion of dramatic illusion and the phrase "the willing suspension of disbelief" in both audience's and readers' perception of art and literature is one of the key elements of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's critical work. McFarland (1990: 337) deems the phrase "undoubtedly the single most famous critical formulation in all of English literature", which "penetrates to the very heart of the psychology of aesthetic illusion". The idea has been further developed, occupying a significant place while treated and redefined in manifold ways. In one of Coleridge's notes called *Progress of the Drama*, which he wrote as part of his preparation for lectures, Coleridge also refers to it as "temporary half-faith" (Morrill 1927: 437), "the suspension of the act of comparison", "negative belief" (Fogle 1960: 36), while Morrill calls it "the suspension of the judicial power" (Morrill 1927: 438). Brinker (1977: 194) talks about it as of "a situation of psychological concentration on the art-engendered imaginary object which makes the viewer behave in a manner which is reminiscent, at least partially, of the behavior toward real objects". In Elam's *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, in the chapter that deals with the "possible worlds" of drama and the relation that is established between the hypothetical/imaginary world of drama and the actual world of the audience, the notion of disbelief is introduced as "the spectator's awareness of the *counterfactual* standing of the drama, which permits him to judge and enjoy what is represented according to less literal standards" (Elam 2002: 93). In the fourteenth chapter of his *Biografia Literaria*, Coleridge offers a definition of the poetic faith as the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment", the means of allowing the artist, actor or a poet a possibility to communicate the message intended in the given work in a less realistic context that is still necessary for the poetic effect (Coleridge 2004, *Project*

*Gutenberg*). In order to be able to adequately approach the question of dramatic illusion and the willing suspension of disbelief, my essay will tackle Coleridge's synthetic understanding of two opposing positions on the perception of both stage performance and poetry, which highly influenced him, and will situate it in the wider context of the poet's view of imagination, by providing an example from his opus, more precisely from a close reading of one of his most important poems, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

## 2. The willing suspension of disbelief in literature and drama

Fogle (1960: 37) sees Coleridge's theory of the willful suspension of disbelief as "a reconciliation of or mean between the two opposite views of the French neo-classics and Johnson" and goes on to emphasize that it "is highly characteristic, for Coleridge's habitual dialectic is a demonstration of relationships between apparent disparates. While carefully maintaining necessary distinctions, he seeks to establish the essential unity of many concepts usually regarded as separate". Fogle's essay "Coleridge on Dramatic Illusion" brings attention to the two contrasting views of stage illusion put forward by Coleridge: that of the French critics and poets of neo-classicism on the one hand, and of Dr. Samuel Johnston's on the other. The French neoclassicists held the opinion that dramatic illusion was an actual illusion, where the unities of time, place and action, strictly observed by the French, were derived from the "doctrine of literal delusion" (Fogle 1960: 33); in other words, it is the theory according to which the audience believes the developments on the stage to be real life events. In opposition to that, Dr. Johnston maintains that no audience is ever deceived and led to believe that a stage performance is something that might be perceived as real, and that the "spectator understood that he was viewing a presentation of fictional events and judged it according to its adherence to sound morality, logical probability, and general human nature" (ibid.).

Defining the willing suspension of disbelief, Coleridge found the middle ground for these two opposing views of the artistic and literary reception; he claims in his theory that it is not *delusion* that is in question here, but rather *illusion* that creates what Coleridge called "poetic faith", which, to a great extent, sustains itself on the will of the audience to believe in order to allow themselves to have a full experience of what the author and the performers are seeking to convey. McFarland (1990: 337) points out that "aesthetic illusion never refers to our being tricked; it rather refers to our accepting something as true that we know not to be true"; along the same line, Brinker (1977: 191), interpreting Ernst Gombrich's views in his *Art and Illusion*, says it "should be regarded as a faithful representation of reality, namely, one which creates an impression of total resemblance to it." In the light of Coleridge's attempt to synthesize the two opposing notions, we can say that the willing suspension of disbelief could be defined as willful fallacy on the part of spectators/readers/audience, who neither lose touch with reality while engaging with a literary work or stage performance, nor do they allow its realistic impossibility to interfere with aesthetic experience. Instead, they allow themselves to get immersed into the illusion, while suspending the understanding of its impossibility. The impossibility may entail supernatural and fantastic elements, however if they contribute to conveying a universal truth of meaning rather than of facts, that is if they are in that sense probable, they will only

reinforce the suspension of disbelief and the immersion into the world of poetically, if not factually, possible events.

As for the dramatic illusion in the theatrical performance, another concept in close connection is the dialectics produced between the audience and the play, considered as one of the key points of Coleridge's understanding of dramatic illusion. Fogle (1960: 38) states that "Coleridge's doctrine of illusion supposes the audience, or a spectator, the subject; and a play, the object" and that "[t]he immediate purpose of their conjunction is dramatic illusion". Charles Lamb's (1836) essay on stage illusion deals with this subject-object relation, more precisely with the relationship established between actors on the stage (in a comedy or tragedy) as well as the relationship between actors and spectators. Lamb finds the exchange between the stage and the audience very important, as it is this exchange that the dramatic illusion issues from. Lamb (1836: 26), talks about the "degrees of credibility demanded" in the actor's performance of a "mournful or a merry story" marking a slight difference in the degree demanded for a tragedy and for a comedy, and arguing that the degree required for tragedy, unlike that for comedy, must be absolute:

If we suspect the [mournful story] of falsehood of any one title, we reject it altogether. Our tears refuse to flow at a suspected imposition. But a teller of a mirthful tale has latitude allowed him. We are content with less than absolute truth. 'Tis the same with dramatic illusion. (ibid.)

Lamb discusses the actor's ability, whether it be high or low, to render "mortifying" and "pitiable" infirmities of character pleasurable for the spectator in a comedy, through "an inner conviction that they are *being acted* before us; that a likeness only is going on, and not the thing itself" (idem: 25). Fogle (1960: 33-34) quotes Coleridge's words that "we are brought up to this point, as far as it is requisite or desirable, gradually, by the art of the poet and the actors; and with the consent and positive aidance of our own will. We *choose* to be deceived", and further comments on this phenomenon as "a complex attitude in part self-willed, in part created by the skill of the playwright and the actors".

### **3. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner***

In her essay "Coleridge's Theory of Dramatic Illusion", Morrill (1927: 443) asserts that "[t]he principle of illusion was, of course, applied by Coleridge, not only to explain our attitude toward scenes upon the stage, but to account for our acceptance of ideal or supernatural elements in poetry in general". In Coleridge's poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, the reader's disbelief is suspended in an atmosphere of the supernatural, in a world parallel to the *real* world of the poem, which is the joyous and festive occasion of a wedding. Although "[d]eceptively simple at one level", Creed (1960: 215) mentions "a great deal of critical talk [...] spent arguing about just where the richness and the power [of the poem] lie". The Wedding Guest, who at the beginning shows no inclination to even talk to the Mariner, is strangely captivated by his sinister story that absorbs his attention completely. The reader witnesses inexplicable occurrences that succeed themselves in a row – the Mariner's seemingly unmotivated appearance, as if from nowhere, then his unrelenting urge to tell the story that both puzzles and rivets the reader, as well as the Mariner singling out a particular guest at the wedding to tell him the

story. We can argue that the poem features two imaginary layers: the real world of the poem, with the wedding taking place, and the supernatural realm, imaginary to this real world. The reader of the poem interacts with both. Such doubleness provides a unique platform for examining what Coleridge defines as the willing suspension of disbelief, as the poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* implies two realities – the reality of the Wedding Guest, who encounters the ancient Mariner who, then, takes the Wedding Guest to the realm of the supernatural through a story the Wedding Guest is so compulsively drawn to hear, and the reality of the reader, who interacts with the Coleridge’s poem with the same degree of captivation as the Wedding Guest does with the ancient Mariner’s tale. The Ancient Mariner, “with his glittering eye”, or “the ‘inward eye’ of the imagination, we may conclude, which sees *really* and not *merely*” (Creed 1960: 220), holds the attention of both audiences with the same intensity:

[...] The Wedding-Guest stood still,  
And listens like a three years’ child:  
The Mariner hath his will.  
[...]  
He cannot choose but hear;

The Ancient Mariner’s glittering eye and the inward eye of Coleridge’s imagination are inviting both audiences, the Wedding Guest and the reader, to go beyond the rational in their perception and understanding. One of the first reactions that the poetic voice attributes to the Wedding Guest is the impression of the ancient Mariner as nothing more than a “grey-bearded loon”, implying that his appearance is out of place and even offensive, further implying that the story he is so intent upon telling cannot possibly be *of any consequence*. We may identify this detail as a sort of metafictional commentary; just as the imaginary worlds of literature and theater performances may seem inconsequential to anyone rationally approaching the matter of the real and the imaginary, so does, at first, the story of a “grey-bearded loon” seem to strike the unsuspecting Wedding Guest, and literary critics too - it is interesting to note that in his essay “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner: A Rereading”, Creed (1960: 217) cites I. A. Richards and his 1950 work *The Portable Coleridge* that sees the “absence of a moral or intellectual core” in the poem, suggesting that “the more comprehending parts of our minds should go to sleep” while we read. And yet, the more imaginary parts of our minds become fully engaged. The eerie presence of the Mariner and his story, progressive in its intensity, captures the Wedding Guest’s and reader’s attentions and keeps them suspended until the very end of the poem. After drawing the Wedding Guest’s attention, the Mariner’s ghostly, oneiric story begins only to be paused shortly afterwards; the poetic voice abruptly interrupts the trance which both the Wedding Guest and the reader seem to be sliding into, with:

The Wedding-Guest here beat his breast,  
For he heard the loud bassoon.  
[...]  
The Wedding-Guest he beat his breast,  
Yet he cannot choose but hear;

The interruptions are predominantly executed by the Wedding Guest, with his repetitive reactions of surprise and horror, such as in the first lines of Part 4: “I

fear thee, ancient Mariner! / I fear thy skinny hand!” The Wedding Guest’s sudden reactions stir the reader from the trance that sustains itself upon the Mariner’s rime. In the essay focusing on the willing suspension of disbelief in Coleridge and its application in the works of Poe, McGann (2004: 727) quotes Coleridge’s view of his own poetic work as an endeavor “to procure for [the] shadows of [his] imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” Coleridge talks about his poetry as shadows in a way that implies that the spectator/reader knows the shadows’ authenticity needs to remain unquestioned for a certain period, so that “poetic faith” can be constituted. Every time the Wedding Guest unexpectedly utters “I fear thee, ancient Mariner”, the utterance reinforces a *disbelief* issuing from the ominous elements of the Mariner’s story. The presence of the supernatural repels, and, at the same time, compels the Wedding Guest as well as the reader of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* to listen – they are repelled by disbelief, but also compelled by the poetic force of the Mariner’s tale that suspends their disbelief. The “poetic faith” is thereby created at both levels, in the imaginary realm of the Wedding Guest’s and Mariner’s reality and the reality of the reader engaging with the poem.

As the poem develops, we are introduced to the consequences of a moment of ancient Mariner’s inexplicable irrationality when killing an albatross, ultimately leading to a state of loneliness issuing from his actions. We are not presented with reasonable grounds for the Mariner’s murderous act. The poem’s structure leads to a gradual rise of tension and suspense, entangling both the Wedding Guest and the reader in a net of unexpected, dreamlike occurrences that are supernatural in its substance, but are in every respect “harmonious and in keeping” (Fogle 1960: 43), thus creating a basis for a context in which disbelief in the fantastic can be suspended. The ancient Mariner’s rime depicts events that develop as if they were being produced at some feverish, subliminal level of dreams, and comparison to dreams is a concept Coleridge uses in his critical approach to the willing suspension of disbelief. Commenting on this idea in Coleridge’s critical work and referring particularly to its application in the context of theater, Morrill says:

In a word, then, the state of mind of an audience in the theater is likened to the condition of the mind in a dream. Dramatic illusion consists in our being placed for the time being, as it were, in a dream in which we take no account of space or time. All that is necessary for the dramatic poet is that he be able to carry us with him throughout the course of his action, and that he make clear to us the sequence of cause and effect (Morrill 1927: 440).

In his story, the Mariner refers repeatedly to dreams and dreaming, for instance, “But swift as dreams, myself I found / Within the Pilot’s boat”, as well as to nightmarish visions in which he speaks about “the slimy things” that “crawl with legs / Upon the slimy sea” that he, out of his mind, “blessed [them] unaware”, about “Four times fifty living men” that “With heavy thump, a lifeless lump, [they] dropped down one by one”, about “The dead men” who

[...] groaned, stirred, [they] all uprose,  
Nor spake, nor moved their eyes;  
It had been strange, even in a dream,  
To have those dead men rise.

The poet equally introduces several powerful images of despair and inner torture bordering with insanity:

The many men, so beautiful!  
 And they all dead did lie;  
 And a thousand thousand slimy things  
 Lived on; and so did I.

Towards to the end of Part 2 of the poem, “the Spirit” is mentioned in a context of dreams, in which some of the sailors claim to see it:

And some in dreams assured were  
 Of the Spirit that plagued us so;  
 Nine fathom deep he had followed us  
 From the land of mist and snow.

Also, the Mariner refers to himself at one point as to “a blessed ghost”, with death and sleep present in the same image. In his defense of the idea that “[c]ontrary to the opinion of the vulgar, the unusual is not of itself unnatural” (Fogle 1960: 41), Coleridge refers to the case of Hamlet and the apparition of the Ghost in Shakespeare’s play, and the disposition of the character of Hamlet “to escape from his own feelings of the overwhelming and supernatural by a wild transition to the ludicrous, - a sort of cunning bravado, bordering on the heights of delirium” (Coleridge qtd. in Fogle 1960: 41). This is one of the moments where the impossible is intensified to the extreme, by means of which, as Coleridge argues, the illusion itself is further intensified.

#### 4. Conclusion

Discussing Coleridge’s understanding of the *willing suspension of disbelief*, McFarland (1990: 337) points to “the almost incredible resonance of this phrase, from Plato to T. S. Eliot”, which “lives immortally and reverberates endlessly, because it exactly formulates and provides basis for, not just the efforts of playwrights, but all the achievements of culture itself”. In the cases where a work of art exceeds the limits of what is perceived as realistic, Coleridge argues that it is in the *supernatural* and not the *unnatural* where the spectator’s or the reader’s capacity of recognizing logical patterns lies. It is the dreamlike quality that makes the reader disbelieve, but its poetic force rivets the reader until the end. The illusion of the supernatural is reinforced, the improbability heightened, and the audience, although aware that what is presented does not belong to the domain of the real, arrests their rational judgment; identifying the domain as probable, although not possible, the willing suspension of disbelief allows the poetic message to be fully communicated.

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## WHITMAN'S POETIC POLITICS: SYNCHRONICALLY AND DIACHRONICALLY SHARED EXPERIENCE

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*Abstract:* As many critics have mentioned, ordinary individuals are the subject matter of *Leaves of Grass*. A closer look shows that in focus are their experiences, categorized into two types: one on a contemporary solidarity (synchrony), and the other on a sense of continuity with the past (diachrony). The paper argues that Whitman's emphasis of the synchrony and diachrony of experience is about the process of purely descriptive of everyday experience turning into a unique American experience of self-government which enables its Republicanism. This new perspective of Whitmanian individual experiences helps us to gain deeper understanding of his works

*Keywords:* experience, Jefferson, synchrony, diachrony

### 1. Introduction

The essay forefronts a mediation between textual and contextual reading. As one of “the reasons for changing a textually oriented strategy of reading into a contextually oriented one” (Kovács 2010: 17), Kovács (idem: 27) notes, “the notion of literature has come to become a cultural product within the framework of other cultural discourses like the human and social sciences.” The cultural discourse on American governance is vast, yet the link between Jefferson's and Whitman's ideas about government has yet to be fully investigated. Jefferson was a politician and Whitman was a poet, but both share the same theoretical background – faith in ordinary people – from which they developed their ideas. Just as Jefferson challenged the idea that governing should be done by experts, so Whitman challenged the idea that self-expression should be done by experts. As Betsy Erkkila (1989: 49) remarks, “Whitman's poet participates in the act of national creation by carrying on the revolutionary task of transferring power from the government to the individual”.

This essay sets out to explore the similarity between the two enterprises, of Jefferson and of Whitman. Foregrounding ordinary people, Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* centers on two different kinds of experience: on a contemporary solidarity (synchrony), and also on a sense of continuity with the past (diachrony). Whitman's synchrony and diachrony of experience is portrayed through everyday experience and from there, Jefferson's unique American experience of self-government surfaces. Investigating Whitman's works through the expanded perspective of experience – in the context of his relation with Jefferson – helps us to gain a new insight into them. In section 3 of this paper, I will show how this framework of two kinds of experience functions in Whitman's tackling of the

slavery issue and the paradoxes of America: the relation between the individual and the mass, between states and federal government (Reynolds 1995: 112).

May I add that Kerry McSweeney, while stressing the import of individual experience in his analysis of *There was a child went force*, refers to synchrony and diachrony; he states that “The synchronic experience at the poem’s conclusion recapitulates spatially the diachronic movement of the poem outward from the maternal environment to the external world” (1998: 7). While my framework is concerned with poetic politics (Jefferson’s and Whitman’s shared emphasis on the communal aspects of experience), McSweeney focuses on personal aspects. In other words, McSweeney’s use of synchrony and diachrony is made in a context different from mine.

## **2. Whitman’s poetic politics: synchronically and diachronically shared experience**

Both Whitman and Jefferson stress the importance of experience. On the one hand, Whitman (1984: 20) calls his long poem “Poem of Pictures. Each verse presenting a picture of some characteristic scene, event, group, or personage – old or new, other countries or our own country”, and as Reynolds (1995: 285) shows, Whitman’s interest in pictures derives from their intensification of common experience. On the other hand, as Steele (2012: 124) points out, Jefferson unequivocally believed that “American social and historical experience (of self-government during the colonial era) had made a democratic American politics possible and proper” and demanded “continual cultivation and regeneration of that experience”. (idem: 132-133) In this way, this emphasis on the experience of ordinary people was shared by Jefferson – in his political philosophy – and Whitman – in his poetics. I want to emphasize that it is Whitman’s stress not only on ordinary people, but also on their experiences that makes him more exceptional.

In Whitman’s poems, experience occupies the center. Whitmanian experience, especially in his early career as a poet, has two aspects: a synchronically shared experience and a diachronically shared one. The former is about a contemporary solidarity, “fellow feeling,” and the latter about a sense of continuity with the past. On the one hand, Reynolds (1995: 337) illustrates the synchronically shared experience: “Whitman’s emphasis on the common denominators of experience – the earth, sleep, work, sex, and the appetites – shows him trying to regain fundamental laws that are unarguable and sound, not shifting and unfair. [...] He is making a strident call for the unification of humankind on the basis of natural law that is part and parcel of shared interests and common experiences.” On the other hand, Somkin (1967: 83), referring to both Jefferson and Whitman, touches on diachronically shared experience: “For Jefferson the preservation of freedom required the reenactment by each generation of the original drama of republican creation. The maintenance of an ‘out of the game’ (section 4 of *Song of Myself*) area permitted the people to act again as they had in the beginning. In their action together, republican liberty would refind its nature, and the irreversibility of time would be denied.” At the time of Whitman, this had more than a usual meaning; the sense of urgency of republican restoration – the signs of its degradation abounded – was on Whitman’s mind.

In these two kinds of experience, there are parallels between Whitman’s and Jefferson’s thinking. In terms of synchronically shared experience, Jefferson’s focus on the present is manifested in benevolence – doing good to others for the

sake of own happiness – and Whitman’s focus on the present is manifested in the love of comrades. Whitman (1980: 115), in *For You O Democracy*, writes, “I will plant companionship thick as trees along all the rivers /of America, and along the shores of the great /lakes, and all over the prairies.” Both Whitman and Jefferson are of the same mind in their emphasis of the affectionate tie. Nevertheless, as regards diachronically shared experience, Jefferson’s and Whitman’s directions are opposite. Jefferson points to the future, given his faith in the capacity of ordinary people and their progress (Steele 2012: 308), while Whitman points to the past. It can be said that *Leaves of Grass* is the meeting point of Whitmanian and Jeffersonian experience, where readers re-experience the Founding spirit through their own contemporary solidarity, through common everyday experience. *Leaves of Grass* can also be said to be about Whitman’s awareness of America’s deflection from the spirit of the Founding Fathers and his effort to fill the gap between the two. Yet, even from the time of the Founding of the nation, there was the nagging issue of slavery, which came to be further complicated by the sectionalism between the North and the South. Whitman needed to face this issue as well, as I will show in section 3.

The essence of Jeffersonian experience – benevolence – is self-agency, not coercive, but voluntary action, based on liberty (Yarbrough 1998: 48), but the socio-political changes from an agrarian to an industrial society made it harder and harder to have such an experience. Furthermore, the difficulty was added by the sectionalization of the North and the South over the issue of slavery. Whitman, who viewed poetry as the best medium to re-experience and rekindle the Founding spirit, sought to help people to regain the sense of continuity with it. Through synchronic and diachronic experience, Whitman sought to restore Jeffersonian republicanism, where America could recommit to the democratic experiment and, in its self-expression, the ordinary people would play the biggest role.

### **3. Whitman’s poetics influenced by Jeffersonian ideas: a focus on *I Sing the Body Electric***

When we seek to find an appropriate poem in order to see the validity of the framework of synchronic and diachronic experience, a caveat is called for; Jefferson (1977: 573) disliked mysticism; emphasis is on experience. Thus, the need to find a poem without the influence of Whitman’s mysticism puts a limitation on the choice. For example, *Song of Myself*, though rich with both synchronic – “The blab of the pave” (1855: 22) – and diachronic – “the vault at Mount Vernon” (idem: 45) – experiences, is heavily coloured by his mystical views, like that of *Kosmos*; the validity of the framework becomes blurred. Considering this, I have decided to focus on Whitman’s poem *I Sing the Body Electric* in *Leaves of Grass* (1855), which has the salient flow from synchronic to diachronic experience. (In *Leaves of Grass* (1855), all 12 poems are without title, therefore, for convenience, I shall call the 5th poem, *I Sing the Body Electric*, the name Whitman attached to it in *Leaves of Grass* 1871).

Although Whitman uses the term “soul” in this poem, it plays a relatively small part in the formation of the overall tone. Gutman (1998: 296) states that “some critics have felt that it (*I Sing the Body Electric*) is obvious and repetitive; others have found it lacking in the deeper mysteries characteristic of Whitman’s major works.” I argue that the poem is about the human body, with the message covering his political agenda of the unity of the nation, of the relationship between

private and public, and of slavery and prostitution. Erkkila (1989: 125) remarks that “Whitman assumes an active political posture, attempting to uproot the contradictions in the body politic of America by addressing the reader directly.” Furthermore, she adds that “Critics have tended to treat the poem as a fairly tedious enumeration of body parts, failing to note its ominous political prophecy and the fact that the body electric is also black.” (ibid.)

Here I reconstrue this poem by applying the framework of Whitmanian synchronically and diachronically shared experience. These experiences are brought to the fore through corporeal metaphors. In the opening, Whitman says:

The bodies of men and women engirth me, and I engirth them,  
They will not let me off nor I them till I go with them and respond to them and love  
them. (1855: 77)

.....  
There is something in staying close to men and women and looking on them and in  
the contact and odor of them that pleases the soul well,  
All things please the soul, but these please the soul well. (idem: 78)

“The bodies of men and women engirth me, and I engirth them” and “the contact and odor” signify the proximity of human contact, with nothing in between. In this way, Whitmanian synchronically shared experience, a contemporary sense of fraternity, mostly starts from sensation through the basic senses – hearing, sight, touch, and smell. The inclusion of the senses which tend to be downplayed both in our life and in literary representations – touch and smell – amplifies the tone of egalitarianism of this poem.

After admitting “The expression of the body of man or woman balks account,” Whitman says:

The expression of a wellmade [sic] man appears not only in his face,  
It is in his limbs and joints also ... it is curiously in the joints of his hips and wrists,  
It is in his walk ... the carriage of his neck ... the flex of his waist and knees ...  
*dress* does not hide him, ... (idem: 77, emphasis mine)

Through the trope of the human body, Whitman signifies three layers of meaning – the commonality of body, the relationship between the private and the public sphere, and the harmony between Federal government and States. First, Whitman forefronts the human body as the unarguable commonality of all people. (Here pronouns are male, but the context allows us to understand them as general, non-gendered ones.) All people, regardless of race, class, and sex, have body parts in common. Second, in the public realm, the face is the only part fully exposed. It plays a synecdochical role; we recognize others mainly through visual perception of their faces. The other parts – limbs, joints, hips, wrists, neck, waist, and knees – are also the commonality of all people, yet hidden under the “dress”, viewed as belonging to the private realm. But through their enumeration by Whitman, the body parts, other than face, go public. Thus, Whitman attains the harmony between the public and the private realm through the corporeal metaphors. Third, Whitman portrays all the body parts as if they were autonomous entities, and also functioning as a whole. Here a parallel can be drawn between the relationship between each body part and the whole and between each state and the Federal government; Whitman (1965: 735) states that “The union of the parts of the body is not more necessary to their life than the union of These States is to their life.”

Whitman sheds light on what we tend to overlook in our life, especially when we pay too much attention to our differences, like those in the political situations before the Civil War. In the above quotes, Whitman, by keeping a delicate balance, succeeds in confirming the commonality of people, without sacrificing their individuality. In the process, what the human body represents turns into a sense of fraternity, with the individuality intact.

So far Whitman has not made it clear about whose body he is talking about, but he starts being more specific:

The man's body is sacred and the woman's body is sacred ... it is no matter who,  
Is it a slave? Is it one of the dullfaced immigrants just landed on the wharf?  
Each belongs here or anywhere just as much as the welloff ... just as much as you,  
Each has his or her place in the procession. (idem: 79)

Here, again, under the assumption that the body is the body politic of America, this *sacredness* of body reminds us of Whitman's utterance concerning "the sacredness of the *bond of union of these States*" (1920: 235). Then Whitman starts to incorporate slaves and immigrants into the subject of body, whom he considers are also entitled to join. Furthermore, after calling into the question of the inferiority of Blacks – "Do you know so much that you call the slave or the dullface ignorant?" (1855: 79) – Whitman switches to the topic of a slave auction, and says:

*A slave at auction!*

I help the auctioneer ... the sloven does not half know his business.  
Gentlemen look on this curious creature,  
Whatever the bids of the bidders they cannot be high enough for *him*,

.....  
Examine these limbs, red black or white ... they are very cunning in tendon and  
nerve;

They shall be stript that you may see them.  
Exquisite senses, lifelit eyes, pluck, volition,  
Flakes of breastmuscle, pliant backbone and neck, flesh not flabby, goodsized arms  
and legs,  
And wonders within there yet. (idem: 80, emphasis mine)

As Jay Grossman (2003: 183) notes, Whitman appropriates the role of the auctioneer through the interpellation "Gentlemen." At first, as auctioneer, Whitman plays up the body of the human chattel as a sales promotion. Yet, in the process, what started as a sales-pitch turns into something else. Engrossed in his own words, Whitman seems to forget his role as an auctioneer and changes sides. As we shall see, Whitman's sales pitch extends to a larger discourse, related to the humanity of slave. Whitman gives the negative answer to the question of the inferiority of blacks, and calls them priceless. By enumerating the body parts of the blacks as he did in the preceding section of the poem, and, furthermore, by putting them in a positive light, Whitman extends his fraternity to them.

It is in this heightened emotional state that Whitman begins to portray diachronic experience, a sense of continuity with the past:

Within there runs *his* blood ... the same old blood ... the same red running blood;  
There swells and jets his heart ... There all passions and desires ... all reachings and  
aspirations:

*Do you think they are not there because they are not expressed in parlors and lecture-rooms?*

This is not only one man ... he is the father of those who shall be fathers in their turns,  
In him the start of populous states and rich republics,  
Of him countless immortal lives with countless embodiments and enjoyments.  
(idem: 80, emphasis mine)

After formulating the synchronic experience by the portrayal of the human body, it is the diachronic experience that is forefronted. Here the blood is like the eternal red-colored river flowing between past, present, and future. The vital question in investigating this part is “whose blood does run?” Grammatically speaking, the referent of ‘him’ is a slave put on the block. If so, it can be said that Whitman includes blacks in “the start of populous states and rich republics,” tallying with Erkkilä’s interpretation that “the body electric is also black.” If not so – if the poet refers to a *general he*, without identifying him, the meaning would be more general. Here, the key is the sentence “Do you think they are not there because they are not expressed in parlors and lecture-rooms?” Whitman acknowledges that his opinion is against the conventional wisdom, connotating that *he* is a slave. The grammatical analysis of *he* and this rhetorical question concur to support this line of thought. This is sensational; there is a retroactively effective bond between whites and blacks.

Whitman goes on to the subject of “a woman at auction” – prostitution. He exhorts readers to have a second thought and feel sympathy for her. In his so doing, this part has an element of the diachronic experience.

A woman at auction!  
She too is not only herself ... she is the teeming mother of mothers,  
She is the bearer of them that shall grow and be mates to the mothers.  
Her daughters or their daughters’ daughters ... who knows who shall mate with them?  
Who knows through the centuries what heroes may come from them?  
In them and of them natal love ... in them the divine mystery ... the same old beautiful mystery. (ibid.)

It is noticeable that the tone of this part, spanning from past, present, and future, is full of potentialities, including that of “heroes” and “mystery.” The generational relationship expressed here relates to the same relationship indicated by *blood* in the former section. Drawing on the power of imagination, Whitman urges readers to change their attitude to prostitutes.

In the closing part, Whitman writes:

Who degrades or defiles the living human body is cursed,  
Who degrades or defiles the body of the dead is not more cursed. (idem: 81)

Here, “the living human body” represents the medium of synchronically shared experience, and “the body of the dead” the diachronically shared experience. This interpretation would be strengthened if both of “the body” were translated into “the body politic of America”; “the living human body” refers to the current status of America, and “the body of the dead” to the Founding Fathers. The antonym of ‘cursed’ is ‘sacred,’ and thus what Whitman is saying here is of



paramount importance – the union of nation. Degrading or defiling those ‘bodies’ stands for a double betrayal: the ongoing failure in Republican experiment, leading to the desecration of Founding Fathers.

In this analysis of *I Sing the Body Electric*, I have aimed to show the validity of the framework of synchronically and diachronically shared experience, where the purely descriptive of everyday experience turns into the normative of the Founding Fathers.

#### 4. Conclusion

In *Leaves of Grass 1855*, Whitman single-mindedly pursued his poetic goal of uniting a then fragmented America. For him, writing and self-publishing his poems was his revolutionary service. In his intensification of common experience, Whitman sought to portray synchronically shared experience – contemporary solidarity – and diachronically shared experience – the continuity with the Founding spirit. These frameworks enable us to delve deeper into the textual analysis, where otherwise the presences of catalogue and parallelism are merely noticed. In the case of *I Sing the Body Electric*, the purely descriptive presentation – the enumeration of body parts – encloses layers of meaning through the process of those parts going public by the act of enumeration.

Although there are few references to Jefferson in Whitman’s poems, recognizing the parallel between the currents of thought of Whitman and Jefferson can be called the foundation for understanding Whitman: Whitman’s poetics – through common, everyday experience, solidarity is felt, and eventually the Founding spirit is re-experienced – and Jefferson’s political philosophy – the unique American experience of self-government enables its Republicanism. It is with this parallelism that we can fully appreciate Whitman’s works, especially his emphasis on experience and bodily expression.

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## A CITY OF ONE'S OWN: APPROPRIATING LONDON IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *PORTRAIT OF A LONDONER*

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**Abstract:** *The article focuses on the anti-modernist representation of London, as revealed by Mrs. Crowe, the protagonist of Virginia Woolf's essay "Portrait of a Londoner". Despite being sketchy and highly descriptive, the essay foregrounds London not only as a setting, but also as a symbolic image, constructed by the female heroine, who maps out the city through gossip and anecdotes related by the guests she welcomes in her Victorian home. I claim that Mrs. Crowe creates a mental cityscape which enables her to act metaphorically both as an urban historian and as a biographer of London who makes the fragmented and discontinuous modernist city comprehensible.*

**Keywords:** *London, anti-modernist representation, private and public space, subjectivity, constructed space*

### 1. Introduction

Virginia Woolf's "Portrait of a Londoner" is the sixth and last essay of the *London Scene* collection, published in the British edition of the popular American women's magazine *Good Housekeeping* between 1931 and 1932. The collection zooms in on a multifaceted London, which, unexpectedly enough, is approached in the manner of commercial journalism at a time when high literary modernism was in full swing. More specifically, apart from providing us with a minute non-fictional tour of the city, Woolf seems to be actively engaged in performing a cultural analysis of London, which, in line with the readership of the magazine, highlights her vivid interest in capturing the changing socio-political role of women in the imperialist Britain. Alice Wood (2013: 40) suggests that her decision to criticise patriarchy "clearly reflects her desire to frame herself as a cultural critic in the early months of 1931". By the same token, Susan Squier (1983: 488) argues that the *London Scene* essays "subvert the often complacent genre of the urban travelogue to portray gender and class relations in the modern city". As a *flâneuse* fascinated with the vast metropolis, Woolf sets out on a pensive journey through London, giving us an intimate image of its iconic sites, such as Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral, of the East End docks, of the Houses of Parliament and of the hustle and bustle of Oxford Street, which is counterpoised by the tranquillity of Hampstead Heath and Chelsea. Notwithstanding the meditative description of all these places, Woolf brings into question the idea of pre-established social identity that she refutes, for she either identifies herself as a middle-class consumer, as is the case of the readers of *Good Housekeeping*, or questions the men/the high class

and women/the labouring class dichotomy translated as insiders-outsiders, “preferring to the security of the insider the freedom and vitality of the outsider” (Squier 1983: 489), which is also suggestive of her desire to distinguish herself as a female writer in the literary landscape of modernist London. This is why the *London Scene* essays are not a mere urban travelogue, since they disclose a consistent social criticism inevitably triggered by a patriarchal poetics of the city. However, the urban travelogue as a “complacent genre” takes on a new dimension in “Portrait of a Londoner”, where the sharp observer of the metropolis is replaced by the ardent listener of small talk about the London life. In this position, the female protagonist of the essay, Mrs. Crowe, becomes a veritable urban historian of the city, who corroborates “little narratives” (Lyotard 1979: 60) about English people, places, and events, in an effort to make the modernist fragmented city intelligible. By following this line of argument, I aim to show that, rather than being observed empirically, London in “Portrait of a Londoner” becomes a mentally constructed space, which is appropriated through experiences told by others and that, ultimately, Mrs. Crowe’s addiction to gossip in her Victorian house recommends her as an anti-modernist biographer of a metropolis with an elusive spatial identity.

## 2. Virginia Woolf’s view of modernist London

It is now commonplace to speak about the modernist city as a space appropriated through impressions or subjective perceptions that speak volumes of the impossibility to know it in detail or to fit it into a coherent topographical pattern. In *The Soul of London*, Ford Madox Ford (1995: 3) stresses this point in the following terms: “I have tried to make it anything rather than encyclopaedic, topographical, or archaeological.” Nevertheless, it is precisely this modernist *qua* experimentalist trend that stirred writers to shape their own different representations of London by adopting the practice of perambulating the streets of the city. Synonymous with *flânerie*, the act of touring the city became crucial to grasping and decoding its texture subjectively. In a nutshell, modernist literature represents London as being “ultimately created through the layering of the authors’ imagination onto physicality, the transformation of the actual city into one representable in language” (Mellor 2011: 202). It thus erases the boundaries between basic deictic categories, such as inside-outside or here-there and propels into action a meditative form of reading the city through personal experiences that are as fragmentary as the real city itself, since the eye cannot perceive the latter in its entirety.

Fascinated with a metropolis which reinforces the idea that being urban means being modern, Virginia Woolf portrays London as an evasive, yet prevailing presence throughout her works. As she confesses in her *Diary* (Bell and McNeillie 1978: 301), “I will write about London and how it takes up the private life and carries it on, without any effort.” Not only is she a chronicler of the city, she also shapes it as a character with a consciousness of its own, as “a protagonist, personified and dramatised in its own right” (Tromanhauser 2004: 33), who, in its turn, constructs the identity of its inhabitants. The tight relation between the construction of space and the space which constructs people’s identity becomes a prevailing feature in Woolf’s fiction. For example, in “Street Haunting: A London Adventure”, the writer’s self is effaced, becoming one with the consciousness of ordinary, anonymous people walking in the bustling city:

Into each of these lives one could penetrate a little way, far enough to give oneself the illusion that one is not tethered to a single mind, but can put on briefly for a few minutes the bodies and minds of others. One could become a washer-woman, a publican, a street singer. (Woolf 1942: 28)

This imagined identification with labouring-class people points to Woolf's anti-elitist attitude towards social rank. It runs counter to the patriarchal view of the metropolis, which she ironically depicts in one of the *London Scene* essays, titled "Great Men's Houses", in order to highlight women's suppression, regardless of their class. Also, Woolf's outsider perspective acquires a political dimension in another essay, "The Docks of London", where she deplores the painful condition of the working class, whose duty is to manufacture exquisite goods for the English high-class. However, Woolf's identification with the anonymous crowd or with London as such can be labelled as a staple ingredient whereby she seeks to portray an overall image of the city built by disconnected local narratives put together by an individual consciousness. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a telling example, particularly when we consider Clarissa's mercurial consciousness, which "presages the possibility of a collective unconscious in the city" (Mellor 2011: 209). Her desire to relish every corner of London *hic et nunc* on a day of June is conducive to her exuberance prompted by the busy modern city, seen as "a social body" (Tromanhauser 2004: 39). In this light, Clarissa – the embodiment of a fluctuating inside-outside perspective – is the counterpart of Mrs. Crowe in "Portrait of a Londoner". Much like Mrs. Crowe, Clarissa "privatizes" London with the help of the guests she welcomes to her party, transforming outside London into a city text or into a chronicle which sheds light not only on the vibrating life of London streets, but also on the past life of Peter Walsh and Septimus Smith. Importantly enough, Clarissa's fear of death urges her to figure out the afterlife as a nexus of relations afforded by the city. Similarly to the vision brought forth in "Street Haunting: A London Adventure", she imagines eternal life encapsulated in the urban space she inhabits:

[...] somehow in the streets of London, on the ebb and flow of things, here, there, she survived, Peter survived, lived in each other, she being part [...] part of people she had never met; being laid out like a mist between the people she knew best, who lifted her on their branches as she had seen the trees lift in the mist, but it spread ever so far, her life, herself. (Woolf 1987: 132)

The bodiless Clarissa merges with places and people alike in a narrative that reveals a thinly disguised version of metempsychosis, or the transmigration of the soul" (Tromanhauser 2004: 40). Geographical mobility is thus interiorized and appropriated as a geography of the mind, as a symbolic realm of individual identity articulated by multiple subjectivities and, finally, as a stance of urban biography based on other characters' lived experience and memories of the city and particularly on Clarissa's capacity to give them textual coherence through her own consciousness. This is exactly what Mrs. Crowe does in "Portrait of a Londoner", where she acts as the very urban historian, who mingles fragments of London together for the sake of a comprehensive – as anti-modernist – understanding of the metropolis.

### 3. Mrs. Crowe's appropriation of London

Initially missing from the *London Scene* collection published between 1931 and 1932, "Portrait of a Londoner" was first printed by *The Guardian*, thanks to

Emma Cahill, who discovered it at the University of Essex in 2004, and reprinted it, along with the other five essays, in 2006. In only a few pages, Mrs. Crowe, a well-known and respected hostess, who reminds us of Clarissa Dalloway, is portrayed as an urban chronicler of the spectacular world of modernist London. A Cockney lady who spent 60 years in the same Victorian house, Mrs. Crowe acts as a catalyst for small talk, shared by her guests between 5 and 7pm every day. She asks for easy conversation which, nonetheless, must be dressed in polite words. Most significantly, she only wants gossip so as to delve into the social archaeology of the city. In the privacy of her living room, she turns London into a microcosm, into a place whose identity is reshaped by the anecdotes that nourish her imagination:

The truth was she did not want intimacy; she wanted conversation. Intimacy has a way of breeding silence, and silence she abhorred. There must be talk, and it must be general, and it must be about everything. It must not go too deep, and it must not be too clever, for if it went too far in either of these directions somebody was sure to feel out of it, and to sit balancing his tea cup, saying nothing. (Woolf 2004)

As the creator of a coherent London geography, Mrs. Crowe aims to decode the fabric of the city or, in other words, the public life that is related to her by a wide array of citizens pertaining to various social classes. Deeply engaged “in a Dickensian objectification of the people around her” (Squier 1983: 497), the host/chronicler of the metropolis bridges public and private space and regards social life as a palimpsest of current routine practices and events. Paradoxically enough, she is a Victorian hostess interested in the chaotic present, which, being similar to a puzzle, she tries to reorder according to former (Victorian) rules and, above all, according to the rural customs of friendly sociability:

Thus Mrs Crowe’s drawing-room had little in common with the celebrated salons of the memoir writers. Clever people often came there - judges, doctors, members of parliament, writers, musicians, people who travelled, people who played polo, actors and complete nonentities [...] The talk that Mrs Crowe liked and inspired was a glorified version of village gossip. The village was London, and the gossip was about London life. But Mrs Crowe’s great gift consisted in making the vast metropolis seem as small as a village with one church, one manor house and 25 cottages. She had first-hand information about every play, every picture show, every trial, every divorce case. She knew who was marrying, who was dying, who was in town and who was out. (Woolf 2004)

The excerpt clearly stresses Mrs. Crowe’s capacity not only to entertain, but also to turn every story into a biographical note about present-day London. Refashioning the city in her mind is, therefore, her major concern: “Mrs. Crowe by no means dwelt on the past – she by no means exalted it above the present. Indeed, it was always the last page, the present moment that mattered most” (Woolf 2004). This presentist standpoint allows her to become familiar with the state of affairs in a fragmented city, which, in her private living room, becomes a comprehensive discourse and, at the same time, a no longer labyrinthine space:

Thus, to know London not merely as a gorgeous spectacle, a mart, a court, a hive of industry, but as a place where people meet and talk, laugh, marry, and die, paint, write and act, rule and legislate, it was essential to know Mrs Crowe. It was in her drawing-room that the innumerable fragments of the vast metropolis seemed to

come together into one lively, comprehensible, amusing and agreeable whole. (Woolf 2004)

It is Mrs. Crowe's inside perspective alone that is responsible for such an undertaking, for, paradoxically again, when in society, "she seemed furtive and fragmentary and incomplete" (Woolf 2004). Only when she has "her own chintzes and her own cabinet and her own Mr Graham under it" can she be "completely herself" (ibid.). As Susan Squier (1983: 498) has cogently shown, she "civilizes and moralizes" the metropolis to such an extent that the travellers coming from India and Africa to visit her in London find the city "lively, comprehensible, amusing and agreeable" (Woolf 2004).

Unlike Clarissa's fear of death, Mrs. Crowe dies and, once with her death, "London will never be the same city again" (ibid.). The narrator's nostalgic tone in the end gives us to understand that the force of change in modernity cannot be kept in check and that the feeling of alienation and discontinuity cannot be assuaged by other contemporary women like Mrs. Crowe. On the other hand, "London will never be the same again" because of the driving force of late capitalism and technology that shatters any homogenous view of the metropolis, now splintered into a myriad of Londons. London will never be the same, because Mrs. Crowe, the synecdochic embodiment of the city, reduces it to "a small village", whose history is as incomplete as the allegedly accurate histories she constructs through discourse. In short, she is an unofficial and anti-modernist chronicler who passes for a symbol of the city, thus transcending the anonymous crowd.

#### 4. Conclusion

A dominant presence in Virginia Woolf's *London Scene* collection and her fiction as well, London is both the space seen and interpreted from the outside perspective of a *flâneuse* and the space appropriated by consciousness as a nexus of subjective impressions or perceptions typical of the modernist discourse. My task was to show that Woolf's London in "Portrait of a Londoner" complies with an anti-modernist model that provides a stabilising perspective of urban space, which is destroyed when Mrs. Crowe passes away. Read from a socio-political angle, the collapse of the well-ordered London shaped by Mrs. Crowe is the result of Woolf's awareness of the modernist decline of communal bonds, meant to keep the memory of the city alive, and of her impossibility "to attempt to reconcile her conflicting identifications, to disguise her perspective as a woman and an outsider under the smooth, unchallenging voice of the insider" (Squier 1983: 499). As a conventional Victorian hostess, Mrs. Crowe translates urban space into a mental map, epistemologically contingent upon subjective ways of experiencing the city. Her aim to redefine London's identity echoes her creator's thoughts about the city as a construct which becomes comprehensible only when the workings of imagination are propelled into action: "No city indeed is so real as this that we make for ourselves and people to our liking; and to insist that it has any counterpart in the cities of the world is to rob it of half of its own charm" (Woolf 1986: 35). It is, in modernist terms, the expression of the individual's liberation from "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 1975: 178).

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**CONFRONTING THE CHALLENGES OF POST-CIVIL WAR  
RECONSTRUCTION: *RODMAN THE KEEPER: SOUTHERN  
SKETCHES* BY CONSTANCE FENIMORE WOOLSON**

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*Abstract:* This paper aims at examining the way Constance Fenimore Woolson tackled the controversial issue of rebuilding the nation and redefining American citizenship after the Civil War in *Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches*, a collection of short stories released in 1880. The narratives explore the tensions between white Northerners, white Southerners, newly released African American slaves, and the Minorcans of Florida.

*Keywords:* Civil War, Constance Fenimore Woolson, freedmen, minorcans, reconstruction

## **1. Introduction**

Constance Fenimore Woolson was among the most prominent and prolific American women writers of the nineteenth century. A self-supporting and socially-committed artist, she penned six novels, four collections of short stories, numerous poems and travel pieces, drawing from her experiences in the Great Lakes Region, the US South, Egypt, France, Greece, and Italy, to name a few of the places she visited during her singularly nomadic life. Nonetheless, until relatively recently, her works have attracted only cursory scholarly attention. Indeed, as Anne Boyd Rioux (2016: xiv) maintains, her remarkable connections with canonical male artists have often overshadowed her creative talent: initially identified as the accomplished grand-niece of James Fenimore Cooper, in her European years, she developed an intimate – albeit complicated – relationship with Henry James, which turned into a lasting source of fascination for biographers and academics, also because it might have influenced her decision to commit suicide.

In an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of biographism, while contributing to the ongoing critical reassessment of Woolson’s *oeuvre*, this essay sets out to explore the strategies she employed to tackle the controversial issue of redefining American citizenship and rebuilding the Nation, in the difficult period immediately following the Civil War, known as the Reconstruction era (1865-77). The present analysis will focus on *Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches*, a short-story collection first released by Appleton and Co. in 1880, and then republished by Harper and Brothers in 1886, given its popularity (Diffley 2018: 503n). As will be shown, in her narratives, Woolson never offered ready solutions to contemporary cultural and political conflicts, nor did she choose to perpetuate an oversimplified North/South binary opposition. Conversely, she delved into the intricate and

nuanced relations between whites (both Northerners and Southerners), freedmen, and Minorcans (the descendants of the indentured servants brought to Florida from Minorca in 1767), while striving to adopt different voices and points of view (a goal she also achieves by often shifting from first to third person narration). In her stories, featuring the struggles of a nation in transition, she uncovered the complexities and tensions she herself – a native of New Hampshire – had witnessed when, in 1873, she moved southward with her ailing mother (affected by rheumatism), in search of a milder climate and fresh inspiration (Douglas Wood 1972: 15). Several other Northerners had already opted for Florida as “a healing tourist paradise” (Kennedy-Nolle 2015: 29); accordingly, until the elderly lady’s demise in 1879, Woolson spent her winters in St. Augustine (Florida); in summer, she would travel through Georgia, Virginia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas, often accompanied by both her mother and widowed sister (Brown 2005: 1).

## **2. *Rodman the Keeper: Southern Sketches: Redefining American Citizenship after the Civil War***

Starting from the “Preface” to *Rodman the Keeper*, the author is at pains to highlight her strict adherence to factual truth. Written during her prolonged Southern sojourn, the ten narratives which compose the volume “record real impressions” (Woolson 1880: 7), a statement she reiterated in an 1881 letter to H. H. Boyesen: “I tried hard to be accurate [...]. I called myself back many times, when at work on those sketches, from tempting exaggerations and fancies, to plain fact” (Dean 2012: 171). Over the years, her stories have been enthusiastically hailed among the most faithful portrayals of the South in the aftermath of the Civil War. Henry James (1899: 179), for example, admired her “minuteness of observation and tenderness of feeling”, and praised *Rodman the Keeper* “in the light of the *voicelessness* of the conquered and reconstructed South” (idem: 180). His words of appreciation have been echoed by a number of other scholars: Fred Lewis Pattee (1939: 134) commended the collection as “the first adequate presentation to the North without sentimentality or local prejudice of Southern conditions during the decade after 1865”. Woolson’s sympathetic attitude towards Southern life and mores has been noticed by Moody Simms (1969: 362) and Anne Boyd Rioux (2016: 78); in the latter’s opinion she “adhered to a kind of empathetic realism”. On the other hand, however, Karen Weekes (2000: 104) has detected a condescending and discriminating attitude toward Southerners, often depicted in the volume as the “victims of their own weakness, indolence, and pride”, besides being in constant need of a “Northern ‘caretaker’” who provides “physical, emotional, or financial salvation” (idem: 103). The writer’s alleged Northern bias is also sensed by Jane Turner Censer (1999: 67) – who believes Woolson deliberately emphasised “the picturesqueness and irrationality of Southerners, black and white” –, and Sybil Weir (1976: 600), who perceives an unbridgeable gulf between Northern and Southern female characters: the former’s reliability and diligence distinguish them from the latter, rash and self-indulgent.

In truth, conflicting tendencies and descriptions coexist in *Rodman the Keeper* stories of collective healing and mutual understanding (which, nonetheless, invariably retain some problematic features) are placed alongside (counter)-narratives where clashes cannot be successfully resolved by the triumphant North for a variety of reasons, rooted in long-standing assumptions, suspicions, and stereotypes by each of the parties involved. Furthermore, even though most of the

stories had been first released individually, in different magazines (such as *Appleton's Journal*, *Lippincott's Magazine*, and *The Atlantic Monthly*), when collected together, they somehow complemented one another and each acquired new meanings, thus effectively reflecting the many facets of a complex and multifarious reality. Woolson's thoughtful refashioning of the original publications is also revealed through the lines cited before the beginning of every story (Brown 2005: 45), an addition (in most cases) aimed at reinforcing the perception of the volume as an organic and polyphonic whole.

Reading *Rodman the Keeper* as a story-cycle – a hypothesis also endorsed by Katherine Brown (2005: 44-45) –, enables readers to trace the remote origins of the Civil War, while investigating the novel challenges of Reconstruction. Indeed, it could be argued that the writer's insightful arrangement of the texts signifies the striking continuity between past hostilities and present anxieties: the four narratives set in Florida seemingly *before* the conflict are, actually, interlaced with the remaining six, whose plots unquestionably take place *after* 1865 in Georgia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. As Boyd Rioux (2016: 50) has elucidated, at the end of the war “the South had become the nation's New Canaan”: participating in a form of neocolonialism, thousands of veterans and carpetbaggers ventured beyond the Mason-Dixon line to either acquire properties at discounted prices, or start new business undertakings which, in many cases, would soon prove fruitless. Likewise, in “The South Devil”, Woolson belies the inveterate misconception that, as a virgin land, wild and luxuriant Florida might be easily conquered. The author was certainly aware that St. Augustine was a Spanish settlement founded in 1565, well before Jamestown. Hence, in one of the numerous asides, she voices the following sharp comment to expose the ignorance and presumption of her fellow-Northerners: “the belief is imbedded in all our Northern hearts that, because the narrow, sun-bathed State is far away and wild and empty, it is also new and virgin, like the lands of the West; whereas it is old—the only grey-haired corner our country holds” (Woolson 2015: 50). In the story, the South (emblematically represented by a large swamp, known as the South Devil) forcefully resists the penetration of two Northern brothers, who have settled there to improve both their financial fortunes (Mark owns a fertile plot of land) and health (Carl suffers from tuberculosis). The writer draws from what John Wharton Lowe (2011: 91) has termed “tropical sublime” to subvert the customary synecdochic correspondence between the possession of a vulnerable woman's body and the invasion of a coveted territory. The lush and colourful swamp (actually swarming with myriads of poisonous snakes, scorpions, and other creeping creatures) is equated by Carl to “a beautiful woman, falsely called a devil by cowards, dark, languorous, mystical, sleeping among the vines” (Woolson 2015: 55) and, therefore, seductively available. Instead of reaping the harvest of his audacity, however, Carl (whose mind becomes haunted by the siren-like music of the swamp) eventually loses his life, during one of his exploratory expeditions through the marshes. The narrative ends with Mark's symbolic withdrawal from his previously occupied Southern territories: in the end, he abandons his outpost and moves back to the North. The imagery of abundance and exuberant natural growth initially employed by Woolson to epitomise Marc's expectations of wealth and prosperity in “winterless” (idem: 50) Florida, is replaced by a nightmarish, almost gothic portrayal of the unfamiliar land: its wild oranges are “over-ripe with rich, pulpy decay” (idem: 62) and the swamp, with its “hot streaming air, and its intoxicating perfume” (ibid.), becomes an unrelenting source of horror and dismay.

In narratives such as “Sister St. Luke” and “Miss Elisabetha”, Minorcans are regarded as uncivilised, indolent, and dissipated: singled out as a “miserable, good-for-nothing race” (Woolson 2015: 16), they are contrasted with characters from the North, whose moral strength and exceptional industriousness stand out (even though, as representatives of a civilising force, they are seldom victorious). Still, in “Felipa”, the namesake character – “a small, dark-skinned, yellow-eyed child” (idem 69), part Minorcan and part Spanish – is granted extraordinary agency, as well as the ability to resist domestication. Assimilated to her yellow dog, to a “little monkey” (71), a “little animal” (73), a “grasshopper” (ibid.), a “queer little thing” (71), she is depicted as the stereotypical racialized *Other* by Catherine, the consumptive Northern painter who, accompanied by her bosom friend Christine, has taken temporary residence in Florida, due to her faltering health. The two ladies are baffled by Felipa’s untamed energy, by the fluidity of her performative identity (she cross-dresses as a boy, and longs to mimic her new, refined, and pale-faced acquaintances by appropriating their clothes). They are also bewildered by her innate connection with the natural world, by her puzzling kind of “colour-blindness” (76) that prompts her to conceive a romantic attachment to both Christine and her fiancé, whom she cannot distinguish from one another since, to her, gender is a mere social construction. Woolson’s story perfectly exemplifies Northern discomfort with Southern hybridity (Boyd 2011: 27); moreover, “Felipa” casts light on the irreconcilable divide between different ethnicities and distant world views, a divide which may turn the (re)-construction of American citizenship after the Civil war into an unattainable dream. As Boyd (2011: 14-15) points out, in fact, the two women fail to establish a mutually enriching dialogue with Felipa; conversely, they devise alternative (albeit equally offensive) strategies to cope with her destabilizing potential. While Christine strips the girl of her humanness and rejects her as an unwanted object, Catherine strives to civilise her, to assimilate her into her own culture, by providing the child with a new gown and bodice, and a “respectable, orderly doll” (Woolson 2015: 77) (a model of conventional femininity and composure) to replace the “ungainly fetich” (ibid.) she usually plays with (Matheson 2009: 56). Predictably, at the end of the narrative, their paths diverge and the vaguely disappointed ladies return to their reassuring homeland, meaningfully leaving Felipa “to her kind” (Woolson 2015: 78).

Among the stories explicitly set during the Reconstruction period, “Rodman the Keeper” surely deserves to be mentioned. The keeper of an unnamed cemetery for Northern soldiers located in the South, Rodman ends up caring for a “maimed and poverty-stricken Confederate” (Woolson 2015: 6), who lives in a dilapidated mansion nearby. Rodman is firmly convinced that, at the end of any war, “it [is] the plain duty of every man to encourage peace” (8). Consequently, by nurturing his mutilated former enemy, by devoting every attention to his fast recovery, he figuratively plays his part in rebuilding the nation. Indeed, the rich and nourishing “New England meals” (7) produced in his “prejudiced little kitchen” (ibid.) – “prejudiced”, as Southern recipes are positively banned – initially reinvigorate the former soldier: Rodman’s “Irish potatoes, corned beef, wheaten bread, butter, and coffee” (ibid.) act as Northern cultural markers, which are introduced into the Southerner’s disabled body with the intention of healing it. Nevertheless, his transformation is only transient and superficial: in the end, the veteran dies, leaving his beloved cousin Bettina behind. In the development of her plot, Woolson might have opted for a symbolic reconciliation of North and South, performed through the romantic union between Rodman and Bettina. Quite the opposite, their obvious

differences in allegiance and political orientation are not bridged over, nor is the lady grateful to her cousin's benefactor, as his boundless generosity drew attention to her own meagre means of sustenance. Isolated in her "poor armour of pride" (14), Bettina refuses to sign the cemetery visitor's register, while proudly declaring that "the South *is* [her] country" (ibid.). Hence, as Wright (2006: 38) observes, Bettina turns into the custodian of "an alternative memory, one not told in the national cemetery", one that denies and undermines the supremacy of the North. Were it not for a final glimpse of hope, therefore, the conclusion of the story would be exceedingly bitter. The veteran's house is sold to an investor from Maine, who is going to pull it down, as it is "only an old shell, just ready to tumble on [one's] heads" (Woolson 2015:14), as he disparagingly remarks. Yet, in an extreme effort to foster cross-fertilization (namely, a reciprocal grafting between seemingly incompatible positions), Rodman buys the vines Bettina had planted in her garden, to give them a new soil, a paradoxical new life from the ashes in the cemetery.

By contrast, another story, entitled "Old Gardiston", ends with the renewed (though questionable) alliance between North and South, sealed through an unrelenting courtship finally blossoming into an accepted marriage proposal. Gardis, a young Southern lady, shares a decrepit dwelling with her cousin, an old-fashioned bachelor called Copeland, whose peculiar physical appearance (he is oddly tiny and scrawny) betrays his – and the South's – inadequacy and deficiencies. Copeland spends his days unprofitably and uselessly, copying old family records with his ornate handwriting. He emblematically negates the present (and the challenges of Reconstruction) in favour of an idealised past, where he cowardly finds shelter. Likewise, Gardis is initially unable to come to terms with the defeat of the South and the novel scenario. Accordingly, she rejects her Northern suitor, Captain Newell, "in a sort of miniature reenactment of the recent war" (Buonomo 1998: 23). She proudly despises him and his men, "belonging to a despot army" (Woolson 2015: 43), a menacing horde of "vandals" (idem: 40) and "aliens" (42). Even if the hostilities are formally over, she still considers the Northerners as "[her] enemies and the enemies of [her] country" (40), which she identifies solely with the South, just like Bettina in "Rodman the Keeper". However, when her cousin unexpectedly dies and she is forced to sell her property due to financial straits, she rapidly surrenders to Captain Newell's conquering passion. Forgetful of her own principles and previous views, she surprisingly agrees to marry him and relocate to the North. Despite the (rushed) happy ending, even the conclusion of "Old Gardiston" is laden with ambiguities and clashing perceptions. If, on the one hand, the prospective conjugal bond signifies the possibility of national reunion, on the other hand the *suicidal* reaction of Gardis's house to contemporary events conveys the opposite message. The anthropomorphised manor house (whose contempt for its Northern buyer is clearly voiced by Woolson) performs an ultimate act of defiance and resistance to the intruder by burning itself down to the ground, seemingly preferring annihilation to the subjection to *foreign* rule. Copeland's countless documents and timeworn papers (the relics of a faded, yet still cherished past) are provocatively accountable for the tragic accident.

In an 1876 letter to Paul Hamilton Hayne, Woolson described herself as a "red hot abolitionist" (Dean 2012: 66). Despite her strong beliefs in equal rights and opportunities, she never uncritically supported the actions of those who streamed southward to educate the blacks to the Lord's Word and democracy. Among the narratives featuring freedmen grappling with the dilemmas and

responsibilities of freedom, “King David” definitely holds a special place in the collection. The plot is centered on David King, a preacher who, after feeling “the call to go” (Woolson 2015: 90), settles in Jubilee Town and becomes known as King David, among the newly released slaves. Just like his name is altered, his stated intentions are also subverted. Actually, far from acting as a spiritual leader (a role suggested by his name), he falls prey to his petty desires and ambitions, fraught with colonial overtones. He yearns to buy a cotton-field of his own, since “to him a cotton-field represented the South” (idem: 91), or, to quote Buonomo (1998: 22), “a synecdoche for the entire South, a picturesque South in miniature”. In King David’s opinion, the freedmen are “ignorant, childish, irresponsible souls” (Woolson 2015: 90) that he, in his capacity as schoolmaster, has to govern and classify, according to the different educational opportunities he accords to men (eligible to vote and, therefore, in urgent need), boys (the hope for the future), and women (prevented from voting and, consequently, unimportant): “for, abolitionist as he was, David King would have given years of his life for the power to restrict the suffrage” (ibid.). When two of the “slow, dull-witted” (91) creatures are invited for supper, he cannot make an effort to share a meal with them, the way Rodman did with the Confederate soldier. When they leave, in fact, “he thr[ows] away every atom of the food” and prepares a second supper, “for he still shrank from personal contact with the other race” (ibid.). The narrative features another Northerner, called the Captain, who lavishly dispenses alcoholic beverages to the black population as an instrument of manipulation, in view of the forthcoming elections. As Buonomo (1998: 22) points out, King David and the Captain embody the two sides of the same coin: they both impose their values on the conquered South, “to either patronise it or exploit it, instead of making a serious effort to understand it”. The lack of real empathy between the parties is emphasised through old Scipio’s farewell words to King David, when, eventually, once he acknowledges his failure, he decides to leave: “you hab nebber *quite* unnerstan us, sah, nebber uite; an’ you can nebber do much fo’ us, sah, on ‘count ob dat fack—ef you’ll scuse my saying so. But it is de trouf” (Woolson 2015: 96).

In another story, “In the Cotton Country”, compassion distinctly prevails. The narrator (a Northern woman artist, like Woolson) relinquishes both her central role and authorial control in favour of an equally unnamed Southern lady, who is granted the chance to recount the atrocities of the Civil War from her own point of view. The characters’ expected functions and prerogatives are, thus, completely destabilized: in spite of her subordinate social position, in fact, the loser succeeds in silencing the winner, who cannot but lend a sympathetic ear to the ordeals of Southern families, torn apart and ravaged by the violence of the conflict. By listening to the compelling account of the prematurely aged lady, the Northern artist learns to observe phenomena with new eyes: she realises that both factions equally suffered and perpetrated cruelties against their enemies. Besides, she begins to revisit her own assumptions on what is fair and appropriate, while questioning the very abolition of slavery, given its grim consequences. Indeed, as she gathers from her companion, untaught freedmen were incapable of providing for themselves; those who chose not to resort to crime, therefore, actually starved: “In six months half of them were gone. They had their freedom - oh yes, plenty of it; they were quite free - to die! For, you see, madam, their masters, those villainous old masters of theirs, were no longer there to feed and clothe them” (Woolson 2015: 69). Even in this case, reconciliation seems impossible; even though she entrusts her traumatized nephew to the artist’s care – “Take him, and

bring him up in your rich, prosperous North” (ibid.) –, the narrator “will abide in [her] own country” (idem): once again, the South.

### 3. Conclusion

Often pigeonholed as fair examples of local colour fiction (Weimer 1986: 3), Constance Fenimore Woolson’s narratives surely deserve closer critical attention. Indeed, they move beyond uncomplicated triumphalisms and monopolies of truth to explore the innumerable complexities of a multi-layered reality, at a time when the very concept of being an American citizen had been severely challenged. Woolson’s Southern characters, whether white, Minorcans, or black, are finally endowed with the power to speak back, to tell their own version of the facts. In her stories, the writer reveals the contradictions within the rhetoric of Reconstruction: quoting Lincoln’s famous “House Divided Speech”, delivered in Springfield in 1858, and advocating the resolution of the North/South controversy, she bravely shows that, in many cases, the “house” was still dangerously “divided against itself” (Shook 1950: 66) and, as such, it would not stand for much longer.

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## ENCRYPTION IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S FICTION: A TRANSACTIONAL READING OF SECRET WRITING

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***Abstract:** Not only was Edgar Allan Poe a writer and literary critic, but he was also one of the leading figures of cryptology. His essays on the art of secret writing, published in Graham's Magazine between 1841 and 1843, popularized the notion of cryptography in the United States. Yet, Poe's profound interest in encipherment had also permeated his literary composition. The present paper traces the different encryption methods employed in his crypto-fiction, in an attempt to examine the impact of his cryptographic experimentation with language upon the act of reading itself, through the lens of Transactional Reader Response theory.*

***Keywords:** cryptography, encryption methods, fiction, Poe, Transactional Reader Response theory*

### 1. Introduction

Edgar Allan Poe firmly believes in the power of writing to escape the confines of alphabetical language. In his essay "Marginalia", he declares "so entire is my faith in the power of words" (2017: 117). Contrary to the nineteenth-century approach to literary composition, Poe's fiction displays a wide range of secret texts, including symbols, codes, riddles, cryptograms, enigmas, semagrams, hieroglyphs, and ciphers. Cryptographically speaking, a secret text is the outcome of a pre-conceived cryptosystem. The latter is a linguistic system which encompasses two interrelated processes: encryption and decryption. As far as the first process is concerned, encryption can be defined as the transformation of any intelligible readable text (a plain-text) into a coded text (a cipher-text) according to a particular encipherment technique. Poe is quite aware that writing in codes "elude[s] the general comprehension" of readers, and therefore creates a transactional mode of reading experience (2013: 33).

In Poe's crypto-fiction, the reader is often invited by an unnamed narrator to participate in the resolution of secret writing. The reader is explicitly involved in every cryptographic transaction (verbal, three-dimensional, and pictorial), thereby becoming a primary component of the meaning-making process. This narrative approach derives from Poe's aesthetic theory (namely the single effect theory), in which every element in the story produces one effect in the reader's mind. Nonetheless, some scholars, including William Kurtz Wimsatt (1934), Shawn Rosenheim (1996) and Terence Whalen (1999), exclusively focused on the scientific aspect of Poe's cryptography rather than on the reading experience itself. On this account, the main objective of this paper is to explore the interaction between the secret text and the reader, through the lens of Transactional Reader

Response Theory. This literary theory, developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978) and Wolfgang Iser (1972), suggests that meaning is the product of the reader-text interaction. On a broader scale, a transactional reading of Poe's secret writing could enhance the interpretation of his cryptographic narratives.

The paper seeks to address two major points. First, it will examine Poe's encryption methods in the following works: "The Gold Bug", the Dupin trilogy, namely "The Purloined Letter", "The Murders in the Rue Morgue", and "The Mystery of Marie Roget", and the novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*. These literary works are rife with different types of encoding techniques which are derived from the science of cryptography. Secondly, every encryption method in these texts will be investigated in relation to the act of cryptographic reading. Poe's secret writings generate a cryptographic transaction, governed by two active components: the cipher-text and the reader. The seemingly unintelligible secret writings call into play the reader's analytical reasoning.

Poe had popularized cryptography through his essays on secret writing before he ventured into a crypto-literary experience. From 1841 on, "Poe's readers" have gradually started to be "fond of puzzles of all sorts, as is evident in the popularity of gothic and sentimental works" (Hayes 2013: 365). In his time, cryptography was no longer a subject of elitism. Rather, it became a popular activity. Over the last decade of his life, Poe's keen interest in secret language culminated in his last works. He made out of cryptography, the science of solution, a luring "art of solution" (Poe 2013: 35). The American literary scholar William Wimsatt (1934: 779) views crypto-fiction as "one of Poe's most impressive gifts".

## 2. The mono-alphabetic substitution cipher

Edgar Allan Poe's "The Gold Bug" is the first short story in American literature to employ a cryptogram in a piece of fiction. The story revolves around an unnamed narrator who accompanies the protagonist William Legrand and his servant Jupiter on a treasure-hunt journey on Sullivan Island, South Carolina. Legrand unveils a hidden text written on an old parchment in invisible ink. This cipher-text, which leads to a buried treasure, reads as follows:

53++(305))6\*;4826)4+.)4+);806\*;4818¶(60))85;]8\*:+\*8!83 (88)5\*!;46(;  
88\*96\*?;8)\*+(; 485);5\*12:\*+(;4956\*2(5\*-4)8¶8\*; 4069285);6!8)4++;1  
(+9;48081;8:8+1; 88;4(+?34;48)4+;161;:188;+?; (Poe 1998: 222)

The secret text above is called a cryptogram, yet Poe employs the term "cryptograph" synonymously. The word "cryptograph" was coined by Poe (1998: 22) in his essays on secret writing. Legrand is depicted as an experienced cryptographer who succeeds in decoding the cipher in question, because he has already solved other ciphers "of abstruseness ten thousand times greater" (Poe 1998: 222). After a first inspection, Legrand describes the cryptogram as "the more simple of ciphers" (ibid.). The use of the word "simple" is by no means arbitrary. This entails that the secret-text included in "The Gold Bug" is a mono-alphabetic substitution cipher. In modern cryptography, it is also called a simple substitution cryptogram. This encryption method, which consists in substituting every character of the plain-text for another character, is based on a particular code-key. Legrand tells the narrator that this cipher is "absolutely insoluble without a key" (ibid.); his words reflect Poe's in-depth knowledge of these species of ciphers.

It is worth noting that Poe's choice of the mono-alphabetic substitution cipher, as the simplest encryption method, is quite deliberate. In the early nineteenth century, cryptography was considered to be of supernatural origin. William Frederick Friedman, a twentieth-century American cryptographer in the army's Signal Intelligence Service, notes that "the popular conception of, and the reaction toward, the subject of cryptography in Poe's time -and to a certain extent today- are the remnants of a medieval point of view, [...] a cryptogram is a piece of writing [...] concealed, hence mysterious or occult, and thus supernatural" (Friedman 1936: 266-267). In other words, Poe was aware that the use of more complex encryption methods would inevitably exceed "the mental portrait [of] the average layman" or the average reader (idem: 267). He took into account, to a logical extent, the cryptographic knowledge of the nineteenth-century mass readership, who had only been accustomed to the simplest enciphering method through his prior essays and articles on cryptography in both *Graham's Magazine* and *Alexander Weekly Messenger*.

Most of Poe's crypto-tales are governed by two major characters, namely the protagonist who plays the role of a cryptographer, and an unnamed narrator. In "The Gold Bug", the narrator and William Legrand, "a well educated [man], with unusual powers of mind", embark on a journey in search of a buried treasure (Poe 1998: 198). Legrand holds complete autonomy of the whole process of secrecy, from encryption to decryption. He explains to the narrator the nature of the cryptogram and provides him with a detailed cryptanalysis. On the other hand, the narrator could be seen as a foil character to Legrand. He only endures perpetual anxiety because of his cryptographic incomprehension. He could barely fathom Legrand's logical train of thoughts. The discrepancy between the mental abilities of the two characters serves a communicative purpose. It aims to transfer the narrator's feelings of uncertainty and anxiety to the reader's mind. In other words, Poe's "transferential poetics [...] is aiming to make the narrator's boundary issues ours" (Frank 2015: 67).

Poe anticipates the reader's anxiety, which might be evoked by the cryptographic complexity of the text. For this reason, he creates a fictional double of the reader, the narrator. This produces a communicative nexus between the reader and the narrator. Poe endeavors to alleviate the reader's linguistic alienation by confronting him/her with his/her own double. In other words, the reader identifies himself/herself with the narrator's gradual understanding of Legrand's mode of reasoning. This transactional approach is intended to reduce the reader's unfamiliarity with the complexity of cryptographic language. In this context, Wolfgang Iser notes:

The process of absorbing the unfamiliar is labelled as the identification of the reader with what he reads. [...] What is normally meant by 'identification' is the establishment of affinities between one- self and someone outside oneself-a familiar ground on which we are able to experience the unfamiliar. (1972: 295)

In order to attenuate the effects of alienation and anxiety aroused in the reader's mind, Poe's narrator acts as a mediator between Legrand's unfamiliar secret text and the reader. Thus, Poe's transferential technique plays a fundamental role in his aesthetic theory. Such a crypto-literary transaction promotes a dynamic and engaging reading experience.

### 3. The Cryptographic detective problems

Edgar Allan Poe is regarded as the precursor of both detective fiction and crypto-fiction genres. In his Dupin trilogy, the two genres are merged with each other: “Poe combined two of his inventions, the detective story and literary cryptography” (Wimsatt 1934: 778). The trilogy revolves around a crime-solving process which is featured by a hidden solution of an enciphered investigation. Unlike the cryptogram in “The Gold Bug”, which is written on a “two-dimensional page”, the three detective stories are characterized by an encoded “three-dimensional world” in which the characters’ minds, objects and events are ciphers to be decrypted (Rosenheim 1996: 25).

To begin with, “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” is Poe’s first crypto-detective tale. Poe weaves a design of secrecy in the form of an intrigue crime problem, which consists in the murders of two ladies (Madame L’espagne and her daughter) in the rue Morgue. The prefect of police, Mr. “G–”, fails to puzzle out this crime. Then, a detective, known as Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin, intervenes, with the company of the unnamed narrator, in order to unravel out the mystery of the crime. Dupin is depicted as an ingenious detective who “is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics” (Poe 1998: 92). Poe’s fictional encryption method consists in enciphering all evidence and clues that could lead Dupin to the murderer.

“The Mystery of Marie Roget” is the second crypto-detective tale of Poe’s trilogy. In 1842, Poe fictionalized a real, unsolved crime that had happened in the vicinity of New York, where a girl, called Mary Cecilia Rogers, was murdered” (idem: 149). Similarly, this tale is about the mystery of a young woman, Marie Roget, whose corpse was found on the shore of the Seine in Paris. Poe encrypts the detective narrative by drawing a cryptographic plot in the form of a murder scene, with neither real suspected murderer nor decipherable clues. Dupin’s task is therefore to decode “the continual absence of all clue to the mystery” (Poe 1998: 152).

The third, “The Purloined Letter”, is the final piece of the trilogy. The story is about an immoral minister, named D–, who steals a letter from the desk of an unknown lady in a high governmental position. Then, he puts a letter identical to the original one on her desk in order to avoid being held in suspicion. The woman knows that D– is the holder of the original letter. So, out of fear of being blackmailed for its content, the woman asks the prefect of police, Mr. G–, to find the stolen letter. Yet, the prefect fails to accomplish this mission. That is why she asks for Dupin’s assistance. The latter attempts to unravel the mystery, find the place of the purloined letter, and take it back from the notorious minister.

In Poe’s Dupin trilogy, a prototypical cryptographic transaction is established between two active agents: the reader and the secret text. First, Dupin, reminiscent of William Legrand, is depicted as a cryptographer with “peculiar analytic abilities” (idem: 94). Dupin is an emblem of secrecy, since he often voices both the enciphered problem and its resolution. The detective Dupin is the manifestation of the whole cryptographic system. Second, the unnamed narrator seems omnipresent in all these detective fictions. He mirrors the reader’s act of secret-reading. Not only does he accompany Dupin as an eyewitness of every investigation, but he also communicates with the reader throughout the narrative stage, from the first process of encryption to the final decipherment process. The narrator’s role is to reconcile the intricate design of secrecy and the reader’s understanding of “the unheard-of powers of [cryptographic] interpretation” (Rosenheim 1996: 13). Poe intensifies

the transactional correlation between the text and the reader by elevating the narrator from the position of a mere storyteller to an intrusive and interactive interlocutor, who constructs a direct communicative relationship with the reader.

Overall, the trilogy is replete with secret identities (the minister D–, the prefect of police G–, the anonymous royal woman, the unnamed narrator, *etc.*), puzzling turns and twists, and more importantly, encrypted designs of criminal investigation. Yet, Poe’s artistic sensibility towards the act of reading manifests itself through his ability to decode the knotty connection between the reader and the secret-text. Simply, Poe establishes a connection between the text and the reader through the intermediary of the unnamed narrator. Poe’s choice of an unnamed narrator is by no means arbitrary. The anonymous narrative voice is meant to endow the narrator with a dynamic identity. The narrator’s identity is manifold because it reflects the many-sided identity of readers. In general, the act of reading a detective story is a cryptographic activity *par excellence*. According to Shawn Rosenheim (1989: 382), Poe’s cryptography is the origin of his detective fiction, because a “detective story begins by extending cryptographic modes of reading to the phenomenal world. Detective fiction applies to one’s sensory experience the same analytic tools used to break a code”.

#### 4. Semagrams

Among Poe’s cryptographic literary texts, only *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* was written prior to his essays on secret writing. Accordingly, this work, written in 1838, exhibits a different encryption method, which involves both cryptography and steganography. In chapter XXIII, the protagonist, Arthur Gordon Pym, and his friend Dirk Peters traverse three chasms and other paths in their journey to the South. Separate semagrams, respectively encompassed in the narrative, display the entire track of the two travelers. Van Tilborg (2005: 118), a Dutch scholar of cryptography, defines a semagram as “a picture or grapheme hiding a message behind innocent looking, frequently minute graphic details”.



Figure 1

Figure 1 “gives the general outlines of the chasm” (Poe 1965: 871).

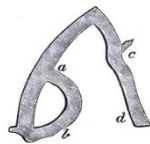


Figure 2

Figure 2 “is also a chasm which is “commencing at the opening *a* and proceeding round the curve *b* to the extremity *d* [...] *c* [is] a small aperture” (idem: 872).

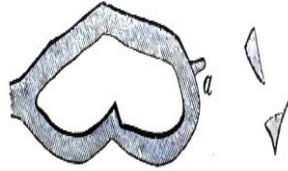


Figure 3

The narrator (*ibid.*) says that “the third chasm three hundred and twenty yards. At the point *a* was an opening about six feet wide, and extending fifteen feet into the rock.”

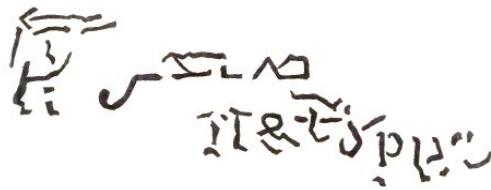


Figure 4

Figure 4 appears at the end (*ibid.*); it represents the whole trajectory traversed by Pym and his fellow Peter.

Pym, the protagonist, might be viewed as a maze runner and a pathfinder who goes through numerous meandering chasms, wells, holes, paths and ‘*cul-de-sacs*’ (Poe 1965: 883). These natural forms could be regarded as puzzling codes to be unscrambled. For Poe, Nature in itself is manifested as a whole cipher to be decoded. Pym strives, mentally and physically, to puzzle out his way. Consequently, a ‘labyrinthine’ atmosphere comes into being through a visual interaction between the reader and the text. However, upon reading Poe’s “Note” (attached to the novel), one discovers the existence of a verbal cryptographic dimension that exceeds the pictorial one. In the section “Note”, Poe (*ibid.*) points out that the aforementioned figures produce three verbal ciphers. The encryption method in question consists in concealing within these figures three messages which take the form of an Ethiopian expression, an Arabic phrase, and an Egyptian hieroglyph.

The three linguistic ciphers (verbal roots) are steganographically embedded in the narrative in the form of five semagrams. It might be said, then, that it is very difficult for a nineteenth-century ordinary reader to discern and decode the two hieroglyphs (Ethiopian and Egyptian) and the Arabic word. This could explain why Poe includes an elucidation of the whole decryption process in the “Note” section. Whilst the Arabic verbal root requires a translation process, the two hieroglyphics are ciphers to be decrypted. Singh states:

[T]he writings of ancient civilizations were not intended to be indecipherable: it is merely that we have lost the ability to interpret them. However, the skills required to uncover the meaning of archaeological texts are closely related to the art of codebreaking. (1999: 13)

This implies that a hieroglyphic writing is not a full-fledged established language; a decoding process is thus necessary to uncover their hidden meanings.

In *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, a two-level cryptographic transaction is established between the reader and the secret extracts. Poe builds up both pictorial and verbal reader-text interactions. However, unlike “The Gold Bug” and the Dupin trilogy, wherein the cryptographic transaction is embedded within the narrative, the novel defers such transaction to a subsequent point beyond the narrative. Only after reading Poe’s “Note” would the reader notice the existence of encoded semagrams within the novel. It is true that stumbling on such recondite secrecy seems at variance with the ordinary reader’s cryptographic knowledge; yet, Poe is inclined to show that the reading process is not merely confined to the two-dimensional page. The universe itself, including Nature, is a broader space to be read and decoded. In “Eureka: A Prose Poem”, Poe notes that the material universe should be read as a poetic work, which contains all the secrets of being and existence. Poe (2015: 130) declares that the cosmos “is but the most sublime of poems”. In general, he seeks to interact with a Pym-like reader who is capable of decrypting his/her own path and of unmasking the far-fetched clues to his/her own being.

In general, according to Poe’s effect theory, an ideal act of reading is an active aesthetic engagement with the effect intended by the writer. It is only through aesthetic experience that one can fill in the gaps in the text. This idea finds its full expression in Iser’s conception of the ideal reader:

The ideal reader, unlike the contemporary reader [...] can close the gaps that constantly appear in any analysis of literary effects and responses. He can be endowed with a variety of qualities in accordance with whatever problem he is called upon to help solve. (1972: 58)

In a similar perspective, the reading process of secret writing transcends the limits of what Rosenblatt (1978: 24) calls “nonaesthetic reading [, in which] the reader’s attention is primarily focused on what will remain as a residue after the reading -- the information to be acquired”. This implies that Poe’s secret writings require active aesthetic engagement. “In aesthetic reading, the reader’s attention is centered directly on what he is living through during his relationship with that particular text” (idem: 25). In Poe’s crypto-fiction, the reader is explicitly engaged in the cryptanalytic process (the decoding process), through his/her aesthetic transaction with the secret text.

## 5. Conclusion

The paper displays a perennial interest in the transactional aspect of Poe’s cryptography. On the whole, a transactional analysis of Poe’s encryption methods could help to provide a window into new layers of literary interpretation. On a broader scale, the investigations into this area could also provide a considerable insight into a growing body of literature, notably the crypto-fiction genre. It is true that a transactional reading basically reinforces one’s understanding of Poe’s cryptographic works, but it is also a tacit incentive for readers to shape the way they approach truth in all its cryptic forms. Poe’s cryptography can be considered as an implicit invitation to transcend the limits of ordinary language. Although seemingly recondite, a fictional secret text demands reasoning beyond the logical

connection of things. Poe (1998: 174) says that “experience has shown and philosophy will always show that the larger portion of truth arises from the seemingly irrelevant”. This could explain the recurrent association between truth and decoding in Poe’s cryptographic narratives. Going beyond Poe’s crypto-fiction, a literary text, in general, offers the possibility of experiencing a creative reading. In his analysis of reading and responding, Derek Attridge (2004: 79) states that “creative reading [...] tries to decode the textual string with the necessary objectivity and accuracy”. One’s creative reading response could therefore decode all forms of literary indeterminacy.

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## AN ANALYSIS OF *THE AWAKENING* FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SARTRE'S ONTOLOGY AND ETHICS

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***Abstract:** This article examines Kate Chopin's novel *The Awakening* from the perspective of Sartre's ontology and ethics. The study starts with a short introduction to existentialism and its main representatives. Then, it analyses the novel by applying Sartre's phenomenological ontology of being and its three structures (being in-itself, being for-itself, and being for-others). Finally, the book's main ideas are explored through Sartre's ethical concepts of freedom and responsibility, authenticity and bad faith.*

***Keywords:** authenticity, existentialism, being, freedom, responsibility*

### 1. Introduction

Related to the root word "existence", existentialism is a philosophy of life. Some of the questions that this school of thought addresses are: How should I live my life? Does life have meaning? What gives life meaning? More specifically, existentialism is described as a philosophy of the meaning of life. It highlights the individual's unique place as a self-determining entity responsible for making meaningful and authentic choices, in order for the individual to create personal meaning in a world that has no intrinsic meaning.

Prior to existentialism, philosophy was rather abstract in placing an excessive emphasis on the rationality of human beings and their ability to act according to rational plans, flourish, and lead a successful life, a view maintained since Aristotle, who declared that we are rational animals. The existential movement revolutionized the prevailing thought by focusing on the absurdity of human condition, and the struggle of the individual to shape their existence. The forerunners of existentialism are Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Dostoyevsky. Often considered as the father of existentialism, Kierkegaard (1813-1855) lived at the end of Enlightenment. Called also the great Age of Reason, this philosophical trend highlighted the importance of establishing a universal social order based on reason and natural law, until it progresses to perfection. Kierkegaard renounced the movement for its excessive reliance on objective truths and application of logic and science to provide solutions for life's biggest problems, including what a true self is. Kierkegaard, while not totally denying the importance of objective truths, favoured subjective truths by stating: "subjectivity is truth and truth is subjectivity" (Online).

While Kierkegaard, as a theistic existentialist, stressed the importance of personal choices in relation to God, but unaffected by the Established Church, Nietzsche (1844-1900) presented a Godless universe, by declaring in *Thus Spoke*

*Zarathustra*: “God is dead” (2006: 69). This implies the idea that Christian values, divine perspective, and the notion of immortality – which had prevailed in Western Europe for about two thousand years – had become obsolete. As a consequence, life has no more meaning, nor purpose. Through this statement, Nietzsche also implied that the overall system of traditional values was ineffectual. It follows that, in order not to slip into anarchy and nihilism, people had to invent a new system of morality and overcome themselves.

A highly influential writer, Dostoyevsky was also greatly praised for his philosophical ideas. Scholar David Kauffman (1956: 15), in his book “Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre”, points out that “It is as if Kierkegaard had stepped right out Dostoevsky’s pen.” His novel “Notes from the Underground” (1864) ranks among most important works of existentialism, where the author attempts to justify the existence of individual freedom as a necessary aspect of humankind. He states that abstract ideologies make a person live an inauthentic life.

The existentialist school of thought rose to prominence during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with major representatives, such as: A. Camus, M. Heidegger, and J. P. Sartre. For Camus, the major issue in philosophy is that of suicide, which he puts forward in the first lines of “The Myth of Sisyphus”: “There is but one truly serious philosophical problem and that is suicide. Deciding whether or not life is worth living is to answer the fundamental question in philosophy. All other questions follow from that” (1991: 1). He also related the meaninglessness of life to the absence of God. Sartre, a completely atheistic thinker, argues that absurdity is part of the universe before consciousness comes into play. While Camus consistently emphasizes the absurd, Sartre maintains that human nature is a product of contingency.

In 1945, Sartre held a lecture in Paris, before Club Maintenant, entitled “Existentialism is a Humanism” – published with the same title the following year – to defend the humanistic nature of existentialist doctrine as one that “makes human life possible and also affirms that every truth and every action imply an environment and a human subjectivity” (Sartre 2007: 18). His statement that existence precedes essence is considered the cornerstone of existentialism. This proposition was the reversal of Aristotle’s belief that essence precedes existence, according to which people and objects have a predetermined essence, prior to their existence. Sartre argues that this is true only for objects, giving the example of a paper knife: before producing it, the craftsman has a clear concept in mind and knows in advance the purpose this product will have. But we could not state the same for human beings, since there is no “human nature” found in all men, as was also maintained by 18<sup>th</sup> century atheistic philosophers like Diderot, Voltaire, and Kant (Sartre 2007: 22). Nor does Sartre accept the idea of God as a divine artisan, who created each individual according to a certain concept. Sartre argues his interpretation as follows:

Atheistic existentialism, which I represent, is more consistent. It states that if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence – a being whose existence comes before its essence, a being who exists before he can be defined by any concept of it. That being is man, or, as Heidegger put it, the human reality. What do we mean here by “existence precedes essence”? We mean that man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself. If man as existentialists conceive of him cannot be defined, it is because, to begin with, he is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes of himself. Thus, there is no human nature, since there is no

God to conceive of it...man is nothing other than what he makes of himself. This is the first principle of existentialism. (Sartre 2007: 22)

In his whole philosophy, Sartre insists on subjective existence in all relations, and emphasizes man's dignity in a Godless world. "Man is indeed a project that has a subjective existence, rather unlike that of a patch of moss, a spreading fungus, or a cauliflower" (Sartre 2007: 23). Sartre further emphasizes man's inability to transcend human subjectivity (idem: 24). This seems to mean that by acting of his own free will man creates something out of nothing, which gives man the attributes of God.

The main link that connects Kate Chopin's novel to the existentialist movement is the major issue of individual existence. *The Awakening*, published in 1899, centers on the sexual and artistic awakening of Edna Pontellier, a married woman, who commits suicide in the end. Most of the critics at the time condemned the work for its taboo themes: female noncompliance with societal norms, extramarital romance of a married woman and the way she handled it, suicide. The novel was labeled as "morbid," "unhealthy," "not wholesome," "vulgar," "repellent," and even "poison"; Edna's character was described as "sensual and devilish" and "not good enough for heaven, [but] not wicked enough for hell" (Bracken, Online). Greatly astonished and disheartened, Chopin turned to writing short stories exclusively. Rediscovered in the 1950's, the novel was acclaimed for its literary sensibility.

## 2. A phenomenological ontology of being

Sartre popularized the existentialist movement worldwide through the publication of his most important work "Being and Nothingness" (1943). He conducted a thorough phenomenological analysis of ontology by probing into the nature of our being in terms of immediate experience and consciousness, in general. He distinguishes three structures of being: being-in-itself (*l'être-en-soi*), i.e. the nonconscious being, which is the being aspect of something; being-for-itself (*l'être-pour-soi*), i.e. the conscious being; and being-for-others (*l'être pour-autrui*), i.e. our being as it exists in the consciousness of another, which Sartre calls the Other.

The being-in-itself is what it is, not dependent on anything for its being; nor does it require a construction of mind or thought for existence. In a word, it refers to a way of existence that simply is. In not being conscious, it is neither active nor passive, thus cannot transcend itself. The for-itself is conscious of what it is not: it is not its own being, i.e. not a being-in-itself, as regards physical mass or shape, so it depends on the in-itself by negating it. The encounter of being-for -itself with being-in-itself creates the real world. The for-itself is initially void, which is filled upon encountering the in-itself. If there is nothing of which for-itself can be conscious, it no longer exists. Being-for-itself (consciousness) "is not what it is and is what it is not" (Sartre 1956: 301). This means that the in-itself and the essence of consciousness do not encounter in the consciousness, but externally in the relationship of consciousness to its object. It 'is not what it is' means its essence is not intrinsic or internal to it [consciousness]. It 'is what is not' means that its existence and essence are to be found in the object it is directed on. In other words, by recognizing what is, the individual focuses on what is not. For Sartre, this means that consciousness is characterized by sheer directedness. He also adopted

the phenomenological concept of intentionality to state that consciousness is always conscious of something. The for-itself is considered by Sartre as ‘authentic’ consciousness, in being able to question, eliminate possibilities, and make decisions based on negation of what is. Sartre also states that the for-itself never “exists for itself, but only for the object, and that subjectivity is a consciousness with subject”. (Desan 1960: 29) This means that the for-itself can remain free only if it is not matter.

Apart from the characteristics of directedness and intentionality, Sartre argues that there is no self in the Freudian sense, “hidden” in the consciousness, so consciousness is also self-conscious. To explain the understanding of self-consciousness and production of ego in the conscious activity, Sartre introduced the concepts of pre-reflective consciousness and reflective consciousness. Pre-reflective consciousness is impersonal, so there is no *I* at this level. For example, when I am watering a plant, the plant is the intentional object, and the attention is directed on it, not on me. But, if I stop doing this action, by leaving or undertaking something else, then the focus shifts on me being aware of doing this other action. For Sartre, the act of consciousness directing on the pre-reflective consciousness brings forth the *cogito*, as a synthesis of two consciousnesses. This way, he considers the unconscious unworthy, because every act has an explanation, as well.

We mentioned above how reflective consciousness negates the unreflective consciousness by rendering it its object. The negating power of the for-itself in the case of reflection creates an instability in the self between being placed as unity and reflecting as duality. It is, thus, the duty of the for-itself to ground the self. In Chopin’s novel *The Awakening*, we learn that Edna, while an adequately functional person on the outside, is detached and unbalanced within, lacking the awareness of herself as herself, due to the social and cultural pressures. The awakening of her true self occurs in chapter 6:

Edna Pontellier could not have told why, wishing to go to the beach with Robert, she should in the first place have declined, and in the second place have followed in obedience to one of the two contradictory impulses which impelled her.

A certain light was beginning to dawn dimly within her – the light which, showing the way, forbids it.

At that early period, it served but to bewilder her. It moved her to dreams, to thoughtfulness, to the shadowy anguish which had overcome her the midnight when she had abandoned herself to tears.

In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her. This may seem like a ponderous weight of wisdom to descend upon the soul of a young woman of twenty-eight—perhaps more wisdom than the Holy Ghost is usually pleased to vouchsafe to any woman.

But the beginning of things, of a world especially, is necessarily vague, tangled, chaotic, and exceedingly disturbing. How few of us ever emerge from such beginning! How many souls perish in its tumult! (Chopin 2011: 21)

There are three events that bring forth Edna’s awakening: her presence among Creole women, who talk freely about sex, yet remain faithful to their husbands; her listening to Mademoiselle Reisz playing on the piano; and the lovely time spent with the young and flirtatious Robert Lebrun, while on vacation. In each of these cases, Edna turns out to be a fast learner, surpassing her teachers. Thus, Madame Ratignolle, with her warm and expressive nature, helps Edna to come out

of her shell and appreciate the sensuality of the female body. But, while Madame Ratignolle remains the devoted mother-woman throughout the novel, Edna is transformed both as a mother and a woman. In a similar light, Mademoiselle Reisz, a talented pianist, captivates Edna during a musical evening party. “One piece which that lady played Edna had entitled ‘Solitude’. It was a short, plaintive, minor strain. The name of the piece was something else, but she called it ‘Solitude’” (Chopin 2011: 40). Identifying herself with the music has a dual purpose. For one thing, it helps a solitary Edna become aware of the need to establish true connections with other people. Likewise, the music arouses in her the inner artistic potential to paint like never before, which constitutes another important form of self-expression. The unapproachable unmarried lady, on the other hand, remains secluded by choice and is largely avoided by others. This renders the influence of her art in her community minimal. Self-conceited, she also shuns love because she believes that no individual of the opposite sex deserves her. As a result, she discourages Edna to pursue both real love and true art because, according to the mademoiselle, “to succeed, the artist must possess the courageous soul” (Chopin 2011: 68). While the eccentric pianist makes no major impact on society, Edna challenges the present state of affairs in the end. Finally, Robert rekindles romantic feelings and passion in Edna, which in turn stimulates her growth as an artist. While Robert does not want to be taken seriously by any woman he flirts with, Edna overcomes her former repression and is willing to sacrifice her marital and social status for the sake of their love. She becomes assertive, in a way that is uncommon of a woman in the community, when Robert shows neglect and indifference towards her after his return. “I suppose this is what you would call unwomanly; but I have got into a habit of expressing myself. It doesn’t matter to me, and you may think me unwomanly if you like” (169).

In terms of inter-personal relationships and the presence of the Other, Sartre, quoting Hegel, states: “The consciousness of self is real only in so far as it knows its echo (and its reflection) in another” (Sartre 1956: 293). Thus, one’s consciousness as consciousness of self depends on the appearance of the Other. However, it is predominantly an encounter based on mutual objectification of each other: I am, in the main, an object for the Other, as he is an object for me; the Look of the Other denies my subjectivity, and reduces me to a tool. He presents to me his own subjectivity, a foreign world to which I have no access. On the other hand, I take revenge by destroying his inner unity. Except for my being, the Other steals the world from me, by imposing his own perspective. For Sartre, human reality is originally and essentially built on conflict rather than harmony.

The first feeling that arises from the Look of the Other is shame. “Shame is the feeling of *original fall*, not from the fact that I would have committed such and such a fault, but simply from the fact that I am ‘fallen’ into the world, in the midst of things, and that I need the mediation of the other in order to be what I am” (Sartre 1956: 349). Edna is overwhelmed by shame when reproached by her husband for being irresponsible towards the children:

An indescribable oppression which seemed to generate in some unfamiliar part of her consciousness, filled her whole being with a vague anguish. It was like a shadow, like a mist passing across her soul’s summer day. It was strange and unfamiliar; it was a mood. She did not sit there inwardly upbraiding her husband, lamenting at Fate, which had directed her footsteps to the path which they had taken. (Chopin 2011: 10)

Other reactions of the for-itself towards the Other are: indifference, hate, desire, love etc. Of primary importance here, with the regard to the novel, is the love attitude. Its ambiguity and paradox concern the question whether I love the Other as object or as subject, and the impact that this has on my freedom and his freedom, and our relationship. Thus, If I treat the Other as object, I negate and appropriate his freedom, which, according to Sartre, is the foundation of my Being. In stealing his freedom, I risk losing my own, as well. Through love, I destroy the very love I sought. In a similar light, in the novel, the strong love that Edna feels for Robert boomerangs on her. While she has gained considerable independence from her husband – by her living in a separate house, developing her artistic talent and making her own money – she is unable to manage her emotional and romantic life. Madly in love with Robert, she expects the same feelings and devotion from him, undermining in this way his subjectivity and limiting his freedom as a flirtatious beau. In doing this, she puts her own freedom at stake: “[...] all sense of reality had gone out of her life; she had abandoned herself to Fate, and awaited the consequences with indifference.” (Chopin 2011: 165) But, when Robert tells Edna that he will ask Mr. Pontellier to set her free, in order for him to marry her, she wakes up to the reality, understanding that she has destroyed everything. Refusing to be treated like some property to be passed from one man to another, she refuses his proposal. Later, Robert, unable to see Edna as a subject, sends her a note, reading: “I love you. Good-bye – because I love you.” (idem: 178) Essentially, this means that he is not strong enough to overcome social barriers and accept Edna for the individual she is, thus leaving her alone in her awakening and shattering her dream world.

Finding her life to be totally meaningless, she asserts her authentic will by making suicide the final choice. For Sartre, “suicide [...] is a choice and affirmation – of being. By this being which is given to it, human reality participates in the universal contingency of being and thereby in what we may call absurdity. This choice is absurd, not because it is without reason, but because there has never been any possibility of not choosing oneself.” (Sartre 1956: 479) However, for Edna, death appears to be inevitable, given the utter imbalance of her outer and inner self, total isolation from others, and particularly the social and historical setting of the novel. Refusing to go back to her older self, and as a mark of protest against stringent societal norms, Edna drowns in the sea:

[...] when she was there beside the sea, absolutely alone, she cast the unpleasant, pricking garments from her, and for the first time in her life she stood naked in the open air, at the mercy of the sun, the breeze that beat upon her, and the waves that invited her.

[...] The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace.

[...] She remembered the night she swam far out, and recalled the terror that seized her at the fear of being unable to regain the shore. She did not look back now, but went on and on, thinking of the blue-grass meadow that she had traversed when a little child, believing that it had no beginning and no end. (Chopin 2011: 182-3)

The sea, a symbol of autonomy for Edna at the beginning, after she learns to swim, represents the same freedom at the end, “so she freely goes to the sea, losing her life. But she does not lose her self (Jones 1981: 169).

### 3. Freedom and responsibility

For Sartre, as man lacks a predetermined essence, he has to create himself out of nothingness. "...human reality is its own nothingness. For the for-itself, to be is to nihilate the in-itself which it is." (Sartre 1956: 439) The for-itself exists as lack, and this lack is its nothingness, which in turn is absolute, in that it is the condition of the for-itself. This way, "man cannot be sometimes slave and sometimes free; he is wholly and forever free or he is not free at all." (idem: 441) In being undetermined, the for-itself is free to make itself and create its values, by reaching beyond the situation it is in through its choices and acts. In the existence of the for-itself, freedom would not be possible without choice and action, just as choice and action would not be possible without freedom.

Sartre also considers the for-itself an ecstatic temporal structure that nihilates the in-itself through the past, present, and future.

For Sartre, the past of the "for-itself" amounts to that which was but is no longer [...]. By mirror opposite, the future of the "for-itself" amounts to which it intends to be but is not yet [...]. And between the two, the present of the "for-itself" is that which it is not, for its being is characterized as being-not-the-thing-of-which-it-is-conscious [...]. (Kelly, Online)

Almost halfway through the novel, Edna comes to this realization:

The past was nothing to her; offered no lesson which she was willing to heed. The future was a mystery which she never attempted to penetrate. The present alone was significant, was hers, to torture her as it was doing then with the biting which her impassioned, newly awakened being demanded. (Chopin 2011:71)

Overwhelmed by a sense of helplessness, she lives, up to this point, in a world of phantasy, memories, and desire. However, for Sartre, the real self is created in *praxis* through action, because "to act is to modify the shape of the world; it is to arrange means in view of an end." (Sartre 1956: 433) Thus, for an act to be considered valid, it has to be intentional. And since an act is directed to an end, it is not realized yet. Thus, an act cannot be determined by an antecedent causality. Sartre (idem: 435) states it as follows:

No factual state whatever it may be (the political and economic structure of society, the psychological "state," etc.) is capable by itself of motivating any act whatsoever. For an act is a projection of the for-itself toward what is not, and what is can in no way by itself determine what is not.

It is true that there can be no absolute freedom, once the for-itself is engaged in a situation, but our freedom has to find its mechanisms to manage these limits. The relationship between freedom and factual situation is, in fact, a paradox: "there is freedom only in a situation, and there is a situation only through freedom." (idem: 489)

Freedom entails also responsibility for one's actions and others:

If indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's actions by reference to a specific and given human nature. [...] We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free:

condemned, because he did not create himself, yet nonetheless free, because once cast into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. (Sartre 2007: 29)

If freedom is absolute, so is responsibility. While capable of creating a personal moral code that renders her life meaningful, Edna becomes disoriented in the long run. The burden of responsibility proves to be too heavy for her, which in turn causes her a lot anguish and despair. Given that her choices and actions are simply based on feelings, she loses her grip on reality. However, in having made her own choices and committed to them, she accepts the consequences of her freedom with dignity. The final scene of her entering the sea is depicted as embracing the highest dimension of freedom, while being conscious that she lived authentically. Regarding this sense of pride, Sartre (1956: 554) points out that:

He must assume the situation with the proud consciousness of being the author of it, for the very worst disadvantages or the worst threats which can endanger my person have meaning only in and through my project; and it is on the ground of the engagement which I am that they appear. It is therefore senseless to think of complaining since nothing foreign has decided what we feel, what we live, what we are.

#### **4. Authenticity and bad faith**

The central ideas in Sartre's philosophy are individual freedom and authenticity. Inextricably linked to each other, they are dependent on our incessant choices towards the project. In this context, Sartre (1956: 480) states that

Since freedom is being-without-support and without-a-springboard, the project in order to be must be constantly renewed. I choose myself perpetually and can never be merely by virtue of having-been-chosen; otherwise I should fall into the pure and simple existence of the in-itself.

This simple existence of the in-itself brings forth the phenomenon of bad faith, which equates with a lack of authenticity. Bad faith is a type of self-deception whereby the individual consciously hides the truth from himself and lives in self-denial. To illustrate this, Sartre gives the example of a waiter whose conduct is too "waiter-esque". His voice oozes with an eagerness to please; he carries food rigidly and ostentatiously; "his movement is quick and forward, a little too precise, a little too rapid" (Laing 1969: 44). With his exaggerated behaviour, for Sartre, the waiter is deceiving himself, because he is not a waiter in essence. He is never a waiter in-itself, but a fundamentally free individual, who is not what he is and is what he is not, as he could well at any moment decide to stop being a waiter. By focusing on himself as a static being, he's denying the dynamic nature of his being.

Bad faith means surrendering oneself to the influence of facticity. "Much more than he appears 'to make himself', man seems 'to be made' by climate and the earth, race and class, language, the history of the collectivity of which he is part, heredity, the individual circumstances of his childhood, acquired habits, the great and small events of his life. (Sartre 1956: 482) In defining himself through these givens, the individual adopts false societal values and denies his freedom and possibility of transcendence.



The phenomenon of bad faith is ubiquitous in the novel. In the beginning, Edna is not aware of her essential freedom and, like other women, considers herself as an extension to her husband. Later on, she manages to surpass her existence as mother and wife by challenging the societal barriers. While she is the only one to create an authentic life for herself, the other characters do not experience any transcendence. For one, Madame Ratignolle, whose entire world revolves around being a model wife and mother, is the epitome of bad faith, in also constantly reminding Edna of inattention to her children. Edna – and the reader – cannot help feeling sorry for this woman.

The little glimpse of domestic harmony which had been offered her, gave her no regret, no longing. It was not a condition of life which fitted her, and she could see in it but an appalling and hopeless ennui. She was moved by a kind of commiseration for Madame Ratignolle, - a pity for that colorless existence which never uplifted its possessor beyond the region of blind contentment, in which no moment of anguish ever visited her soul, in which she would never have the taste of life's delirium. (Chopin 2011: 88)

The in-itself mode of being is also embraced by Mr. Pontellier, who feels too comfortable in his role as traditional husband that strives to keep up appearances at all costs. To him, Edna is just some property in his possession. In a similar light, Mademoiselle Reisz, though an artist, is unwilling to challenge the status quo. Her secluded world and freedom as a single lady suffice her. Likewise, Robert, though in love with Edna, is not courageous enough to commit and fight against social conventions.

## 5. Conclusion

Existentialism in philosophy and literature places man at the heart of its reflection as opposed to an abstract and conceptual philosophy. This school of thought emphasizes true and individual existence by granting each person the freedom to decide about themselves and create meaning and essence out of their life without the interference of religious or societal establishments. It highlights freedom and authenticity as the essential step towards self-identity and self-definition through thought, feeling, and action.

An exploration of the novel “The Awakening” through Sartre’s ontological and ethical approach brings to the light the complex nature of the human condition, which is what people have in common. The individual defines himself/herself and interacts with others as a being in a situation, which, in turn, imposes its limits and restrictions. Paradoxically, complete freedom is only possible if bound to a situation. Rejecting determinism, Sartre encourages the individual to overcome deterministic tendencies by always attempting to be more than his situation. “A prisoner is always free to try to escape.” (Sartre 1956: 484) Real success lies in trying. Being essentially free, man is totally free and totally responsible for his choices and actions.

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### Online resources

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy\\_of\\_S%C3%B8ren\\_Kierkegaard](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_S%C3%B8ren_Kierkegaard)  
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**BEYOND THE MYOPIC VISION: SITUATING MINIATURES  
IN JESSIE BURTON'S *THE MINIATURIST***

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***Abstract:** The nexus of humans and objects requires careful consideration of their interaction throughout the ages. Bill Brown's phenomenal essay "Thing Theory" (2001) has paved a new way for reexamining this affiliation. This paper is an attempt to study the different roles of miniatures in shaping the life of Petronella Oortman, a seventeenth-century Dutch woman. In so doing, the paper closely reads Jessie Burton's *The Miniaturist* (2014). Drawing theoretical insights from Susan Stewart, Gaston Bachelard, among others, the paper probes into the significance of miniatures in shaping anthropomorphic relationships.*

***Keyword:** Bachelard, Jessie Burton, miniatures, seventeenth-century Netherlands, Thing Theory*

## **1. Introduction**

The role of miniatures in fiction requires careful consideration in order to understand the nexus of corporeality and materiality of objects. Miniatures summon the limits of human perceptions to visualize beyond the tangible nature of things. The power of the miniature lies in their size, which offers a certain form to the owner's imagination. As Forsberg (2021: 2) rightly observes, "[m]iniatures offered a multiplicity of branching narratives that blurred the boundaries between science and imagination, between what is and what could be", opening avenues to embrace the unknown and the uncertain.

Miniatures offer alternate realities spawning the consciousness of an indeterminate conviction and the possibility of life beyond the preconceived notions of size. The existence of miniatures surpasses time and space. For the ancient Egyptians, miniatures formed an integral part of the afterlife rituals. Susan Allen (2006: 19) reflects on the importance of the miniature offerings which "could continue to function magically and provide for the afterlife of the deceased". For the ancient Egyptians, the function of the miniature moves past the grave. The miniature painting in India originated during the Palas of Bengal and reached its peak during the Mughal rule. Similarly, the Persian miniature attained the pinnacle during the Mongol and Timurid periods (13th-16th century). For the Persians, the miniature intermingled art and poetry which was pleasing to the eyes and easy to comprehend (Kianush 1998).

The sixteenth century Dutch boxwood miniatures were objects of devotions, as they were characterised by convoluted illustration from the Bible. However, the seventeenth-century Netherlands witnessed a rise of dolls' houses which were the

perfect replica of domesticity during the era. The miniature houses were part of the Dutch Golden Age, wherein a small circle of wealthy merchant wives displayed their wealth through the possession of a cabinet house ostensibly depicting their domestic sphere. Courtney Harris (2018) notes that these cabinet houses conferred agency to the women, which was otherwise denied to them. They would control the workings of the household through the miniature house, by taking ownership of what they would furnish the home with. The decision regarding the household was always carried out by the husbands. The miniature house acted as a threshold of the public and the private lives of the wealthy merchant wives.

My paper attempts to read the different roles played by the miniatures in the life of a seventeenth-century Dutch woman, and the way she defied the prescribed notion of being a woman by creating a new world for her own. In so doing, the paper does a close reading of English writer Jessie Burton's *The Miniaturist* (2014). The novel revolves around Petronella Brandt, née Oortman, wife of a wealthy Dutch merchant, Johannes Brandt. Nella hails from a small village called Assendelft. The city of Amsterdam is strange to her, just like her new home, which is bigger and more magnificent than her mother's. Nella's life takes a drastic turn when her husband presents her with a cabinet house as a wedding gift, and she discovers the miniaturist in the *Smit's List*. Her relationship with the miniaturist shapes her life and those around her. The television adaptation of the book, aired in 2017 and 2018, was a beautiful portrayal of Nella's life and the complex web of mysteries surrounding the Brandt household. Set around 1686-87 in Amsterdam, the story evokes the seventeenth century Amsterdam and its newly acquired wealth.

Burton was inspired by Petronella Oortman's dolls' house in the Rijksmuseum. According to Caroline Halleman (2018), Jessie Burton came across the cabinet of the real Petronella during her visit in Amsterdam in 2009. The encounter with that "stunning" and "aesthetically pleasing" object inspired her to tell a story revolving around the cabinet house. It also reflected the city of seventeenth century Amsterdam, "a wealthy city, but it was a city that was very nervous about its wealth. The cabinet house is a real thing as much as it's a symbol of the society and of the city of Amsterdam itself" (Burton, qtd. in Halleman 2018). However, the novel is not a biographical account of the real Petronella Oortman; the story takes on a different turn conspicuously drawing the readers to the secrets of the domestic world and beyond.

## **2. "A monument to her arrested womanhood": domesticity and the dolls' house**

Susan Broomhall stresses the function of the Dutch dolls' houses as a training ground for little girls. She suggests that "household role-playing" proved to be a crucial element in the surging demands of dollhouses among the wealthy Dutch circle (Broomhall 2007: 50). Similarly, Moseley-Christian (2010: 345) also argues for the instructional role of the Dutch dolls' houses, wherein the didactic purpose meant that the dolls' houses were owned by young girls to groom themselves as prospective mistresses of their future households. However, Melinda Fallon (2003: 98) contends that the role of dolls' houses and miniatures far surpassed its didactic purpose, in as much as they became a medium to assert the owner's right, social standing, and wealth.

The numerous domestic scenes portrayed in the paintings of seventeenth century Netherlands have made scholars recognise the home as the female space

(Rybczynski 1987; Flanders 2003). Flora Jacobs (1965: 13) notes the fascination for miniatures as a “sort of spell” which cannot be explained. The dolls’ house has an agency of its own, as is evident when it prefigures in the events of Nella’s life. The use of the possessive (doll’s) by the narrator in regard to the cabinet house reflects the miniatures’ proprietorship over the house. This in turn indicates the control that the owner (in this case Nella) has over the house.

The understanding of the physical world is associated with the perception of the ideal world. For Nella, the dolls’ house signifies a space of her own, she decorates its interior and collects objects within the cabinet. She comes to terms with her husband’s sexual orientation and her eternal virginity through the sense of decay that prevails within the cabinet: “no promise of motherhood, no shared secrets in the night, no household to run - except the one inside a cabinet where no living soul can thrive” (Burton 2014: 124). The cabinet is going to be the only truth in her life. In the novel, more than household role-playing, the dolls’ house enables Nella to carve her position in the house.

While the real house crumbles in front of her, the cabinet house becomes a symbol of her resilience. The gift from her husband, which she thought to be a “monument of her powerlessness, her arrested womanhood” (Burton 2014: 43) turns out to be the most intimate possession which provides her solace as she “rests her head on the side of the cabinet, the cooling wood touching her skin like a balm” (idem: 211).

Nella is aware of the didactic role of the dolls’ houses as she ponders upon the fact that she might have had this kind of house if her father had been alive to let her practice the basic errands needed to run a household. But, now since she was married, it is an insult to Nella that her husband has presented her with this mock house, rather than recognise her proper place in his house. She is bewildered by the thought that her husband thinks of her as a child, and her heart sinks:

I am too old for this, she thinks. Who will see this piece of work, who will be able to sit on those chairs, or eat the waxen food? She has no friends, no family in this city to come and exclaim at it – it is a monument to her powerlessness, her arrested womanhood. *It’s your house*, her husband had said, but who can live in tiny rooms, these nine dead ends? (Burton 2014: 43)

For Nella, the cabinet house was meant to be a distraction, a plaything. But to the contrary, it turns out to be her source of strength, as for the first time she tells herself to muster all her courage and bring her caged parakeet back to its place. Susan Stewart (1984: 56) observes that the power of miniatures lies in engaging their owner by overcoming their myopic vision and unfolding narratives that transcend time and space. They allow people to cross boundaries within the house. For instance, on her arrival to the Brandt house, Nella is confined to her room upstairs: “Nella dares not go down”, “tiptoeing down the stairs to the kitchens”, “she feels dwarfed by the sumptuousness of her new room” (Burton 2014: 22-25). The sense of confinement is broken after the arrival of the dolls’ house, which enables Nella to trespass spaces within the house. In some sense, the miniature enables a voyeuristic experience for the owner, which is more than peeking. It is in fact going through the rooms and getting a glimpse of the life within them. For instance, Nella would often wonder what Marin’s (Nella’s husband’s sister) room was like. She once peeps through the keyhole, only to be disappointed. However, the miniaturist allows Nella to experience Marin’s room without going inside it.

Edward T. Hall (1966) probes deeper into the role of accessibility of the objects in nurturing the intimacy imbued with meaning and personal significance. This kind of closeness enabled by the doll's house and the miniatures convey a feeling of mystery and awareness at the same time. When Nella sees the cabinet for the first time, she is immediately taken aback by the eeriness of its accurate resemblance to the real house:

The accuracy of the cabinet is eerie, as if the real house has been shrunk, its body sliced in two and its organ revealed. The nine rooms, from the working kitchen, the salon, up to the loft where the peat and firewood are stored away from damp, are perfect replicas...As Nella stands before the exposed interior, it begins to make her uneasy. Its hollow carapaces of elm and tortoiseshell seem to watch her back as if its rooms are eyes. (Burton 2014: 42-44)

The constant reference to the body foreshadows the role of the cabinet in Nella's life. It is as if the cabinet has a life of its own. The rooms stare back at her. The hypodermic effect of the cabinet in Nella's life is evident when she decides to decorate the cabinet "with all the things that [Marin] detest" (Burton 2014: 51). The act of defiance is initiated through Nella's possession of the cabinet. The decoration of the cabinet reflects Nella's attempt to redefine her identity, which she was denied within the real house. It can be read as a conscious attempt to reclaim the power over the house and the space. Philip E. Wegner (2015: 185) calls this an act of rebellion against the notion of space as a fixed identity: "if social and cultural spaces, including the body, are indeed the product of human actions, then there is the possibility of our reconstructing human spaces, and hence human being-in-the world as well". Hence, the first things that Nella orders from the Miniaturist turn out to be things that are forbidden within the premises of the Brandt household.

### **3. "Shrouded in ignorance": miniatures as an escape or a reverie**

Miniatures offer a certain form of reverie that reveals itself as a kind of escape from the lived realities. Susan Stewart (1984: 56) writes of the dollhouse as the "secret recesses of the heart: centre within centre, within within within". This effect of the narrative unfolding of interior space renders new meanings to the story and its characters. Stewart (ibid.) calls the miniature an "infinity of detail", which suggests untold narratives, secret existence and a life underneath the surface reality. The daydreaming that is associated with the miniatures holds true for Nella as she is constantly driven towards a different world whenever she stares at the miniatures and the cabinet:

Nella returns home and rushes upstairs to the cabinet, running her fingers over the miniaturist's pieces. They are charged with a different energy, laden with a meaning she cannot penetrate, yet even more addictive in their mystery. Cornelia's voice and approaching footsteps pull her from her reverie. (Burton 2014: 100)

Nella's mother calls her a "girl with imagination – strong and capable" which facilitated the search for truth (Burton 2014: 120). The reverie in which Nella indulges takes her beyond the supposed reality and provides her with a sense of control. However, this control is illusionary, as it is revealed later how little control Nella has over the events. Contrary to the belief that miniatures provide escape from reality, Nella is in fact, confronted with it. Miniatures challenge the

portrayal of truth, questioning the very nature of reality. The miniature makes familiar things look strange, as is evident when Nella first receives the miniature and she sees the people around her in a different light. This phenomenon of familiar things turning unfamiliar evokes Freud's definition of the uncanny. In "The Uncanny", Sigmund Freud (2003) delineates the concept of *heimlich* (homely) and *unheimlich* (unhomely). The concept of *unheimlich* is crucial for understanding how the secrets of the Brandt household reveal themselves inadvertently, changing the lives of its inhabitants. The cabinet house with its miniature household belongings reveals secrets meant to be hidden from the world. The cabinet house subverts Nella's knowledge of the house and of herself. The uncertainty looms large upon Nella as she searches for answers from the miniaturist. It is only after she destroys the miniature house and everything in it that she gains an understanding of the world around her.

In his *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard (1994) postulates that the gaze on the miniature enables the onlookers to liberate themselves from the shackles of their everyday existence. This process of emancipation is possible due to the shift in scale, which constructs unlimited scope for imagination and reverie, and, at the same time, releases the person from the confinement of "all obligations of dimensions". Nella often engrosses herself in the miniatures, and finds them to be mysterious pieces seeking answers about her life. She hopes that the miniatures would give her a clearer picture of what is to come. When she holds the miniatures in her palm, she feels that she encloses her life in the centre of her fist.

In a similar line, Susan Stewart (1984: 65) theorizes that the intense convolution of miniature objects defers the synchronal confrontation by hypnotizing the onlooker into the "infinite time of reverie...which negates change and the flux of lived reality". In the theorization of the miniatures as an introspective experience, both Bachelard and Stewart refer to the extension of an inner world curated by the observer's own imagination. This can be aptly applied to Nella's experience with the miniatures and the dolls' house itself, which enabled her to solve the mysteries of her existence. So rather than being shrouded in ignorance, miniatures revealed a kind of fascination of the mind, triggering real-life events.

Reality is often challenged through Nella's cabinet house and miniature possessions. For some time at least, readers accept the fact that the miniatures have allowed Nella to venture into ideal worlds without facing the real ones. However, the bubble-like living is thwarted when the miniatures provide Nella a glimpse of reality which she has to confront. The miniaturist sends Nella a cradle, which she "feels a sense of invasion, as if she is being closely observed in her bridal foolishness", turns out to be a distortion of her present being (Burton 2014: 65). The facade created by Marin is questioned by the miniaturist, as later it is revealed that Marin gives birth to Otto's (the black servant of the Brandt household) child. So, the cradle sent to Nella was not for her, it was only a way to show Nella the truth behind the walls of the rooms. Nella thought the cradle "a mockery of her unvisited marriage bed", only to realise the depth of the miniatures later (ibid.). Hence, the reverie or the escape provided by the miniatures is in fact an introspection which enables the owner to look beyond. The myopic vision is certainly surpassed and the owners gain epiphany through the miniscule objects.

#### **4. Miniatures as objects outside the boundaries of measured time**

Miniatures are often perceived as objects of nostalgia. They are replicated as things of the past, to be cherished and held dear. However, Burton's depiction

of the miniature slightly differs from the popular notion, in as much as Nella is concerned. For Nella, the miniature acts as an object which in fact foretells her future. She looks for suggestions and possible clues in the miniatures which might lead to her next action. For instance, when she realises that the sugar cone in miniature Agnes (Brandts' family friend and business partner) is turning black, she becomes immediately aware of the stock of sugar kept in her husband's warehouse; or when she sees her own miniature with Agnes, she "searches the miniature body -- for wounds, she tells herself, to arm against any coming danger" (Burton 2014: 247). This instinctive desire to look into the miniatures for any possible event marks these tiny objects as something which is far ahead of its time.

The notion of the "arrested time", as put forward by Susan Stewart (1984) can be traced back to the Victorian novels, where the miniature reflected the past. Aunt Julia's miniature portrait in George Eliot's *Middlemarch* or Osborne's miniature portrait in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* materialise the longing for the past or the sagacity of nostalgia attached to miniatures. In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea's awareness of female solidarity surpasses time and space wherein she could relate to Aunt Julia's circumstances of injustice. This in turn helps her nurture fellow feelings for the aunt's grandson, who would eventually marry Dorothea. Similarly, in *Vanity Fair*, Amelia uses the miniature of her dead husband as a means to evoke the lost time she had with him, nurturing every moment of their togetherness. However, she also makes use of the miniature to keep prospective suitors at bay.

For Nella, the dolls' house and the miniatures in it are more than "arrested time" (Stewart 1984: 67); they move beyond objects of nostalgia and the past. They are not frozen at a given past moment, the miniatures change according to the situation and make Nella aware of the future. Hence, the miniatures give Nella and the people around her a new lease of life. Leaving her past behind, Nella moves on towards an uncertain future in a new city, with the miniatures as her guide. It is interesting to note that, when the dolls' house becomes the past, Nella destroys it, keeping only the miniatures of Johannes (her husband) and Marin (her sister-in-law). Therefore, it can be said that the role of the miniatures in this novel lies more in their function as guidance for the future, than as keepsakes.

#### 4.1. Miniatures as talismanic comfort

Susanne Kuchler (2019: 177) speaks about the empathetic feeling that is forged through miniatures. The "making, repairing and caring" idea of the miniatures are inextricably linked to their owners. This highlights the invisible cord that is evidently formed between the maker and the owner, as can be seen in the relationship between Nella and the miniaturist. The reflective gaze on the miniature kindles an understanding on the part of the maker which is delineated through the minute details. The way in which the miniaturist offers clues to Nella regarding the imminent harm to Rezeki or Johannes underlines the custodian's role in safeguarding the latter. At one point, Nella becomes so much dependent on the miniaturist that she waits for her to provide her with hints regarding the course of events. Nella however discovers a close knit group of wealthy women who are also guarded by the miniaturist:

All this time, she thinks, I have been watched and guarded, taught and taunted. But never has she felt more vulnerable. Here she is – hidden in the middle of so many of Amsterdam's women, their secret fears and hopes. She is no different. She is Agnes



Meermans. She is the twelve-year-old. She is the woman who will miss her husband every day. We are legion, we women. All of us in thrall to the miniaturist. I thought she was stealing my life, but in truth she opened its compartments and let me look inside (Burton 2014: 269)

So in spite of feeling female solidarity, Nella feels betrayed, as she is not the only one whom the miniaturist guides. Hence, she destroys the cabinet and the miniatures and takes charge of her own life and fate. Thus, the miniaturist, more than the miniatures themselves, enhances and concretises Nella's life. As Gaston Bachelard (1994:152) observes, "miniatures causes men to dream" and these dreams evince the veracity of life. The dreams open a new life for Nella and prepare her for confronting what lies ahead.

#### 4.2. Miniatures as borrowed glory

Susan Stewart (1984: 69) sees the miniature as "a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination", which reflects the futile attempts to search for the solace from the estranged existence that the owners seek in the miniatures. Taking instance from the text, it is evident that however hard Nella tries to find answers through the miniatures, she fails; she curses "the miniaturist for not altering her to what needed to be done, to what could have been prevented" (Burton 2014: 238). The ability of the miniatures to engage and defy the real world nurtures a sense of freedom. This independence comes to Nella only after she destroys the cabinet house and the miniatures inside it.

The new world that the cabinet has unlocked for Nella brings with it a quandary of existence which she wants to decipher; yet Nella feels it is the existence of the miniatures that have kept her alive. She can whiff life from the miniature dolls, beaming with power that Nella cannot control. The cabinet house stares at her, it feels no less than the real one, with the tortoiseshell reflecting the sumptuous interiors and the wealth of the Brandts. While the house seems to fall off, the cabinet glows with life. Johannes thought the cabinet would be an amusement for Nella, but it turns out to be an entrance to new life. However, the facade is soon broken, as she realises the potential that she had in controlling the events in her life:

Johannes called the cabinet a distraction, but Nella, on the threshold of a new life, had taken it as no more than an insult to her fragile status. She rejected this uninhabitable world, then gradually believed it held the answers, that the miniaturist was the one who held the light. But Johannes was right, in a way, Nella thinks. Everything about this cabinet was indeed distracting. So much happened while I was looking the other way. I was sure I'd been standing still, yet look how far I've come. (Burton 2014: 284)

This act of destruction comes as a liberation for Nella in discarding the norms and confinement that had tied her to domesticity. The dolls' house was the domestic world, which happened to open new doors for Nella. Susan Broomhall (2019) calls the dolls' house "a kind of ego-document, or self-narrative, that presented a vision of her as she wanted to be remembered by future generations"; however, Nella's destruction of the cabinet towards the narrative's end implies her defiance and her broken shackles.

## 5. Conclusion

Lin Foxhall (2015: 1) points out the common features that miniatures share, which include the microscopic replication of an object, “an imitation or a model of another thing, so that the significance of the miniature and the significance of the original remain linked”. This reflects the narrativity of the miniature itself, wherein the materiality of the object embodies the intertextuality of meanings encapsulated and identified with the other object, and at the same time, generating new meanings for itself. The miniature reinforces the essence of the prototype and eventually creates a new world of its own. Foxhall (2015: 2) also observes that miniatures foster a different kind of relationship with the material world, which alters relationships of the possessor and the object. The changing dimension of relationships takes the owner away from the everyday experience and provides alternative perspectives. This is reiterated by Jozwiak (2020: 13), who opines that the miniature exhibits introspection by enabling the surge of fantasy to shape the psyche of the owner. Hence, the paper has delved into the various aspects of the anthropomorphic relationship of the miniatures and the owner by taking the case of Nella Oortman and her cabinet house.

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**LEARNING TO LIVE, LEARNING TO DIE:  
WRITING AS MOURNING AND/OR FRAUD  
IN PETER ACKROYD'S *THE LAMBS OF LONDON***

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**Abstract:** *In The School of the Dead (1994), Hélène Cixous investigates the kinship between writing and death by recalling Montaigne's famous perspective of philosophy, which identifies philosophizing with dying. This paper suggests a reading of Peter Ackroyd's Lambs of London in the light of Cixous's approach, juxtaposed with her "friend" (φίλος) Jacques Derrida's contributions on memory, mourning and ethics as "learning to live from the ghosts". Accordingly, the novel will be explored as a literary topos of Mnemosyne, through which the author revives the admiration and longing for Shakespeare, by resurrecting the ghosts of William Ireland, Mary and Charles Lamb.*

**Keywords:** *Derrida, hauntology, hermeneutic mourning, mimesis, Mnemosyne, Peter Ackroyd*

## 1. Introduction

“ ‘There is no secret,’ I replied, ‘ unless it is the secret  
of the whole world in which the elements are intermingled.’”  
“The House of Doctor Dee”

Peter Ackroyd, one of the most prolific writers in contemporary English literature, has also acquired the reputation of a playful novelist. His playfulness as an author is not limited to his use of language, but defines a peculiar capacity to interweave genres. Jeremy Gibson and Julian Wolfreys' *Peter Ackroyd: The Ludic and Labyrinthine Text* constitutes a guide for critics and readers alike, meant to facilitate the deciphering of his authorial style:

Ackroyd plays constantly: within a given text, across his own texts, and between the texts which his name signs and those to which he alludes, from which he cites or otherwise borrows, often wittily, with knowing gestures of pastiche and parody, as much from a sense of fun or jest as out of a sense of respect and inheritance. He plays quite seriously between the conventional constraints of the novel and biography, so as to interanimate and contaminate the genres respectively. He plays too on expected values and meanings, toying with the commonsensical, with convention and received wisdom. (Gibson, Wolfreys 2000: 9)

Ackroyd's toying with genres, history, and fiction inevitably and/or intentionally construes a labyrinthine path connecting the past and the present. *The*

*Lambs of London* was published four years after the critical work mentioned above. The 2004 novel easily fits into the spectrum of texts discussed by the two critics, and thematically and stylistically fits the overall points of interest in Ackroyd's oeuvre.

Nevertheless, in light of the critical claims made by Gibson and Wolfreys (2000: 14), *The Lambs of London* is also open to new interpretations as "the singular example of 'a work of literature' which must be respected in all its singularity, and which cannot be controlled according to some thematic horizon of expectation."

For this reason, the present paper aims to argue that, within its singularity, *The Lambs of London* belongs to and embellishes the unconventional continuity of Ackroyd's remarkable ludic spirit: firstly, via his revisitations of the past and secondly, by obscuring the boundaries of authorship in the context of the notorious story of a literary fraud. The theoretical framework of the current reading will employ two well-known Derridean concepts. The first is hauntology, which I understand in the ethical context, as a specific way of being-with-others that entails past and future generations. In the introduction to *Specters of Marx*, Derrida (2006: xvii) defines ethics as a process of learning how to live from the ghosts of the past and of the future. In the following chapters, he introduces *hauntology* and elaborates on the necessity of speaking to and with the ghost, with several references to Shakespeare. The second concept that I will employ is *hermeneutic mourning* and its associations with memory, as offered by Derrida in *Memoires for Paul de Man* (Derrida 1989: 7). In order to illuminate the juncture between writing as hermeneutic mourning and hauntology, I will also draw on selected aspects of Hélène Cixous's work. As a philosopher friend of Derrida's, she also elaborated on the relationship between writing and death. In view of these combined perspectives, the present paper will offer a reading of *The Lambs of London* with a theoretical approach based upon the significant bond that connects writing, death, memory, and mourning.

## 2. Writing with ghosts

In *The School of the Dead*, which is the first part of *Three Steps on the Ladder of Writing*, Cixous (1994: 7) notes: "To begin (writing, living) we must have death". Recalling Montaigne's words that philosophizing is learning to die, she (idem: 9-10) claims that "writing is learning to die". According to her (idem: 12-13), "in the inseparable relationship of the death of the I and the other, writing originates". Yet, writing is not merely about dying, but it is also an opportunity for being the guardian, the friend, and the regenerator of the dead (idem: 13). In an earlier text titled *Coming to Writing*, Cixous (1991: 3) describes writing as a "way of leaving no space for death, of pushing back forgetfulness, of never letting oneself be surprised by the abyss". The current reading claims that this is what Ackroyd mostly achieves in his novels, such as *Hawksmoor* (1985), *Chatterton* (1987), *Dan Leno and The Limehouse Golem* (1994), and *The Lambs of London* (2004). He creates a labyrinthic chronotope, where he is able to resurrect the dead poet, dead artist, dead novelist or the dead philosopher. He writes and rewrites the historico-literary events of London, he dialogizes his own narration by reviving great historical names, authors such as James Joyce, Thomas Chatterton, Dan Leno, Karl Marx, Thomas De Quincey, and, of course, William Shakespeare. Ackroyd, as a novelist with a confessed obsession with ghosts, pens his own

literature for the future as the literature of speaking to and with the ghosts. The author's playfulness and labyrinthine narration transcend the boundaries of a chronological past and present by an interplay of imagination, fiction, and history. As Ganteau (2021: 1065) formulates it, "Ackroyd's ethics and aesthetics of chronological resonance cannot be content with the constrained idiom of phenomenal realism."

Albeit concerned with and defined by the relationship with death as both conceptual and implacable reality, it is worth pointing out at this juncture that the conversational and non-fictional writings between Cixous and Derrida occurred while both philosophers were still alive. Neither philosopher had to wait for the other's death for the textual friendship to blossom, most probably because they had already invested a lot in attempting to tackle the various ways of commemorating the past and the entire literature of the dead. They both seemed to agree on the unavoidable bond between death/mourning/memory and writing. According to Cixous's *School of the Dead* (1994), the first moment of writing is that in which the writer learns not only to die but also to mourn, and this can also be understood as life itself. Ackroyd, as a novelist, also rediscovers his life in his mourning and re-membering the past, namely in the history of literature. From this perspective, it seems even more fitting to focus on *The Lambs of London*, since one of the protagonists of the novel, William Henry Ireland, is not only a real historical literary persona, but also a *quasi*-Shakespeare for a defined moment in history. William Ireland's multi-layered persona thus stands as the most representative character for exploring the possible associations of mourning, memory, and ghosts with writing.

### 3. The ghostly fraud

*The Lambs of London*, published in 2004, is a novel by Ackroyd within the literally literary chronotope of 19<sup>th</sup> century London; its plot draws its substance from William Ireland's meeting with two other historico-literary siblings, Mary and Charles Lamb. Their roads cross because of their shared-obsession, Shakespeare. When William Ireland discovers a book (Greene's *Pandosto*), which was claimed to be the one Shakespeare had read before writing *A Winter's Tale*, he wants to give it to Charles Lamb, who is an essayist, journalist and a poet of the time (Ackroyd 2005: 16-17). Mary and Charles Lamb are mostly famous for their retelling Shakespeare's plays for children, under the title *Tales from Shakespeare*, published in 1807. In Ackroyd's novel, they are both still living with their parents; Mary is the one who feels compelled to look after their father, who is suffering from a mental disorder very similar to dementia. For this reason, Mary's ambition for literature and reading must be spent indoors, while Charles is trying to forge his way in the intellectual circle of London. Despite sharing her enthusiasm and love for literature and Shakespeare with her brother and her continuous support of him, Mary seems to be resentful about her restrictions. That is why the encounter with William Ireland has such an impact on her: "She glanced up at him, astonished. 'Have you always loved Shakespeare?'" (Ackroyd 2005: 43). This is a momentous encounter between kindred spirits who share a similar obsession with Shakespeare; it becomes even more so in the context of Charles Lamb's numerous drinking escapades, which leave her sister devoid of brotherly and humanly affection. Hence, it is hardly surprising to find Mary investing deep confidence and trust in Ireland's discoveries, while the two are following in the Bard's footsteps through

London streets. Soon the mutual affection for Shakespeare develops into an intimate friendship, with William Ireland preferring Mary to his own father, when it comes to sharing the news of having located *Vortigern*, the allegedly lost Shakespearean play: “I would like you to see it first, Mary. Before anyone else. Even father does not know of it.” (Ackroyd 2005: 131)

However, the forgery is unveiled by William himself, after some investigations and accusations were already being uttered, when he confessed to his father:

‘All is true, Father.’

‘You cannot stand before me and tell me you alone – no more than a boy – you alone produced such voluminous papers? It is laughable. It is ridiculous.’

.....

‘I will do it now. This instant. I will show you, Father, how I am the forger...’

(idem: 202, 203)

Ironically, the idea of the will, the poems, even of the play itself being authored by Shakespeare, appeared more convincing to Samuel Ireland than his own son’s capacity to write like the Bard; what is even more incredible is that several reputed Shakespearean scholars would confirm the forgery as the genuine work. Mary, on the other hand, was devastated when she witnessed the conversation between the father and the son:

William had lied to her. He had betrayed her. She found herself thinking of other things – of the flight of sparrows from dark corner to dark corner, of some broken glass upon the cobbles, of a linen curtain billowing in the breeze, of the leaden sky threatening rain. And then just as suddenly she felt very cheerful. Nothing could touch her. Nothing could hurt her. ‘I am discharged from life,’ she said to herself, ‘after valiant service.’” (204)

The above quotation, apart from presenting Mary’s shifting moods ranging from bitter disappointment to unexpected elation, uncannily anticipates her committing matricide, followed by her imprisonment in a mad house. These chilling developments are explained in Charles Lambs’ letter to Thomas De Quincey, incidentally another famous writer, who is known for his interest in murders. William Ireland continues to write, publishes “more than sixty-seven books” and never again mentions his “Shakespearean adventure” (215, 216).

### 3.1. Mnemosyne as a poetic topos

Ireland’s story of literary forgery is notorious in literary history, similarly to the Lambs’ story:

William Henry Ireland (1775-1835) achieved fame - or, rather, in-famy - in 1795, when his father, Samuel, began displaying to the public a collection of William Shakespeare’s autograph manuscripts. William, not yet twenty years old, had discovered the first of them, a legal deed bearing Shakespeare’s signature, late in 1794; over the next year and a half there appeared a stream of legal documents, personal letters, poems, rough drafts of famous works, and even two previously unknown plays, all in the Bard’s hand. (Lynch 2011: 465)



Nevertheless, the encounter between Ireland and the Lambs, as depicted by Ackroyd, relocates the story of the famous literary fraud among the famous ghosts or ghost writers. In this part of the paper, I will attempt to briefly introduce Derrida's ideas about memory and mourning, accompanied by Cixous's thoughts, as parallel to Ireland's literary obsession with Shakespeare's ghost(s).

After the death of his friend Paul de Man in 1983, Derrida was asked to contribute to the commemoration; consequently, he dedicated a series of lectures to the memory of his deceased friend, which took place in the Wellek Library, at the University of California. The first of the four lectures was titled *Mnemosyne*, after the mother of all muses, who knows the past and the future and always remembers everything. The Greek word *μνήμη* refers to the capacity of remembering and has a very significant role as a human faculty in terms of knowledge. Aristotle, for instance, names *mimesis* and *μνήμη* among the primary conditions for human cognition (2002: 980b 25). Derrida dwells on the word *Mnemosyne* in association with Hölderlin's poem with the same title, and Paul de Man's readings of Hölderlin and Heidegger. Derrida (1989: 7) emphasizes that for Paul de Man, "the power of memory is not first of all, that of resuscitating, it remains enigmatic enough to be preoccupied, so to speak, by a thinking of 'the future'". According to Paul de Man, Heidegger's reading of Hölderlin is simply appropriation-by-identification, since Heidegger seems to reverse Hölderlin's writing in his own. Yet this, according to Derrida (*ibid.*), stands as Heidegger's "hermeneutic mourning". The hermeneutical capacity provides us with the possibility for a plurality of narration and rewriting. As Derrida suggests, "there is no singular memory" and therefore he chooses to name his lectures *Memoires* in the plural. "Plus d'une langue" he states, means more than a language, but, at the same time, no more a (single) language (*idem*: 15); since the plurality of *memoires* indicate plurality of languages and narrations.

Remembering takes place via writing and interpreting due to the plurality of *memoires* and it often follows a death or deaths. Each time a person is about to remember, there is a sort of appropriation-by-identification, since it is his or her *memoires* - plural, both masculine and feminine. Additionally, since mourning can also be life itself, as Cixous would say, memory is not solely about the past, but about the future, too. Therefore, suggests Derrida (1989: 22), "Funerary speech and writing do not follow upon death; they work upon life in what we call autobiography". Mourning and memory are utterly (auto)biographical and an (auto)biography takes place "between fiction and truth" (*ibid.*). The commonest phrase of funerary writings and discourses of mourning, "in memory of", refers to the other in us, who is no more outside us: "If death comes to the other, and comes to us through the other, then the friend no longer exists except in us, between us" and since the other lives in us, "we are no longer ourselves" (*idem*: 28). Cixous (1994: 13) also explains that the one who dies kills and the one who doesn't die, when the other dies, kills as well. Mourning in this sense involves a narcissistic fantasy of reciprocal killing, beyond any death and resurrection via re-membering. It is at the same time a hallucinatory prosopopoeia, a fiction of prosopopoeia, which dissolves the subjectivity of the *I* and *the other* who died:

The truth of the mourning of the other, but of the other who always speaks in before me, who signs in my place, the hypogram or epitaph being always of the other, and for the other. Which also means: in the place of the other." (Derrida 1989: 29)

In the process of mourning, when memories are considered, we are not only talking as ourselves, but also as the dead-others for the dead-others. Derrida

explains the “others living in us” with mimetic interiorization, recalling Freud’s analysis of mourning through memory and interiorization.

This mimetic interiorization is not fictive; it is the origin of fiction, of apocryphal figuration. It takes place in a body. Or rather, it makes a place for a body, a voice, and a soul which, although “ours”, did not exist and had no meaning before this possibility that one must always begin by remembering, and whose trace must be followed. (1989: 34- 35)

The soul – psyche also refers to “a revolving mirror”; for Derrida (1989: 39), Mnemosyne is now replacing psyche, thus creating a literary topos in which the other and the I become one, which is neither. Since mourning is also the future, it transforms the future, as well, through *memoires*. Mnemosyne, therefore, becomes “a poetic topos”, in which the dead speak to the future, with the future (idem: 38).

### 3.2. The ghost writers

In the previous sections, I have pointed out that Mnemosyne is not only about the past, but also pertains to the future, establishing a very specific chronotope for or within Ackroyd’s work.

Memory is the name of what is no longer only a mental “capacity” oriented toward one of the three modes of the present, the past present, which could be dissociated from the present present and the future present. Memory projects itself toward the future, and it constitutes the presence of the present. (Derrida 1989: 56-57)

The presence of Ackroyd’s characters, the selection and lineage of narrative incidents can be very well located within the chronotopicity that is bounded within memory. The poetic topos that is offered by Derrida, designating Mnemosyne and mourning as the locus *par excellence* for prosopopoeia and mimetic interiorization, can be explored in *The Lambs of London* as the chronotope of imposture, fraud, ambiguity of identity, and chronology. Ackroyd’s playing with time makes its presence very early in the novel, specifically when Charles Lamb and his obsession with the past are introduced:

Charles loved all the tokens of antiquity. He had stood on the site of the old Aldgate pump, imagined water being drawn from the wooden pipe five hundred years before; he had placed the line of the Roman wall, and noticed how the streets naturally conformed to it; he had lingered over the sundials in the Inner Temple, and traced their mottoes with his finger. ‘The future is as nothing, being everything,’ he had once told Tom Coates in a moment of drunken inspiration. ‘The past is everything, being nothing.’ (Ackroyd 2005: 15)

The novelist’s playful engagement with the motto on the antique wall is therefore an early signifier of a historical exploration. Ackroyd’s haunted narrative will tell a “moth-scented” account of the Ireland fraud, along with the story of the Lambs (2005: 15). Hauntology, too, relatable to multiple roots deriving from Freud (along with a whole tradition of philosophy), alludes to inheritance and the generational.

If Marx, like Freud, like Heidegger, like everybody, did not begin where he ought to have “been able to begin” (beginnen können), namely with haunting, before life as such, before death as such, it is doubtless not his fault. The fault, in any case, by definition, is repeated, we inherit it, we must watch over it. (Derrida 2006: 220)

Peter Ackroyd's literary works might also suggest a variety of psychoanalytic readings, "whereby the failing or absent fathers of Ackroyd's writings become versions of Ackroyd's own absentee parent" (Gibson, Wolfreys 2000: 13). Nevertheless, the scope of the present study remains ethical or more precisely hauntological. Therefore, the issue of the father will be touched upon in a restricted parenthesis. It is not mere coincidence that Ackroyd picks the character of William Ireland. William's story is the quest of a young man attempting to defeat his father, which is, in a way, a cliché. The fraud itself is part of these attempts that could be read as an extenuation for William in terms of the crime.

Initially, Ireland in-tended to hoax his father, but his successful forgery convinced him into producing an even more elaborate falsification, the *Vortigern*. Accordingly, Bagnani concludes by modifying the initial motto that headed his article, *Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur*, turning it into *eruditi cupiunt decipi, ergo decipiuntur*. This explains to a great extent Bagnani's suspicious attitude to-wards erudites who encouraged or did not disclose the fraud, rather than fakers themselves. (Butoescu 2019: 173)

In Ackroyd's narration of William's intercourse with Beryl (the prostitute on the coach), the cynosure shifts to Ireland Senior, he becomes the pivot of the conversation with the occurrence of the kerchief. What about the kerchief? (Ackroyd 2005: 19) This interruption and interference of the father is considered; the scene is depicted in the way that the effort to become a man is alluded to by overreaching the father who does "all the talking ... on the merits of Shakespeare" (ibid.). Therefore, the perception of literary fraud is relevant to the father. Ackroyd successfully gives the impression that William hoped to be William Shakespeare, not only because of his inherited affection or admiration for the Poet, but also because of his resentment of being William Ireland. In a way, William does kill himself for the sake of becoming another in Ackroyd's strange mixture of personalities, impostures, masks, identity confusions among generations and chronologies.

#### 4. Conclusion

Peter Ackroyd is the ghost writer in *genitivus obiectivus*, that is he writes the ghosts. His writing is haunted by the past and is haunted for a reason. He remembers, resurrects, internalizes, and learns to die together with the dead, for the literature of the future. In a very simple re-telling of an already renowned story of the Shakespearean fraud, he recreates this poetic topos of Mnemosyne. Therefore, Shakespeare is a ghost writer both in *genitivus obiectivus* and *genitivus subiectivus*, not only the one who wrote the "arch-ghost(s)", as Derrida (2006: 220) would put it, but who is also himself the ghost-writer. In Cixous's (2012: 17) pertinent formulation, Shakespeare "is the master, the king, the Lord of the Ghosts". William Ireland is also revived as an authentic ghost writer, despite his counterfeit Shakespearean texts, in *The Lambs of London*, which is yet another work of hermeneutic mourning. William Ireland, like Shakespeare, as the Quasi-Shakespeare, is a writer of ghosts and a ghost who writes. He is the exemplar of mimetic interiorization, killing himself in his admiration and longing for the Bard, trying to resurrect him and his writing through his own texts. In his struggle with his father, he initially kills himself, and then Shakespeare (as the other father), when he confesses that he wrote those works which were allegedly Shakespeare's.

The fraud becomes an opportunity to speak in place of the Ghost Shakespeare, in his memory in Ackroyd's retelling. Ireland tries to survive with Shakespeare in him, to bequeath *plus d'un* Shakespeare, to entrust more Shakespeare(s) who are no more Shakespeare. He stands almost as a transcendental figure of self-destruction in the work of mourning and at the highest possible level of mimetic interiorization.

The deaths of Shakespeare and Ireland are no more separable since writing originated in that relationship, to phrase it in Cixous's words. Ackroyd regenerates both writers for the future, again through writing which for a moment must attend the *School of the Dead*. Hence, he keeps looking for Shakespeare, Marx, Dryden, Chatterton, de Quincey and other Ghosts around London to collect more *memoires*: "He asked her how she found the house, but she misunderstood his question. 'I don't mind the rats,' she replied. 'But I mind the ghosts.'" (Ackroyd 2005: 145)

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*IN THE MIRROR, DARKLY*



**THE YOUNG INTELLECTUAL AS LIGHT BEARER IN  
LILLIAN SMITH'S *KILLERS OF THE DREAM***

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**Abstract:** *In Killers of the Dream, Lillian E. Smith explores the crucial role of the young intellectual for human thriving. Focused on the racism of the early twentieth century US South, Killers examines the forces that, in service of white hegemony, often smother the inquisitive nature of children, both black and white, and prevent the conditions that would foster young intellectuals' survival and maturation. Smith argues for a more responsible mentorship model that would promote society's healing and advancement.*

**Keywords:** Killers of the Dream, Lillian Smith, intellectual, mentorship, racism, totalitarianism

## **1. Introduction**

For most of the twentieth century, the writings of Lillian Smith went largely unnoticed by literary scholars, but during the past forty years, interest in her work has seen a notable surge. A white southern writer dedicated to improving civil rights in the US during the 1940s, '50s, and '60s, Smith was recognized nationally in her own time, published widely and welcomed as a comrade by other activists of the period, including Martin Luther King, Jr., Eleanor Roosevelt, and Pauli Murray. Nonetheless, in the context of literary studies, she was, for decades, all but ignored, despite the fact that she published seven books during her lifetime, including the best-selling novel *Strange Fruit*. In 1986, however, Anne C. Loveland's biography, *Lillian Smith: A Southerner Confronting the South*, helped spark what has become a revival of interest in Smith's writings, perhaps thanks in part to post-postmodern literary approaches that broadened the field at the end of the twentieth century. The burgeoning scholarship on Smith's work reveals the richness of her oeuvre and its value for twenty-first century readers. The organic relationship between her aesthetic practice and her socio-political perspective produced works that not only addressed the tumultuous conditions of her time, but speak powerfully to ours, as well. Through both fiction and nonfiction, Smith examines the ways that the privileged often sabotage their societies through their efforts to preserve rigid social hierarchies, inadvertently deforming people psychologically at all social levels, including themselves. Her 1949 autobiography *Killers of the Dream* is perhaps her most compelling exploration of such sabotage and its fallout. In light of current global debates over access to resources, crises of national identity, and questions of democracy's survival, Smith's timeless rendering of southern experience in *Killers* offers us important insights into the challenges of contemporary life.

Throughout Smith's body of work, the young intellectual figures prominently, imbued with the potential to lead society toward justice and wholeness, though this curious explorer is often seen as a threat and hence repressed. In a 1951 commencement speech at Kentucky State College, Smith envisions how society might become more just and resilient: "A whole world requires that whole men live in it. To have whole men means that we must have integrated individuals. To have integrated individuals means that our children must be given the chance to grow not as split-up personalities in whom body, mind, and emotion are forever warring, but as children kept whole, with strong creative loving egos that bind the body and personality together, and to their world" (Smith 1978: 65). In her portrayals of the young intellectual, Smith also emphasizes the crucial role of those guiding the young, since they wield the power either to foster these youths toward healthy maturity or to stunt their growth. In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith employs autobiography as a vehicle for collective self-exploration and sharp social commentary. The book's unifying theme is an insistence that the South must address and heal from the trauma it has perpetuated for generations, or it will continue to suffer the terrible effects of its self-inflicted wounds.

## 2. Autobiography as diagnostic vehicle

Early in the book, she offers two anecdotes centered on the intellectual coming-of-age process, the management of which can yield either the vigorous thinker necessary to a thriving and resilient society or the stunted and fragile psyche common to totalitarian systems, which Smith consistently warns against. In the first anecdote, Smith tells of her childhood experience with Janie, a little girl who stayed with her family for a time. Ostensibly, the light-skinned Janie had been abducted and kept in the black community before being discovered and "saved", that is, taken in by the white Smiths, until a suitable arrangement could be found for her. The narrative reveals that young Lillian is thrilled to have a playmate and quickly bonds with Janie. Soon, though, when the community concludes that Janie is, in fact, black, and thus that the two girls can no longer play together – nay, should *never* have played together, young Lillian must deliver the cruel news to Janie and afterward suffers guilt and disillusionment as she tries to process what has happened. Smith offers this anecdote as an example of the intellectual coming-of-age catalyst, an event that confronts the child with discrepancies between the ethics she has been taught verbally and the unspoken social mores of her culture that betray those ethics, causing the child to question the moral authority and beneficence of the adults in her life. Such moments, according to Smith, are forks in the road, the smoother path – conformity – enabling continued communal acceptance, but leading ultimately toward the "split-up" personality and a stultified society; the rougher path - intellectual honesty - often resulting in social exile, but preserving the possibility of healthy maturation and a flourishing society.

The second anecdote expanding on this *Killers* theme centers on an incident at the Laurel Falls Camp for Girls, which Smith owned and ran from 1925 to 1948. At Laurel Falls, in the mountains of north Georgia, young white girls from privileged families would spend summers swimming, horseback riding, and playing tennis, as well as engaging in serious conversations and theatrical productions that explored the difficult questions of the day, such as moral ethics, female sexuality, and racial segregation. Although Smith could not racially integrate the camp, due to social and legal restrictions, she and her partner Paula



Snelling guided campers towards ideas and experiences that challenged and expanded them physically, intellectually, and psychologically. In this anecdote, an adolescent camper comes to Smith's office one evening, upset at the realization that the insights she has gained over the course of many summers at Laurel Falls have changed her, making her unfit for the life she once took for granted in her small Georgia hometown. Like young Lillian of the earlier story, the camper grapples with the realization that her own parents help to perpetuate racial segregation, though she wants desperately to continue believing they are good people. She lashes out at Smith for encouraging a type of exploration that has put her in a moral bind. Smith responds not with self-defense or adult platitudes, but with a history lesson that illuminates the conditions and events leading up to the South's present difficulties. These two anecdotes work rhetorically in *Killers* to confront readers with the same challenge young Lillian and the camper face. Assuming that readers are predisposed to consider their own cultural mores as fundamental and natural principles of ethical behaviour, Smith insists that we examine those mores more closely. Leading the way as a character in her own story, she calls readers not only to reclaim the young intellectual within ourselves, henceforth examining honestly the cultural norms which influence our values and behaviours, but also to become morally courageous mentors, supporting youths' natural tendency to explore and test ideas rather than shutting down their curiosity. She argues that fostering the young intellectual is crucial to building a resilient and thriving society.

Through autobiography, Smith invites readers to embody both the mentee and the mentor in moments of great discomfort. In the Janie anecdote, young Lillian plays both roles, first suffering her own psychological crisis – when her mother refuses to address the hypocrisy of forbidding the girls' play – and then performing the role of authoritarian adult herself in relaying the devastating news to Janie. As the episode unfolds, the reader is presented with the perspectives of young Lillian the mentee, young Lillian the developing mentor, and Smith the narrator, who, in the present, processes the trauma of the childhood incident and traces in it the patterns of social dysfunction. By treating her own experience as a vehicle, Smith subtly draws readers into a willing analysis of our own intellectual development and behaviour, as both mentee and mentor. This strategy aids the reader in transcending the psyche of the stunted child to engage in critical self-reflection. In "Framing Southern Rhetoric: Lillian Smith's Narrative Persona in *Killers of the Dream*," Scott Romine (1994: 95) points out a common dynamic of white southern autobiography, which "places the autobiographical 'I' in certain varying relations to 'the South' as a dual act of self-expression and social commentary". Romine (idem: 97) focuses on the effect of the "dual temporality invoked in the first sentence [suggesting] a phenomenological distance between narrative 'I' and object 'I'". He emphasizes Smith's resolution of ideological tension by positioning her narrative "I" as an outsider to southern culture. Through the combined perspectives of "insider" and "outsider" positions, Smith leads us to the vantage point from which we also can see the dangers of shutting down a child's intellectual development.

For the child, having one's curiosity treated as taboo is traumatic, Smith asserts. Smith draws us into the experience of the betrayed mentee by relating young Lillian's confusion through first person point of view. When Lillian protests that she does not understand why a nice child cannot play in their home, even if she is "colored," her mother refuses to explain: "You're too young to understand. And

don't ask me again, ever again, about this!' Mother's voice was sharp, but her face was sad and there was no certainty left there" (Smith 1994: 37). To compound young Lillian's trauma, she must shift roles immediately to become the betraying "mentor" to Janie, having temporarily accepted the mantle of generationally transmitted racism. She explains to Janie that according to her mother's mandate, "white and colored can't live together" (ibid.). When Janie asks the inevitable "Why?", Lillian employs words as final as those her mother used on her: "Because they can't" (ibid.). Narrator Smith explains, revealing insights young Lillian would not yet be able to articulate, "I knew, though I said it firmly, that something was wrong. I knew my father and mother whom I passionately admired had betrayed something which they held dear" (ibid.). Ostensibly, Janie is experiencing a similar kind of devastation, only worse perhaps, since, having been displaced from the black community, she depended on the seemingly kind Smith family to protect and care for her only to find herself soon cast out for reasons she cannot make sense of.

In the Laurel Falls anecdote, the camper relates a similarly traumatic experience to camp director Smith. She tells Smith that once her father took her to New York on a train, and during the journey, when she saw the black president of an Atlanta college relegated to a seat behind a curtain, she indignantly noted what she felt was a discrepancy. Her father dismissed her concerns and stifled further inquiry: "That's where colored folks are supposed to sit. You mustn't get silly notions, honey" (55). In Smith's camp office, as the youth expresses her dawning disappointment in the segregation politics of her father and other white townsfolk, she asks, "Why don't they be honest about it? Why pretend and go to church and say nice words? It doesn't make sense!" (53).

Smith seems to anticipate that while reading these accounts, the reader may forgive the actions of Lillian's mother and the camper's father as those of conscientious parents: for their children's own protection, good mothers and fathers are supposed to establish behavioural parameters to ensure the youths' survival in an often hostile world. But Smith insists that the lessons offered by Lillian's mother and the camper's father cannot be characterized simply as good-faith parenting; their actions are, in fact, totalitarian in nature. These guardians accept and help perpetuate the mandate "Don't ask me again, ever again, about this," revealing that repression is a tool necessary for promoting blatantly unjust ideologies. Romine (1994: 98) notes that in such systems, language itself must become "double": harmless in denotation, but deadly in connotation, violence running beneath the seemingly polite words or, in this case, silences. Smith asserts that no impulse so damaging and degrading can be justified as reasonable. She says of her mother's decision to forbid her play with Janie,

Something was wrong with a world that tells you that love is good and people are important and then forces you to deny love and humiliate people. I knew, though I would not for years confess it aloud, that in trying to shut the Negro race away from us, we have shut ourselves away from so many good, creative, honest, deeply human things in life... I knew that what cruelly shapes and cripples the personality of one is as cruelly shaping and crippling the personality of the other. (Smith 1994: 39)

Here, Smith introduces the second part of her message: stifling a child's intellectual development not only harms him or her, but also shuts off society from elements necessary to its own health.

As young Lillian and the camper struggle to understand the underlying motives of their authoritarian guardians, they begin to see that the short-term rewards of racist ideology cannot counterbalance the culminating costs to society as a whole. Jay Garcia (2008: 64) examines the influence of Rabindranath Tagore on Smith's understanding of that cost: "[B]oth Tagore and Smith identified industrial capitalism as the source of numerous global tensions. Modern economic relations appeared ready to abandon 'complete man' in favour of 'political and commercial man, the man of limited purpose' Tagore wrote". With her own notion of the "complete" human in mind, Smith analyzes the ordinary behaviours of white southerners like her own mother and father who, rather than test notions of white superiority, succumb to the silent dictator and are degraded in the process. She sees that white privilege is not only cruel to nonwhites, but diminishes whites as well, robbing them of the creativity and liberty of mind necessary for achieving full humanity and healthy relationships. The result, she says, is "collective madness ... which feeds on half-lies and quarter-truths and dread"; under these conditions, no appeal for a better world can be made "[b]ecause there is in many people no Divine Center to appeal to: there is only emptiness and a broken relationship with the Outside World of fact and reason and the inside world of Self" (Smith 1994: 222). She warns that, as a result of the psychological split that racism requires, the ailing beast of southern society is in no shape to navigate the future: "We are still fighting false battles or dead ones. We are still defending old worn-out systems, pitting them against each other... It is as if we cannot bridge the chasm between the past and what lies ahead. Perhaps we feel too insecure about the status of the human being" (idem: 233). Smith's characterization of her sick, though beloved, South offers an apt diagnosis of any authoritarian society dependent on repression of youth, and of honest intellectual exploration, for its survival.

### 3. Treating the disease through responsible mentorship

Fortunately, Smith's story does not stop with diagnosis. Juxtaposed against the terrible portrayals of personality-crippling inflicted for the sake of a worn-out hierarchy, she articulates a more promising option: opening one's own mind and – perhaps more importantly – fertilizing the minds of the young and giving them space for growth. To illustrate the methods of the good-faith mentor, she offers the model of herself as camp director, a position she took up after many years of her own intellectual grappling, observation, and study, which loosened the tentacles of racism and southern taboo that had threatened to strangle her as a child. Rather than dictate to her reader the tenets of good mentorship, she conveys the message indirectly through the irate camper, embedding it in the young woman's complaints:

[Y]ou have made us want to be good. Mature, you've called it. You taught us to be honest, not to cover up things. You made us think it fine to be like that, even when it hurt. All these years, you've said so much about human dignity – it's a nice phrase .... You've talked of love ... human rights ... bridging chasms between people – ... You said that the most precious right a human has is the right to be different. (Smith 1994: 51)

In her catalogue of Smith's sins, the camper unwittingly reveals the solution to the South's dysfunction: the young intellectual needs a caring guide and permission to follow her own trajectory of rational exploration and creativity.

The power of that trajectory is great, insists Smith. Garcia (2008: 62) illuminates Smith's humanist belief, aligning with Tagore's, in the importance of fostering "citizens who can think for themselves, who can imagine the situation of others, and who are continually challenging themselves by seeking examples from other cultures and other ways of life". Smith's autobiographical strategy in *Killers*, of embodying not only the young intellectual, but also the mentor, works well in exploring the effects of that crucial relationship. As narrator, she practices the mentoring approach she used as a camp director: "I had not tried to give her [the camper] answers. I had tried only to give her understanding of the difficulties of the elders - of all of us who have failed so miserably in the culturing of children. Knowing that bitterness is a poor bent key to use to unlock the future, I wanted her to begin her search for answers with sympathy for those who had not found them." (Smith 1884: 74-75) By resisting the urge to lay out in black and white what mentorship ought to be, she respects the reader's creative space – a space necessary for the kind of growth she advocates. Smith implies that more knowledge is a better strategy than simple answers, even when that knowledge makes things more complex.

#### 4. Conclusion

In *Killers of the Dream*, Smith opens up a space where the reader might stretch long-unused muscles to push open the door and look out. Through her anecdotes, she leads us "along the iron corridor we travel from babyhood to maturity," where the door might begin "to swing outward, showing glimpses of the world beyond, of that bright thing we call 'reality'" (Smith 1994: 30). She offers the figure of the young intellectual as both a site for self-reflection and a promise of hope. If one can rise above the stultifying waters of authoritarian culture to follow the youth's exploring gaze, one will begin to understand the potential in the child's curiosity. The freedom to investigate the world without the restrictions of social tyranny enables a more natural process of development as well as relationships that can evolve unhindered by taboos. The result, Smith asserts with optimism, is a society with the resilience to navigate the challenges of the modern world.

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**GLAMOUR WAVES: THE GOTHIC STORY  
OF MARILYN MONROE  
AS TOLD BY JOYCE CAROL OATES IN *BLONDE***

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***Abstract:** So much has been written about Marilyn Monroe that it seems impossible to break new ground regarding either her iconic persona or her sad life. However, Joyce Carol Oates draws on a vast biographical material, but also on Gothic tropes in order to make Marilyn Monroe a literary character in her own right. My paper tackles the way Oates' novel mends the split between the real person and the actress' onscreen charisma and assesses the significance of blondness – epitomized by the famous "glamour waves" haircut – in Monroe's rise to stardom.*

***Keywords:** biographical novel, Marilyn Monroe, Joyce Carol Oates, popular culture, women in Hollywood*

**1. Introduction: the silver screen and the literary mirror**

Writing about Marilyn Monroe seems either utterly redundant or an ethical necessity. So much has been said and written about her, and since the '50s, she has become so conspicuous in the visual arts and popular culture, that everybody has their own perspective on her. However, assessing Monroe's public persona is not at par with properly understanding her personality or illuminating the problematic aspects of her sad life. By writing about Marilyn Monroe, many a biographer and film critic have tried to crack an enigma. To what degree was she a victim of the Hollywood industry and how should one relate her untimely death to the history of mental illnesses in her family and her own self-destructive proclivities? How good was she really as an actress? And perhaps the most important question, what was she like? Wendy Lesser notices that sorting through the whole material the actress' career has spawned over decades, one comes out in the end empty handed: "the closer you look at Marilyn Monroe, the harder it is to see her." (Lesser 1991: 193) Lesser (1991: 194-195) adds that an act of cruelty is inherent in every attempt to write about her, because, in Monroe's case, it is almost impossible to separate the person from the movie star and because "being looked at was Marilyn Monroe's essential gesture, her defining role."

Joyce Carol Oates tackles an even more risky approach. She makes Marilyn Monroe the main character of her most ambitious novel to date, *Blonde* (2000). Oates wants us to read the life of such a complicated celebrity as fiction. As she underscores in an interview, "to call it 'non-fiction' would be misleading." (Johnson, Oates 2001: 17) She imagines Marilyn Monroe as a lovable Emma

Bovary and sets her life story on an epic scale (idem: 15-16). The mood of the novel is settled by Joyce Carol Oates' choice of the first person posthumous narrative. This artistic option highlights the unreliable storyteller and also turns *Blonde* into an allegory of sorts. Is it an allegory about Marilyn Monroe? About America? About the way Hollywood – old and new alike – represents women and treats its actresses? We hear not only Marilyn Monroe's voice in the book, but a whole chorus: family members, friends, lovers, ex-husbands, producers, directors, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HCUA) informers – there is even an FBI file on her name slipped between the pages –, one of President Kennedy's secret servicemen, and many others.

Moreover, Oates designs Marilyn Monroe's life as a gothic story, a genre with whose conventions she has played convincingly during her prolific writing career. Actually, she turns the glamour we are used to associate with Marilyn Monroe's image into the blinding light that reveals the horrors inside a vampire's castle. Except that this time, the only reality is the reflected one, which everybody around feeds upon. Oates has Marilyn say:

Never did I experience my face and body from the inside (where there was numbness like sleep), only through the mirror, where there was sharpness and clarity. In that way I could see myself. (Oates 2020: 30)

By employing well established topoi such as light and darkness, angelic innocence and ogreish lust, sensual reverie and graphic physiological afflictions, glamorous appearance and major depression, Joyce Carol Oates tries to endow Marilyn Monroe with the features of a classical novel heroine. But is antithesis enough when it comes to grasping such an elusive personality?

## 2. Golden Aphrodite

In the beginning, she is curly-haired Norma Jeane Baker – Oates uses this spelling of her middle name –, a California girl from the land of fire, sun, and sand, who takes movies for reality: she is made to believe that her unknown father might be a famous actor – Clark Gable perhaps, or maybe Charlie Chaplin –, she sees the stars' mansions in Beverly Hills and Los Feliz as fairy tale castles, her dreams borrow the colours of the glossy posters advertising beautiful women and men she stares at near the entrance of the Egyptian Theatre. As a consequence, little Norma Jeane is fond of her blond doll with pink ribbons. However, this sunny childhood is nothing but another California mirage. Her mother, Gladys, whom Joyce Carol Oates imagines as a fading and alcoholic former actress – the real Gladys Mortensen was a negative cutter (Miller 2000) – suffers from paranoid schizophrenia and is prone to frightening fits of violent behaviour. One might say that Norma Jeane's early childhood resembles that of Stephen King's *Carrie* (2011) – especially after Gladys tries to drown her daughter in a hot bath – and that her becoming a ward at the Los Angeles Orphans Home Society after Gladys was taken to a psychiatric hospital might have been Norma Jeane's luck. She was an orphan with both her parents alive, actually.

Wendy Lesser (1991: 199) assesses the strong hold the image of the orphan – “the pathetic Dickensian victim” – has on our imagination, and the degree to which literature feeds fantasies about misplaced identities, but also shapes the myth of Marilyn Monroe as the pauper turned princess:

The orphan is someone who needs to be taken care of, as men – in life and in the movies – were offering to take care of Marilyn. The orphan is an eternal child [...], as Marilyn in some sense appeared to be. But the orphan is also a positive, Huckleberry-Finn-like image of freedom and self-creation. [...] The alternate orphan fantasy, the victorious, rather than pathetic one, is the dream of not belonging to one's own family, of being aristocracy misplaced. (Lesser 1991: 199-200)

Joyce Carol Oates also draws on this pervasive myth. After she is placed in the care of an adoptive family, Oates's Norma Jeane becomes Lolita to her foster father, Warren Pirig, and Red Riding Hood to all kinds of wolfish men, some much older than her; an underage bride for Bucky Glazer – a character reminiscent, but at the same time distinct from the real first husband, James Dougherty – who works as an embalmer and is the first to turn Norma Jeane into his pinup, using makeup taken from the funeral home in order to boastfully expose his young wife's nakedness to his pals; and a model for more or less sleazy photographers during the war. All these men are after her body which their eyes slice and inspect one part at the time. Norma Jeane wants to be a good wife to Bucky instead – she tenderly and incestuously calls him “Big Daddy” – and to be loved by everyone. Because the reader knows from the very beginning how the things will evolve, the whole literary setting is lit up in order to receive the future star who is unaware of her mesmerized audience. In this way, what we know about the real Marilyn Monroe, what her many lovers see when they date Norma Jeane, and what the character of the famous Marilyn remembers about her passion for movies become indistinct:

They took her on drives along the coastal highway as far north sometimes as Santa Barbara and as far south as Oceanside. They took her on romantic drives by moonlight, the Pacific Ocean luminous to one side and dark wooded hills on the other and the wind rippling her hair and sparks from the driver's cigarettes flying back into the night, but in later years she would confuse these drives with scenes from movies she'd seen or believed she must have seen. (Oates 2020: 112-113)

Joyce Carol Oates' designs are rather explicit, yet efficient only if one concedes that what we know about Marilyn Monroe is akin to a history of both men and women looking incessantly at her. It happens as often as not that the viewer projects on Marilyn Monroe her or his desires, expectations, and misconceptions, such as blondness (she was not a natural blonde), an implicit lack of education (she was a hard-working self-taught) or the sway of the hips responsible for her alluring walk. The latter is not sheer exhibitionism, as one might conclude just by watching the movies and the photo sessions on the red carpet:

In *Timebends*, Arthur Miller says of her well-known hip swivel, “It was, in fact, her natural walk: her footprints on a beach would be in a straight line, the heel descending exactly before the last toepoint.” Hers was, in fact, the walk of a tightrope artist – someone who knew that a fall was imminent, and that the medium she moved through was not intended to support a human being. (Lesser 1991: 209)

In California, an old tenet of classical Athens, which brings together physical beauty, aristocracy, axiology, and power, seems to resurface anew – “[...] in movie logic, aesthetics has the authority of ethics: to be less than beautiful is sad, but to be willfully less than beautiful is immoral” (Oates 2020: 91) – with the difference that at Hollywood there is no metaphysics beyond the appearances.

There is only glitz and desire. Once she peroxides her hair in order to make an appropriate debut, Mr Z, the producer modelled on the famous mogul Darryl F. Zanuck, cannot remember the young actress' name, yet refers to Norma Jeane Baker as "that blonde looking like a tramp." (idem: 209) As soon as she becomes Marilyn Monroe – Oates rolls the syllables in her character's mouth for almost a page until the reader grasps the "sexy murmurous sound" of the stage name (idem: 216-217), – her looks as the dollish woman come into everybody's focus. Otto Össe, the photographer who took her nude shot during the late '40s for the "Miss Golden Dreams" pinup calendar – the same photo that the *Playboy* magazine would buy a few years later, when Marilyn Monroe was rising to fame, igniting thus a national scandal – broods over the time he met her: "Her problem wasn't she was a dumb blonde, it was she wasn't a blonde and she wasn't dumb." (idem: 232)

While doing the screen tests for the part of Angela in *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), her first important role, albeit a minor one, the scared platinum blonde "with an exquisite body in shimmering white rayon", who is not able to talk except in a whisper (idem: 240), surprises the director John Houston – he even forgets to light his cigar while watching her – by revealing herself as a well-read person and able to brilliantly explain the psychology of her character. In her autobiography co-written with Ben Hecht, Marilyn Monroe (2007: 111) remembers preparing that part for several days before the audition, the nervousness that paralyzed her and the men laughing around apparently without reason, the moment she chose to play Angela's role stretching on the floor, but she also remembers John Houston's professionalism and the fact that, unlike Zanuck, "he did not believe that actresses shouldn't be allowed to know what they were going to act in." (ibid.) I suppose that Oates used that impression in order to make the character of John Houston one of the most humane male figures in her novel.

Marilyn Monroe appears on screen only for about ninety seconds, enough for Houston to develop "much of the rest of the movie around the *idea* of women like Marilyn, sexy women whom men think exist to be looked at." (Lesser 1991: 218) There is a Freudian touch in Monroe's cinematic persona, a motif Joyce Carol Oates is aware of – a copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams* with pages blotched from the hydrogen peroxide used in the makeup cabin gets mentioned in the novel (Oates 2020: 313). From *The Asphalt Jungle* onward, Marilyn Monroe "is almost always shown with a 'sugar daddy', a man old enough to be her father, but functioning as her illicit or aspiring lover." (Lesser 1991: 201) The same is true of her 1953 role in *Niagara*, the *film noir* that raised her to stardom, where she plays Rose Loomis, a *femme fatale* who plots her husband's killing.

The movie opens with George Loomis (Joseph Cotten), a Korean War veteran, talking to himself near Niagara Falls in a spurt of rainbow colours. We see the same multicoloured shimmering when he returns to his tourist cabin, where Rose pretends to be asleep, walking through sprinklers. Pondering on the chromatic suggestions – the lodgings bear the name "Rainbow Cabins" – Wendy Lesser connects the rainbow with Marilyn Monroe and dreaming, something that Marilyn was not prone to do in her real life, marred by alcohol and sleeping pills:

It's [the rainbow] a real thing of beauty that has no solid reality, and yet it's one of the strongest positive images in mythical thinking: fairy tales place their pot of gold at the end of it. It's a perfect emblem for Marilyn Monroe. (Lesser 1991: 206-207)

In *Blonde* one learns about the competing theories from the *Niagara* set. One was that the female lead could not act and that in Rose Loomis she was playing



herself actually. The other one implied that she was pure talent, a born actress (Oates 2020: 328). Along with *The Misfits* (1961), Monroe's last completed motion picture, *Niagara* remains still one of her most appreciated performances by the critics.

The movie caused a stir at that time due to its risqué scenes and the rumours – which turned out to be true – that Marilyn Monroe was naked under the sheets. The promotional poster advertised her curvaceous body as landscape sheathed by rushing water (Miklitsch 2016). She sings her alluring song, “Kiss”, like a siren in a hot-pink dress. It is the song that, later in the movie, the Rainbow Tower Carillon bells should play in order to signal her husband's death. *Niagara* is a movie about sexual roles and about the interplay of deception and sincerity (Lesser 1991: 207-208), but also about American mores during the '50s. As Robert Miklitsch (2016) put it, “Rose functions in many ways as a screen onto which the '50s audiences could project their fears and anxieties about (female) sexuality: you were either a virgin or a ‘tramp’ [...]” On a more political note, film critic J. Hoberman (2012: 256) describes her instant success as leisure consumerism, the manifestation of a richer American Dream: “Marilyn is milk and honey, the representative of a sweet, carnal democracy, a vision of abundance for the average Joe.”

In *Niagara* there seems to be no division between the men's and women's reactions when looking at Marilyn Monroe. They are similarly entranced by her presence (Lesser 1991: 208-209). When Ray (Max Showalter) and Polly Cutler (Jean Peters), the middle class couple recently married, who witnesses the Loomises drama unfolding, sees Rose at the party, the man exults: “Why don't you ever get a dress like that?” and his wife comments: “Listen, for a dress like that you gotta start laying plans when you're about thirteen.” (Miklitsch 2016)

Indologist and historian of religions Wendy Doniger (2017: 229) calls this “the slut assumption”. She assesses the long and complicated relation between sexual roles, jewelry, and power games from the Antiquity to modern times and notices that since the eighteenth century onward, the “slut assumption” has been applied to women. The assumption is that “if a woman is seen wearing fake jewelry, she may well have bought it herself. But if she sports a new piece of valuable jewelry, she must have gotten it by sleeping [...] not with her authenticating husband, but with an illicit paramour.” (idem: 228-229). Doniger finds the origin of this prejudice in the infamous 1784 “Affair of the Necklace”, when the courtesan Jeanne de Saint-Rémy de Valois played a dirty trick on Marie Antoinette and the Cardinal Louis René Edouard de Rohan, bishop of Strasbourg, arranging a meeting in the “Bower of Venus” at Versailles of the Cardinal with a courtesan resembling the queen, in order to negotiate the purchase of a diamond necklace (Doniger 2017: 208-211). Despite the fact that the plot was exposed and Marie Antoinette was not aware of the whole cabal, the rumours and conspiracy theory fueled the people's hostility toward her, a hostility that simmered until the French Revolution.

Not only was Marilyn Monroe subjected to the “slut assumption” during the '50s, when her courtesan image was set against that of virginal Doris Day in the binary approach “woman with many lovers” versus “respectable wife” (idem: 20), but she became the longed-for jewel herself. Writing about the preparations for *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* premiere, Oates lavishly describes the whole process of fabricating the Marilyn Monroe look – all smile and glamour waves –, the army of hairstylists and makeup artists working under the supervision of Allan ‘Whitey’

Snyder, the artisan of her enduring official portrait. In his dexterous hands, Marilyn Monroe becomes an *objet d'art*:

Her face and throat were steamed, chilled, and creamed. Her body was bathed and oiled, its unsightly hairs removed; she was powdered, perfumed, painted, and set to dry. Her fingernails and toenails were painted a brilliant crimson to match her neon mouth. (Oates 2020: 417)

The 1953-1954 movie season inaugurates the disappearance of the actress in her public image “so much so that whatever she might do, she will never seem out of character.” (Hoberman 2012: 256) She becomes willy-nilly the focus of interest for the advertising industry, fashion houses, tabloids, writers, high-brow artists and not least for military propaganda (her arriving in Korea in order to sing to the American enlisted men makes history at the very landing of the helicopter). The paradox of this career which has been growing incessantly at the expense of the Marilyn Monroe charisma only is summed up by J. Hoberman:

At the year's end, the twenty-seven-year-old actress graces the cover of *Playboy's* maiden issue, while Willem de Kooning is action-painting his own abstract expressionist *Marilyn*. It is the deadly siren of *Niagara* – a force of nature, per movie's title – that will provide Andy Warhol with the basis for his multiple Marylins, whereas the proto-pop [*Gentlemen Prefer*] *Blondes* and [*How to Marry a*] *Millionaire* presented Marilyn in the cartoon role of “Marilyn Monroe”. Yet there is no particular movie that can be considered the definitive Monroe vehicle. (Hoberman 2012: 256)

Since the 1950s, the “MM look” has remained a staple for glamorous beauty, despite the sad story and frightening abuses hidden behind the golden mask which has been put on by many actresses, singers, and models, such as Madonna, Linda Evangelista, Charlize Theron, Rihanna, Beyoncé, Nicole Kidman, Jessica Alba, Scarlett Johansson, and many others. Maybe this is why Marilyn Monroe cannot make it into a believable novelistic character. She is too much a visual celebrity, so that little space remains for the literary imagination.

### 3. Conclusion: the icon does not fit into the frame

One of the many voices from *Blonde* relates an episode when, right after her debut, Marilyn Monroe enrolls incognito in a poetry class under the name of Gladys Pirig. She has an authentic passion for literature, but is afraid of being recognized:

Slipping into her seat early each week she'd lean forward over her book rereading the assignment so if you glanced in her direction you'd get the clear signal *Don't talk to me please, don't even look at me*. So it was easy not to notice her. She was serious and downlooking and prim without makeup and her skin pale and slightly shiny and her ash-blond hair rolled back and pinned up in the style women were wearing during the war if they worked in factories. It was a look of the forties and of another time. (Oates 2020: 271)

No one notices her until she reads with a mellifluous and comprehensive rhetoric “The Altar” by the metaphysical poet George Herbert. She surprises everyone with the clarity of her interpretation of the poetic form (Oates 2020: 275-277).

However, one day her colleagues recognize the shy young woman in an issue of the *Hollywood Reporter* and their perception of Gladys Pirig clashes with their admiration for Marilyn Monroe. The film star's fabricated glamour annihilates the young woman's natural mien. No one can look at "Gladys" the same way as before. Saddened by the swift exposure of her cover, the actress gives up the poetry class. Oates anticipates her disappearance by melting the image of low-profile Gladys Pirig into the blond shimmering pages from the *Hollywood Reporter*.

The artist who saw the future of culture marred by media hyper-reality and commerce and who intuited correctly Marilyn Monroe's posterity was Andy Warhol. Right after her death in August 1962, Warhol bought a promotional photograph for the movie *Niagara* and multiplied it in his well-known silkscreen painting *Marilyn Diptych*. Camille Paglia (2012: 150-151) astutely notices the concept of this two-paneled work of art that evokes the Renaissance altar piece and the excess of spray-painted gold with Byzantine suggestions (Andy Warhol's parents were Czechoslovakian immigrants of Eastern Catholic Rite). Thus, Marilyn Monroe's posthumous charisma becomes saintlike and glossy at the same time:

Marilyn's life is portrayed in all its sun and rain. On the left, we see her blazing glamour as a cartoonish symbol of the Hollywood studio system, which created her but, as it broke down, could no longer protect her. On the right is the real, humdrum, daily Marilyn, the eclipsed Norma Jeane Mortenson struggling for identity. The black-and-white images, streaked like soot stains and sodden newsprint, seemed bathed in tears, the misery of a shunned Magdalene. By the time of her death, with her erratic behaviors and sputtering career she had already become yesterday's news.

The dizzying proliferation of Marilyn's replicates the industry publicity machine pumping out her image. She was a product, as slickly packaged and heavily promoted as Campbell's soup. (Paglia 2012: 152)

Warhol's silkscreen might help us understand why *Blonde* is such a puzzling novel. Marilyn Monroe is everywhere in the book, yet nowhere especially, because Joyce Carol Oates' perspectivism reminds us almost everything we know about the actress, while the imagined details do not enhance our perception of her life too much. Even though Oates conceives Marilyn as a literary character, the line between sheer biography and entrancing fiction is too thin to circumvent the rules of the former or to take full advantage of the freedom provided by the latter. Marilyn Monroe is already a pervasive cinematic and media fiction. Words on paper cannot reconfigure her aura.

Film critic Alex. Leo Şerban (2006: 75-76) equates cinema and memory, considering that film – he calls it "moving anthropology" – employs technical progress in order to offer us slices from the life of real people in a dreamy fashion. He also thinks that cinema makes us accustomed to old age. The present preserved by old movies is the treasure trove of our past:

It is a *natural* ageing, like each of us becoming older. But every movie projection confronts us with this raw truth: our ageing, as movie goes, comes with the obsolescence of the film roll and the stories it encapsulates. Any movie is melancholy, any projection is its own elegy. (Şerban 2006: 77, my translation)

Even if she did not plan it, Marilyn Monroe extracted her always young image from the confinements of the silver screen and made it adaptable to all forms of art and for all generations. Perhaps this is the shining side of her bitter immortality.

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**PHILIP ROTH'S *THE FACTS*:  
SELF-QUESTIONING AND THERAPEUTIC  
"MEMORIES OF IMAGININGS"**

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***Abstract:** The paper revisits Philip Roth's 1988 *The Facts*, an unconventional attempt at public self-exploration / representation. It focuses on the intriguing mixture of inventive confession, nostalgic (re-/de-) construction and critical fictionalization that derives from the writer's belief that "in autobiography you construct a sequence of stories to bind up the facts with a persuasive hypothesis that unravels your history's meaning".*

***Keywords:** (auto)biography, memory, narrative, (non)fiction, self*

## **1. Introduction**

A novel-length autobiographical sequence amid two (semi)-fictional, meta-textual letters: that might well be the first impression created by *The Facts*, Philip Roth's 1988 first declared attempt at exploring the depths and shallows of allegedly non-fictional life writing. Although to a lesser extent than his major prose works, the book was to stir controversy: not so much via its underlying web of themes, ideas, and human (stereo)types, as rather due to its intentional blurring of the conventionally acknowledged boundaries between author – narrator – character, self – world – other, fact – fiction(alization). What might have the appearance of a logically and chronologically ordered recollection of major personal events and stages, in the line of traditional memoirs, is framed by a prologue and an epilogue in which reality and imagination are forced across a (pseudo-)conversational bridge. Roth-the-author questions and answers his fictional alter-ego, Nathan Zuckerman, in matters related to the dilemmas of authentic self-reporting.

Consequently, the genre that Roth seems to "try on", as if to see whether the suit fits, becomes itself a topic of discussion and analysis. As David Gooblar (2008: 34) points out,

The subject of autobiography would preoccupy Roth for some time, as *The Facts* was the first of four books, published consecutively, each of which contained, at least in part, non-fictional accounts of the author's life [...] For many critics, these four "autobiographical" books continue and extend Roth's interest in this "hall of mirrors" effect: probing the permeability of borders between fact and fiction, exploring the ways in which non-fiction may be just as unreliable a representation of reality as fiction, and playing games with readers' expectations of divulgence.

This paper sets out to outline and interrogate the ways in which *The Facts* navigates the essential conundrums of writing about oneself as a professional author. It will, therefore, look at Roth's theoretical engagement with the topic, alongside the practical illustration that the selected volume provides. In doing so, it will foreground the echoing introductory and conclusive letters and address the stream of memories that are integrated into the main body of the manuscript, as parts of a sinuous process of self-investigation turned autoscopia. Decades later in Roth's career, the protagonist of *Everyman* (2006) was to literally examine his past life from beyond the grave and outside his own living body. It is my impression and subsequent claim that, in *The Facts*, Roth similarly attempts to distance himself critically from his own life path and pattern, which include, kaleidoscopically, both his existence and the oeuvre which he is in constant relationship and dialogue with.

## 2. Writer out of the shadows

In her October 1988 narrative rendition of her interview with Philip Roth, for *The Boston Globe*, Linda Matchan manages to shed some light upon the mixed structure of what she calls "a sort of five-act drama" (1988: 65). She goes on to summarize it as „childhood in Newark, college at Bucknell, disastrous early marriage, object of Jewish wrath, literary fame and death of hated wife" (ibid). Throughout the conversation, she succeeds in persuading the writer to address the surprising positioning of his fictional Nathan Zuckerman as an interlocutor for the meditative authorial voice. She gets the type of response one might not necessarily predict, but may quite easily expect from Roth's complex persona(lity):

Without Zuckerman, you have a very different kind of book, a conventional autobiography. But I don't want to write it. Let the other guy write it. It's not a matter of being unconventional just to be unconventional. That would be silly. But it would be an incomplete autobiography, at least to me. My life includes this. The life I spend with Zuckerman is much more interesting than the life I spend without him. Zuckerman is part of my autobiography. (Roth in Matchan 1988: 65)

Such an explanation makes it quite clear that what the reader witnesses in *The Facts* is (and must inevitably be read as) a deviation from the autobiographical genre or, rather, an extension of the memoir. As such, it is meant to include figments of the creative imagination, alongside immediate occurrences in the evolution of the private and, oftentimes, public self. The indissolubility of life from work becomes, therefore, an integral and decisive part of the writerly profile, and Roth's appeal to a blended fact-*and*-fiction version of his trajectory stands out as his own brand of authenticity and accuracy. Thenceforth, it was to become a trademark of his fiction and non-fiction works alike, simultaneously provocative and intriguing.

In *The Facts*, one can follow the inquisitive mind and voice of the author undertake a journey of self-discovery and (re)articulation. The need for a new understanding of the authorial self in search of a coherent narrative as complex, plural, non-linear is prefigured already in the opening page. Therein, Roth assesses his attitude towards the act of introducing the individual behind the text to his general readership:

On the pendulum of self-exposure that oscillates between aggressively exhibitionistic Mailerism and sequestered Salingerism, I'd say that I occupy a midway position, trying in the public arena to resist gratuitous prying or preening without making too holy a fetish of secrecy and seclusion. So why claim biographical visibility now, especially as I was educated to believe that the independent reality of the fiction is all there is of importance and that writers should remain in the shadows?" (Roth 1997: 4)

Using the epistolary introduction as a place of self-explanation and justification, Roth engages himself and his readers in a conversation about subjectivity, which was to last consistently throughout his career and preoccupy not just the two, already-mentioned parties, but also an entire host of critics, reviewers, researchers, and aficionados of Roth's work. Looking at this volume as resonating with *Patrimony* and *Operation Shylock*, for instance, within what she sees as a larger experiment, Elaine M. Kauvar (1995: 412) emphasizes that

since the publication of *The Facts* in 1988, Roth has turned to "nonfictional treatment" as a strategy for exploring the issue of subjectivity. Naming a book "a novelist's autobiography", or a "true story", or a "confession", Roth plays not only with the idea of selfhood but with the entire enterprise of autobiography. Trying to get a handle on both, he first investigates in *The Facts* a topic fundamental to contemporary historians and psychoanalysts alike – the representation of reality.

It is, therefore, in this line that Roth-the-narrator engages in conversation with Zuckerman-the-fictional-alter-ego, about the deep, intimate origins of his character. This is also the kind of playful, jocular, yet serious manner in which the author was to consistently investigate matters (big or small, individual or communal) throughout his career: with the determination to challenge fixed, unidirectional, predictable conceptions and interpretations. So convincing are his ongoing disputes with Zuckerman (who openly confronts him in the closing section), that the captive audience might feel the need to interact and jump straight in. Ralph Baumgarten's review for *The Los Angeles Times* stands proof of the kind of spirited response such an approach might elicit:

Dear Roth: I like having Zuckerman, the fictional figure you've nurtured for more than a decade, turn up in your autobiography. How sly to play the old tune of the charming, self-effacing young (old?) Jewish writer-yourself, in the prologue - writing Zuckerman a letter, asking for his advice, relying on his candor. Not that it will fool anybody. Beginning your account of "the facts" by writing to him and asking what he thinks of this as your effort at self-exposure is a terrific way to let us all know this is not your adieu to fiction. (Baumgarten 1988: 1)

Indeed, it is indubitable that, underneath the biographical appearance, there lies a writer's meditation about his own creative plight and process. Should one understand life writing as strictly recording or recollecting events that happen to the writer on a regular basis, *The Facts* would certainly fall out of this category. Roth decides to expand the scope of his narrative and proposes a wider discourse. In this volume, his practical need to deconstruct and comprehend the mechanisms of personal breakdown represents a most compelling prompt for going back to the roots of all action and reaction. This is where the revelation begins, as he states, "I found no moment of origin, but a series of moments, a history of multiple origins, and that's what I have written here in the effort to repossess life" (Roth 1997: 5).

Regressing into an uncertain, challenging past and resurfacing with new meanings is the key, two-way move that provides the nucleus of this potentially healing experience.

### 3. Demythologizing / depathologizing the self

While a passage such as the above-quoted one does support the idea that a process of personal recovery is therapeutical in and of itself, it also interconnects with the type of message that resides in many of the author's novels as well: one of coexistence, plurality, unity in diversity. Roth himself frames his autobiographical discourse in *The Facts* in connection and by comparison with other works: "If while writing I couldn't see exactly what I was up to, I do now: this manuscript embodies *my* counterlife, the antidote and answer to all those fictions that culminated in the fiction of you. If in one way *The Counterlife* can be read as fiction about structure, then this is the bare bones, the structure of a life without the fiction" (Roth 1997: 6).

The idea of fragmentariness, of the de- and re-composition of the whole out of scattered pieces unites the resonating pieces of Rothian writing. In a 2016 article, Stefan Kjerkegaard introduces the category of 'autofictional novel' in this discussion. He proclaims *The Facts* "a turning point in Roth's way of using a self-fashioning strategy", placing it in direct relation with *The Counterlife*, which "reflects people's fragmented lives and makes it impossible for the readers to form a coherent story of the events told" (Kjerkegaard 2016: 124-125). The voices of Roth and Zuckermann, 'reality' and 'fiction' are, in *The Facts*, contrapuntal, contradictory, and complementary at the same time. They render the inner battle between two of the major sides of the Rothian composite self. Consequently, one can never truly go with the flow of Roth's (presumably) factual narrative and leave aside the meta-textual considerations. Zuckerman's coda to the text, the retrospective analysis, formulates a warning that might trigger yet another (re)reading: "With autobiography there's always another text, a countertext, if you will, to the one presented. It's probably the most manipulative of all literary forms." (Roth 1997: 172)

The convoluted issues of multiplication, ramification, beautification of experience or, on the contrary, self-victimization are part and parcel of what *The Facts* offers in terms of the discourse of the self. While delivering an account of what (f)actually happened, it equally encompasses side notes on how and why. In doing so, it also questions the very authenticity of the way in which subjective memory arranges pieces of the reminiscence puzzle into a whole. Kierkegaard's argument captures the dilemmas and intended puns that are prefigured by *The Facts*' very title and layout:

At first *The Facts. A Novelist's Autobiography* looks like an autobiography, but several things point in other directions. For one, it resembles a novel since, curiously, its title includes the name of the genre. If it were a traditional autobiography, the primary title *The Facts* would be a pleonasm. With autobiographies, we are not supposed to question whether something is factual or not. The contract or "the pact," to use Philippe Lejeune's words, between the author of an autobiography and the readers is that it is all factual. (Kjerkegaard 2016: 125)

Nevertheless, as one dives into the manuscript, one becomes gradually aware that this is not the case. As per usual, Roth plays the dissenter and produces



a postmodern, innovative type of literary self-stripping, in a text that functions like an inner hyphen: it unites and divides, it delineates the distinct portions of the self, while also highlighting their unquestionable points of contact and overlapping. Paralleling lived experience with its fictional translation (which Roth had always done, to certain extents, and was going to do even more intently afterwards) is presented in *The Facts* as the only available option for the writer to restore personal balance during and, most importantly, after a point of severe crisis. He aptly describes the process to his ever-present interlocutor and, implicitly, to the potential reader:

Undermining experience, embellishing experience, rearranging and enlarging experience into a species of mythology - after thirty years at that, it could have seemed like I'd had enough even under the best of circumstances. To demythologize myself and play it straight, to pair the facts as lived with the facts as presented might well have seemed the next thing to do - if not the only thing I *could* do - so long as the capacity for self-transformation and, with it, the imagination were at the point of collapse. Insofar as the rest of me, which had collapsed as well, intuited that stripping the writing down to unvarnished specificity was a part of getting back what I'd lost, a means of recovery and a way to strength, there wasn't even a choice. I needed clarification, as much of it as I could get - demythologizing to induce depathologizing. (Roth 1997: 7)

In this specific passage, one can clearly identify the inner battle between the literary and the ontological, the lived and the presented events, the uncontrollable circumstances of happenstance that govern everyday existence and the writer's ceaseless temptation to exert control in any kind of discourse he produces, be it fictional or non-fictional, sometimes at the predictable expense of accuracy. It is this clinical desire for an order that he can decide upon, on his own terms, that Roth attempts to face, expose and, ultimately, conquer and tame via the self-imposed and, nevertheless, problematic biographical exercise that he begins in *The Facts*. As pointed out by Jay Rogoff (2009: 508) in an article on 'Philip Roth's Master Fictions', *The Facts* does not solely set out to untangle certain essential scenes in the author's life (some of which have made their way into his fiction as well). It additionally "deals with the deceptions a writer practices, even – perhaps especially – in the act of claiming to come clean".

The book's directness and the impression of undisguised, honest depiction are, in fact, enhanced rather than challenged, by the letters that function as argument and coda. In his rendition of life-shaping events and circumstances (growing up in a Jewish Newark family, cultivating self-preservation despite a legacy of collective trauma, choosing and being chosen by a college, discovering fraternities as social reflections, beginning an academic career and gathering inspiration for later characters – to name but a few), the writer oscillates between the confessional and the analytical as dominant narrative moods and modes. The detailed, (self)-explanatory parts as to how memory and (auto)-biographical discourse function in practice, and how expectations are, oftentimes, inverted, bring to the fore the hermeneutical apparatus of a professional, who never ceases to explore the possibilities, the liberties, and the constraints of the literary trade.

One relevant passage in this respect is the following:

I recognize that I'm using the word "facts" here, in this letter, in its idealized form and in a much more simpleminded way than it's meant in the title. Obviously the

facts are never just coming at you but are incorporated by an imagination that is formed by your previous experience. Memories of the past are not memories of facts but memories of your imaginings of the facts. There is something naïve about a novelist like myself talking about presenting himself “undisguised” and depicting “a life without the fiction.” I also invite oversimplification of a kind I don’t at all like by announcing that searching out the facts may have been a kind of therapy for me. You search your past with certain questions on your mind - indeed, you search out your past to discover which events have led you to asking those specific questions. It isn’t that you subordinate your ideas to the force of the facts in autobiography but that you construct a sequence of stories to bind up the facts with a persuasive hypothesis that unravels your history’s meaning. (Roth 1997: 8)

While Roth’s multiple confessions in *The Facts* tend to occupy the center of the narrative stage, such theoretical insertions capture the readers’ attention to a considerable degree as well. The writer steps out of the merely personal space and looks beyond his own struggle with the nature of his compulsions. He formulates more generic warnings, and kind or, sometimes, rather acid reminders that a novelist by trade will always have plot and construction in mind. Thus, the impulse of fictionalization may pervade what the reader takes for undeniable “truth”. Moreover, the need to write down one’s personal story per se is perceived as far from the urge to produce a mechanical, objective, detached transcript of events. It appears rather as a need to establish a certain order, which is inevitably predetermined by the author’s specific logic, reasoning, subjective perspective.

#### 4. Personalizing / personifying experience

Roth’s musings in this direction are meant to complement his disclosure of episodes he considers worthy of his audience’s interest. This process of selection itself can be most interesting to investigate as, many a time, what is left unsaid or unwritten may prove essential, and the amount of privacy a public figure can afford is a very delicate topic. The author’s massive 2021 biographies, alongside his private papers, the legacy of which has been equally suffused in scandalous rumors, might provide further evidence in the quasi-detective quest for ‘the true Roth’, who spent his life disproving the fact that such an individual entity actually exists. Back in 1988, however, *The Facts* paved the way for Roth’s insidious and assiduous interplay of persons and personae. As Solange Leibovici (2017: 88) points out, “the letter Zuckerman writes to Roth about *The Facts* is a form of mise-en-abyme: it repeats and contradicts the so-called autobiography, fills in the gaps, and procures another kind of authenticity”.

It becomes evident, once more, that *The Facts* would not be complete and would not stand on its own without the sly meta-textual frame provided by the two letters, which enrich the self-search and give it extra-dimensions. The penchant for blending worlds and amalgamating life and art is addressed quite frequently in the volume, whether explicitly or obliquely. As in other books, Roth seems to plant clues underneath the most innocent or, on the contrary, most insightful appearances. For instance, he speaks in an allegedly frank and perceptive manner about his courtship strategies. They are presented as indissolubly tied to his abilities as a storyteller, marked by “an innate taste for dramatic juxtaposition, an infatuation with the coupling of seemingly alien perspectives”. (Roth 1997: 93) Although, in the text, he applies this analysis to the rather limited specter of his romantic (inter)actions, the declared object of his affection might be easily equated with the generic reader of his literary demonstrations of skill and creativity:

I was wooing her, I was wowing her, I was spiritedly charming her—motivated by an egoistic young lover’s predilection for intimacy and sincerity, I was telling her who I thought I was and what I believed had formed me, but I was also engaged by a compelling form of narrative responsory. I was a countervoice, an antitheme. (Roth 1997: 93)

If one were to take this passage independently, out of the given context, one might be able to detect a similar pattern to the one that shapes *The Facts*. The author-narrator-protagonist enchants the reader with his own seductive blend of divulgence, presenting a plausible and convincing version of his evolution, as a result of expectations that require confirmation or, on the contrary, most often, denial and antithesis. It is not at all rare that Roth refers to the interconnectedness between real-life episodes and several of his prose scenes. Referring to a chapter in *My Life as a Man* as a perfect duplicate of biographical facts, he comments that “those scenes represent one of the few occasions when I haven’t spontaneously set out to improve on actuality in the interest of being more interesting”. (Roth 1997: 107) When he narrates his toxic relationship with the woman who was to become his wife against all odds, he talks about his addiction to her constant deceptions, which he labels as “overbrimming talent for self-invention”. (idem: 111)

Moreover, he openly declares his fascination with the woman’s absurd fabrications, “something marvelous and crazy, a bedazzling lunatic imagination that - everything else aside - rendered absolutely ridiculous my conventional university conceptions of fictional probability and all those elegant, Jamesian formulations I’d imbibed about proportion and indirection and tact”. (Roth 1997: 112) With his characteristic mixture of self-irony and biting humor, Roth, thus, confesses not just his marital union to “my worst enemy ever” (ibid.), “specialist par excellence in the aesthetics of extremist fiction” (ibid.), but also his utter personal vulnerability in the face of a good plot, which the careful researcher is challenged to discover in his autobiographical writings as well. For the sake of observing theatricality in life-writing, alongside intertextual effects, the ending of this particular confession must not be omitted. “Reader, I married her” (ibid.), Roth exclaims; a contrapuntal conclusion to what would have been a logical denouement and, simultaneously, a histrionic curtsy to Jane Eyre’s famous melodramatic announcement.

Thus, it emerges quite clearly from the recollections themselves, not just from the analytical, dialogical opening and closing letters, that life-stages and events have always constituted initiations and invitations for Roth to write, transform, explore, and extrapolate. He goes even further with the illustrations of echoing and interconnectedness in the uncanny episode of his former partner’s death, which struck him as replicating the ending of his recently published *When She Was Good*. His semi-philosophical, semi-resigned aside is yet another parenthetical meditation on the sometimes-confusing ways in which life anticipates art, and vice-versa. The pathology of the self that incorporates and responds to the impulses of both is an integral part of Roth’s declared struggle: “If the real circumstances had indeed “validated” the fatal destiny of that personification of Josie’s defiant extremism which I presented as Lucy Nelson, I would never know. And what difference would knowing have made anyway”. (idem: 149)

Although real names have been changed in many cases (and Zuckerman furiously objects thereto), *The Facts* does provide a notable amount of insight into Roth’s life and how his creative laboratory has turned it repeatedly into fiction.

It indirectly documents his transformation into the relentlessly satirical Zuckerman, whose ever-contesting voice resonates louder than the memoirist's at the end of the book. Ira Nadel (one of the authors of the aforementioned 2021 monographs), emphasizes in his 2011 commentary on the volume that

The importance of *The Facts*, other than its biographical details, some of which are fudged to protect the innocent, is Roth's insightful commentary on his own work and its evolution. His talent for "self-confrontation," his need to be astonishing become the subject of self-scrutiny. Through the details of his parents, his education, his marriage, and career, he offers important remarks on his own sensibility and technique. He is self-aware and astute. (Nadel 2011: 93)

What is it, then, that the fictional alter-ego reproaches his creator in such an unexpected and unconventional manner at the end of the book? It seems to be precisely the difference between Roth-the-individual and Roth-the-writer, Roth-the-private and Roth-the-public, the inability of the two worlds and personas to merge completely into the ultimate work of art. From this extreme perspective, Roth's efforts seem disappointing to Zuckerman, as his life-writing, innovative as it may be, still abides by written and unwritten rules that his fiction otherwise makes it a point to pulverize from within. Zuckerman acknowledges the ethical implications of autobiography and the permissions it requires, which fiction does not. "In this book you are not permitted to tell what it is you tell best: kind, discreet, careful - changing people's names because you're worried about hurting their feelings - no, this isn't you at your most interesting". (Roth 1997: 162)

Despite full awareness of the limitations of life-writing, Zuckerman sees Roth's biographical experiment as devoid of the nerve and rhythm of his fiction, as a submission to inhibition: "a slowing of pace, a refusal to explode, a relinquishing of the need I ordinarily associate with you for the acute, explosive moment." (ibid.) However, what is most traumatic in Roth's psychoanalytical and psychoanalyzable confrontation with his own fears and frustrations is the impossibility to render himself in as accomplished a manner as the one in which he draws his characters. From a distance, the author, via his fictional and, in this context, superior self, looks at his (presumably) non-fictional work and deplores the lack of artistry that it involves.

As for characterization, you, Roth, are the least completely rendered of all your protagonists. Your gift is not to personalize your experience but to personify it, to embody it in the representation of a person who is *not* yourself. You are not an autobiographer, you're a personificator. You have the reverse experience of most of your American contemporaries. Your acquaintance with the facts, your sense of the facts, is much less developed than your understanding, your intuitive weighing and balancing of fiction. You make a fictional world that is far more exciting than the world it comes out of. My guess is that you've written metamorphoses of yourself so many times, you no longer have any idea what *you* are or ever were. By now what you are is a walking text". (ibid.)

This turning of the tables and denunciation appears as violent as it might be undeserved. It is the voice of Roth's dark, hidden, eroding and corroding self, the embodiment of authorial insecurities, the constant vacillation between the quests for originality and authenticity, sensationalism and sensitivity that are ubiquitous in one of the richest and most generous bodies of works by one single author in

American fiction. Zuckerman's acting as a mischievous foil in this imaginary dialogue (the opening and closing letters are, in fact, parts of Roth's inner monologue) may seem cold, cynical, unforgiving. Nevertheless, it does capture the essence of the writer's plight, the acute need for the desired inner balance which autobiography might – eventually, though doubtfully – provide, and the persistent question behind it all: could/ should a writer's life and work ever intertwine to the point of identification?

## 5. Conclusion

Launching further questions regarding (self)-awareness, the distortions and exaggerations of personal (hi)stories, the exclusive and selective nature of the memoirist's choices, the conscious or unconscious manipulations that self-writing inevitably entails, Zuckerman prefigures at least two more decades of fictional encounters and (self)-interrogations, which Roth was about to produce.

As Ira Nadel (2011: 93) points out,

Zuckerman's critique in the final section of the autobiography is bracing because it is Roth through Zuckerman criticizing Roth. He has it both ways: remembering and dismembering, recalling and complaining (93). *The Facts* successfully engages the factual and the fictional. [...] He does not want to abolish aesthetic distance and personal experience but to expose the permeability of the boundary between them.

It is, in fact, this artistic creed, this implicit statement in *The Facts* that makes the experiment stand out. As early (or as late) as 1988, Roth makes it clear that his private existence could not and would not be divorced from his fiction. This, however, was not to instantly trigger a literal interpretation of his works and/or an immediate equation of his protagonists' deeds, thoughts, actions, and reactions with his own. Cleverly working with and through the permeability of borders, Roth has become a master of ventriloquism, a powerful voice *in absentia*, an engaged and engaging writer for more than half a century of private and public, individual and collective history. *The Facts* marks the moment in his evolution as a writer wherein fact and fiction meet and greet full face: at once a continuation and a starting point, in the middle of a most successful and intriguing career. And life.

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**MASCULINE–FEMININE MEDIATION THROUGH FICTION  
AND THE SEXUALITY OF STORYTELLING –  
A GENDER PERSPECTIVE ON *DUNYAZADIAD* BY JOHN BARTH**

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**Abstract:** *The study tries to demonstrate, in the theoretical frame of love studies and rewriting, that John Barth's Dunyazadiad offers a type of gender reconstruction that denies the social determination of the relationships between the sexes by means of a parody of both the patriarchal machismo in its strong Eastern version and the radical feminism of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Barth resorts to fictionalising the idea of metaphysical sex or the natural magic of love, as well as to the representation of love as an intentional construct that prompts exclusivism and duration. The interaction between the fictional love story and the theory about the sexuality of storytelling supports the author's/characters' identity theme – that of seeking one's deeper self, a process in which the Eros and the act of narrating meet at the level of mythical androgyny.*

**Keywords:** *gender rewriting, identity, love studies, metalepsis, parody, the sexuality of storytelling*

### **1. Introduction: The (mytho)poetics of John Barth**

Barth conceived *Dunyazadiad* as the final part of a trilogy of mythical rewritings entitled *Chimera*, one of his classical-postmodern works. *Chimera* is the narrative anamorphosis of a hybrid creature (lion, goat and serpent/dragon), as *Dunyazadiad*, *Perseid* and *Bellerophoniad* are models for “recycled” writing, for the protean text that is always open not only semantically, but also as a material whole. The volume has internal, Moebius-type cohesion, the novellas being, as Barth (1984: 97) confesses, “as different in appearance as a lion from a goat, et cetera, but built upon a single skeleton, warmed by the same blood, and in turn, I hope, all fueling equally the beast's internal-external combustion”.

Barth's epic manner of entitling his books draws attention to the notion of *transvaluation* (Genette 1997: 343), by which changes are made in the axiological order of the canonical work in a positive (revaluation), negative (devaluation) or complex (transvaluation in the strong sense of the term) way. Barth lays emphasis on secondary or tertiary characters, semi-heroes such as Perseus and Bellerophon, function-characters like Scheherazade's younger sister or the colourless Menelaus, as opposed to the bright Helen in *Menelaiad* (Barth 1981), thus questioning the mechanisms of the mythologisation and heroisation processes perpetuated by the authoritarian tradition. *Anonymiad* (idem) is a title that dissipates the idea of impressive epic heroes/plots, as well as the paternity of the text. The text that comes before the author – the plot is nobody's property in

particular –, the “history” of the author intertwined with that of the characters in Chinese box narratives, the recovery of literature by means of the former literature, i.e. the recirculation of plots within the plot index of the entire culture, like the nine amphorae-Muses carried by the sea currents in *Anonymiad* – all these are (meta)fictional as well as academic themes of a writer who constantly illustrates his critical theory through creation and vice versa.

In *Chimera*, the common denominator of the three novellas that make it up is not related to the themes already established by the great epics, the adventure and the *questa* – although they are present –, but to the exploitation of the (meta)fictional dimension of myth, of tradition in its broadest sense, more precisely the revelation of the transfusion from the archetypal cultural matter to the exhausted postmodern imagery that Barth deals with in *The Literature of Exhaustion* and *The Literature of Replenishment*, essays included in *The Friday Book* (Barth 1984). The determination with which Scheherazade supports *recounting* (imitation, reformulation) against *invention* highlights the palimpsestic nature of postmodern literature for which the plot in *Dunyazadiad* is an example: the stories are provided by a Genie that retells the content of *The Thousand and One Nights*; the content, we know from the frame story, is taken from “materials received from narrative antiquity” (Barth 1973: 36).

The non-assumption of the plot in postmodernism has as a correspondent the non-assumption of the traditional instance of the author. The latter becomes, as Brian McHale (2004: 213-215) shows, a metaleptic presence that short-circuits the ontological levels of the text through its double extradiegetic and intradiegetic dimension. The Genie, a character playing the part of a contemporary writer fighting a block, is Barth’s surrogate in a system of mutual mirroring: the Barth on the cover appears as the Author, a “being of paper” in the pages of his own novella, and the novella is mirrored in itself through the references made to the third novella, which becomes the first in the series on which the Genie-Writer pretends to be working: a story entitled *Dunyazadiad*, whose main character is Scheherazade’s younger sister on her future wedding night. Barth’s poetics proposes the reflection of the diegesis in the discourse and vice versa, under the emblem of this secondary, yet fictionally powerful character in which the “old” coexists with the “new”. Dunyazade is the character without a story, but with the most problematic destiny. Paradoxically, she witnessed all the bedroom stories, but she did not take part in anything; she is an *initiated virgin*, a rare combination of “heartfelt ineptitude” and “heartless skill” in both the art of storytelling and that of love. For Shah Zaman, she does not have the advantage of novelty:

‘What are you going to do to entertain *him* [emphasis in original], little sister? Make love in exciting new ways? There are none! Tell him stories, like Scheherazade? He’s heard them all! Dunyazade, Dunyazade! Who can tell your story?’ (Barth 1973: 41)

In terms of writing, Dunyazade is the metaphor for the exhausted subject, a palimpsest with countless layers still waiting to be rewritten upon. She is the answer to the question “How to do something new with something old?”. It is not a coincidence that *Dunyazadiad* opens Barth’s trilogy following the same metatextual logic as *The Tale of the Merchant and the Ifrit*, which opens Scheherazade’s cycle of stories in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* (Mardrus 2004).



It is obvious that Barth's characters – Scheherazade, Dunyazade, the Genie in the first place – are incarnations of his theoretical ideas. The leitmotif statement "The key to the treasure is the treasure" becomes a conclusion both on the metadiscourse and the fictional level: the solution to the problem of saving literature is literature itself, just as the solution to the war of the sexes is, in any social system, even the most patriarchal one, love or, as a character puts it, embracing the "Tragic View of Love". As for the exchange of services between Scheherazade and the Genie, this may be the pact of re-creation that the present makes with the past and the past with the present, casting light upon each other (Truș ă 2018: 797). The exercise of rewriting is *pla(y)giarism*, to use the term coined by Raymond Federman (1993: 51); the procedures of identification and alteration, of paying homage and undermining overlap each other, so both works have something to gain as a result. Any rewriting develops in a double sense – it reaffirms the authority of the canonical work and at the same time reveals its ideological limits, narrative gaps, intentional methods of outranking and downplaying subordinated to social, political, religious, racial stakes etc.

## 2. From the strategy-story to the confession-story

*Dunyazadiad* is not only the rewriting of the subject in the frame of the Arabian cycle, but also its unfaithful continuation. The sequel seems triggered by the artificial conclusion of *The Thousand and One Nights*, felt by the reader as a kind of *deus ex machina* for Dunyazade's fate: the little sister is given as a wife, as required by the symmetrical scheme, to Shah Zaman, Shah Riar's younger brother, the destiny of the secondary couple being the consequence of the Good that spreads concentrically and leads to a chain of happy endings. By contradicting the realemes of cultural history, Barth fills the psychological gaps of the hypotext with his own interpretations or with *motivation* procedures (Genette 1997: 372-373) that clarify the stories of the couples.

The narrative consists of two intertwining stories that are told on the very night of the two couples' wedding, followed by the all-encompassing account of the narrator-Genie. In the first story, Dunyazade tells Shah Zaman how she and her sister became, from possible victims, the brides of the two misogynistic brothers, thanks not only to the tricks devised by the two sisters, but also the stories that the writer-Genie brought to the storyteller from the future, from his fundamental book *The Thousand and One Nights*, arranged in the correct order. It is extremely important for Scheherazade to know which story is more impactful for the beginning, how to emphasize the link between the evolution of her situation and the story she tells, how to adapt the story to the king's frame of mind etc. However, the first story does not stop here: Scheherazade believes that her triumph over the Shah's dark soul is by no means forgiveness and marriage, but the perfectly symmetrical revenge for the humiliations she has endured, a project in which she also involves her sister. The two are going to castrate their own husbands on their wedding night and then commit suicide, hoping they will meet in a world "that knows nothing of *he* and *she* [emphasis in original]" (Barth 1973: 46), but not before letting their former oppressors know what fate awaits them. Dunyazade tells all this to Shah Zaman, and he, under a death threat, tells his own story: his masculine pride made him claim to be dealing with women as his brother did – deflowering and then killing them – but he actually released them secretly. In the end, the two stories meet in another version of the frame story from *The Thousand*

and *One Nights*, that of the couple formed in *one night*. The morning finds both Dunyazade and Shah Zaman – and, it is suggested, the main couple, Scheherazade and Shahryar, as well – purified by their symmetrical confessions and free of prejudices about the war of the sexes. It is a different kind of redemption, found not through the victory of the woman-spiritual guide over the brutalized man, but the triumph of the masculine and the feminine alike, the mutual acceptance of the vulnerabilities and strengths of each sex.

The story and its corollary – locutionary act, narrative art and exemplary plot – maintain the saving function established by the *Arabian Nights* or the Indo-Persian cycle *The Book of Sindibād* (Clouston 1884), that of a weapon sharper than the sword or an exchange by which one's life is redeemed (Bodiştean 2013: 74-80), except that in *Dunyazadiad* the agent of significance is no longer the strategy-story, but the truthful story, the confession. A perlocutionary shift from knowing “which words work, and when, and for what” (Barth 1973: 15) towards life stories that, as Shah Zaman says, “are too important to be lies. Fictions, maybe – but truer than fact” (idem: 61) occurs in the act of storytelling. Or, in the words of Barth, the Genie, who practises the poetics of the fluidity of ontological categories in his entire work, “Some fictions [...] were so much more valuable than fact that in rare instances their beauty made them real” (idem: 25).

The sincerity of the relationship between men and women and, consequently, the acceptance of the *interchangeability* of socially assigned roles form the core of the redistribution of textual ideology in this postmodern proposal. Between the magic (magnetism) of the sexes and the magic of genuine storytelling there is a two-way investment aiming to deconstruct the old mental structures and anachronistic ideologems. The scenario of Scheherazade's nights, consisting of sex and storytelling, in this order, is significantly recalibrated in Dunyazade's reverse scenario, storytelling and sex. Nevertheless, on the night of the narrative present (just one night instead of one thousand and one), one no longer hears Scheherazade's unidirectional monologue, which preserves the pre-assigned roles of listener and narrator, king and subject, but a story with two narrators, Dunyazade and Shah Zaman, a dialogue of two lives that advances to the point where they meet both physically and on an alchemical-spiritual level, that of the “Tragic View of Love”.

Barth's entire fictional construct retraces and preserves the strong topoi of the hypotext – misogyny, death threat, conversion to love, purification of the soul – opposing *multiplicity and duration* (involved in Scheherazade's laborious persuasion) to *uniqueness and instantaneity*. Dunyazade and Shah Zaman “pass a thousand nights in one dark night, and in the morning embrace each other” (idem: 64) because, in the end and as a result of abandoning the strategy in favour of the confession, they make a pact of reciprocity in the mythical-archetypal sense:

‘Let's end the dark night! All that passion and hate between men and women; all that confusion of inequality and difference! Let's take the truly tragic view of love! Maybe it *is* [emphasis in original] a fiction, but it's the profoundest and best of all! Treasure me, Dunyazade, as I'll treasure you!’ (Barth 1973: 61).

### 3. “The Tragic View of Love”

The reception of Barth's work has often been less than enthusiastic, the attention paid to the fictional artefact or its generalising irony leading to “the disregard of philosophical implications of the demythologisation of the ideal

human experience materialised in rigid traditions and systems” (Lupan 1988: 211-212). Depth hermeneutics reveals a discourse on the human condition, which in *Dunyazadiad*, especially its second part, becomes genuine erotology.

Compared to the feminist rewriting of classical myths – such as Margaret Atwood’s (2005) *The Penelopiad* or Christa Wolf’s *Cassandra* (1984) and *Medea* (1998) –, which give a unilateral presentation of the offensive launched by the “once silent party”, *Dunyazadiad* confronts the conventionalism of various socio-political and mentality systems (Eastern-patriarchal, Amazonian, contemporary) with the archetypal view of the sexes and the traditional reality of machismo and its radical and self-sabotaging aspects of feminism. In this manner, Barth denounces the mechanical realistic methods that have led to the establishment of a relational, older or more recent tradition that is a socially determined “representation”, not typical of the human being.

Barth’s Scheherazade is “updated” to resemble the present-day model: the typical successful woman, but also the parody of extremist, self-sufficient and self-destructive feminism. Appalled by the state of the nation, she gives up her studies to fight for a humanitarian cause: to stop the femicide committed by Shahryar. After exhausting all rational possibilities, she realises – and this is the irony of the rewriting! – that her only way out is to manipulate the Shah through “magic”, using sweet words and sex – solutions as “ancestral” as the subjects of her stories. Sherry is neither faithful, nor in love, nor genuine in the “Amazonism” she imposes on herself, just as she imposed her frigidity in her relationship with the Shah. Within the system of textual symmetries, her counterpart is the vizier’s daughter in Shah Zaman’s kingdom, who gives herself to him unconditionally and has the power to turn him from a cruel man with discretionary powers to a man of authentic existence. The “Tragic View of Sex and Temperament” that she embraces fine-tunes the feminist motivational discourse of self-sufficiency, pleading for respecting each woman’s nature or the “inner sex” Evola (1983: 32-35) speaks about – sex that, in the case of atypical individuals, can be asserted as completely independent from the physical conditions and the social mask and, if repressed, causes ruptures in the “organic relations with the essential being” (idem: 33). From the spiritual sex perspective, the “dependent”, Demeter-type woman is *natura innata* in the first place and social determination on the second place:

she knew herself personally be unsuited for independence, formed by her nature and upbringing to be happy only in the shadow of a man whom she admired and respected more than herself. (Barth 1973: 54)

Shah Zaman’s impotence can be a metaphor for his dismantled social role (and its implications related to power, possession, authority), impotence that ends with his schizoid existence:

‘You *are* unable to keep it,’ she told me softly: ‘not because you’re naturally impotent, but because you’re *not* [emphasis in original] naturally cruel. If you’d tell your brother that after thinking it over you’ve simply come to a conclusion different from his, you’d be cured as if by magic’. (idem: 56)

As the denouement suggests, Scheherazade’s character has the same evolution, because she is cured of her feminist ambitions at the end of the show, when Shahryar’s “mask” falls.

Barth's gender reconstruction fictionalises the idea of abyssal, metaphysical sex or natural magic of love – in line with Plato's (1994) androgyny, Ficino's (1985) universal fluid theory, Jung's (2014) *animus–anima* complementarity, and Evola's (1983) magnetic theory of love – combined with the representation of love as an intentional, volitive-intellective-affective construct (Ortega y Gasset 1971, Paz 1995). Both traditional representations imply and support the idea of exclusivist love vs. possession and multiplication (harem). The one-night woman (the virgins beheaded or freed in the morning), the favourite (for a while!) woman/wife in the harem and the woman of a lifetime represent the beginning and the end of the search for *individuation* on the sex-eroticism-love path theorised by Octavio Paz (1995) in *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism*. Eroticism or culturalized sex – the level at which the male-female game takes place in the fictional universe – illustrates the Don Juan/polygamous trap of novelty and diversity and prevents evolution. This is what Shah Zaman, the reverse of Don Juan's character, who does not experience sensuality, but the disillusionment caused by the objectification of woman, admits:

Though I took many, with their consent, I wanted none of them. Novelty lost its charm, then even its novelty. Unfamiliarity I came to loathe: the foreign body in the dark, the alien touch and voice, the endless *exposition* [emphasis in original]. All I craved was someone with whom to get on with the story of my life, which was to say, of our life together: a loving friend; a loving wife; a treasurable wife; a wife, a wife. (Barth 1973: 60)

In the Western tradition of the Don Juan-type of libertine life, one fails in love when one deliberately repudiates the idea of choice by professing a kind of eroticism whose essence lies in change. Of the entire phenomenology of love, one remembers only the stage of “pure sensuality” or “the triumph of the flesh that has forgotten about the spirit” (Liiceanu 2010: 232). On institutionalising the multiple possession of a woman, the Eastern patriarchal system assigns choice and exclusivity a relative nature and, as shown by the two shahs' experiences, the punishment for absolute liberty is boredom. No Commander comes to punish libertinage, only the outraged spirit of those involved in it. Ortega y Gasset developed an interesting theory about love as *spiritual creation* that appears “only in certain stages and forms of human culture” (1971: 180) and is unknown in cultural areas of non-attachment religions like Buddhism or Hinduism. Love, says Octavio Paz (1995: 156), is also incompatible with any totalitarian system, because such a system denies the idea of *person*, implicitly that of identity and singularity. In line with the social theories about love, the polygamous system is revealed as an objective obstacle to discovering the profound masculine identity:

Since love is the most delicate and total act of a soul, it will reflect the state and nature of the soul. [...] For this reason, we can find in love the most decisive symptom of what a person is. (Ortega y Gasset 1971: 144)

Possession, as Barth's re-imagined plot implies, leads to unfaithfulness; in reply, love means the assumption of equality in the mythical-archetypal meaning of complementarity and reciprocity. However, the ideological stake of re-fictionalising the Eastern plot is much more subtle, Barth suggesting that it is not patriarchy (or the Amazonian matriarchy) that kills love, but the patriarchal attitude

– which is, essentially, timeless – or the obedience with which each individual identifies with their social mask.

According to Evola's (1983: 35-41) theory about the manifestation of erotic attraction on the different layers of the being, in *Dunyazadiad* the couples' game takes place on the path leading from "mask" to "face". At the "mask" level, the shallowest layer of the being, any individual is unstable, adopting behaviours like libertine love or socially adequate "bourgeois" love. The profound being comprises the other two layers: the intermediate one, with a remarkable degree of determination and stability, is where the *principium individuationis* and *natura innata* of each person are found; the deepest layer, that of elementary forces preceding individuation, shelters the roots of sex, the blind impulse that pushes one towards the opposite sex only because it is the opposite sex. While this last layer arouses blind, even animal attraction or the positively de-individualized forms of the Eros such as Dionysian manifestations, the choice, the "unique love" is born at the border between the deep and the intermediate layers, where "the conditional quality of bonds belonging to the individuation or inborn nature of a given being start to act almost at once" (idem: 37).

Unlike the artificial symmetry of the Eastern hypotext (in which the secondary couple is a structurally identical "satellite" of the main couple), the denouement in *Dunyazadiad* provides *individual solutions* to the issue of gender equality and love in a couple: Shahryar marries Scheherazade (whose sexual experiences he has known all along) and agrees to giving her a kind of freedom similar to his own, considering that "the way to spare oneself the pain of infidelity is to love and not you care" (Barth 1973: 62); Shah Zaman, sensing Dunyazade's genuine chastity, chooses to reward faithfulness with faithfulness. His love story proves that the positions of power – not only between sexes, but also between individuals of the same sex – do not belong to the "mask" level, but to *principium individuationis*. Through the "experiment" set up on the wedding night, he reverses the poles of authority, giving Dunyazade the opportunity to kill him, fully confident that she will not do it: "Besides, between any two people, you know – what I mean, it's not the patriarchy that makes you take the passive role with your sister, for example" (idem: 50).

Charles B. Harris's psychoanalytic reading confirms that the salvation of the male character is achieved by assuming the female principle – creation, love, acceptance of time – as a constituent part of it:

According to Jung, a man is often incapable of truly loving a woman until he has begun to come to the terms with the feminine component in his own psyche, his anima. (Harris 1983: 134)

Barth's parody targets both the debauchery of Eastern polygamy, hidden behind opulence, and the sexual promiscuity of the modern world. For the contemporary Genie, adultery is a kind of perversion, while the marriage of the modern world, with its "dimensions of spiritual seriousness and public responsibility" (1973: 35), is the only form of expressing the exclusive choice of the other. And "the notion of a love that time would season and improve" (idem: 24), which he invokes, the image of the "two white-haired spouses who still cherished each other and their life together" (idem: 24-25) can be an intertext of the myth of Philemon and Baucis (Ovid 1955: 195-198), who ask the gods to make

them die together (in the myth) or before they stop cherishing each other (in Barth's more cautious version).

The concept of *unconditional love* that Barth (1981) discusses in *Menelaiad* implies the same opposition between *person* and *persona*, between "face" and "mask". Menelaus, tormented by the question of why Elena had chosen him, is the prisoner of the superficial and conventional layer of the Eros, unable to penetrate the depths of reality, despite the assurances of the Delphi oracle or Proteus's explanations. Due to his inability to perceive his own individuation, he appears as a dispersed, fluctuating reality that questions his own existence: "It is easy to love; to be loved, as if one were real, on the order of the others: fearsome mystery! Unbearable responsibility!" (idem: 151).

The solution to escape the war of the sexes, i.e. the degeneration of identity, seems to be to reduce the distance between the Ego and the Superego to a minimum, by projecting the inner being onto the outer one (instead of saving the appearances of patriarchy, as the two shahs did). It is a solution that literature itself (the story) provides – the philosophy of "as if" or fictionalisation, the counterfactual attitude that permanently preserves the consciousness of the mimetic game, of a system of references that exists not in the empirical reality, but the deep layers of psychism:

'Let's make love like passionate equals!'

'You mean *as if* we were equals,' Dunyazade said. 'You know we're not. What you want is impossible.'

'Despite your heart's feelings?' pressed the King. 'Let it be *as if*! Let's make a philosophy of that *as if* [emphasis in original]!' (Barth 1973: 62)

The symbolic hermeneutics involved in the recurring *night-day* binomial (converted here into the ceremonial of the "Good night" and "Good morning" greetings), associated by Durand (1999: 154-164) with the scenarios of transcendence, ascension and fall, links the exclusivist love theme to the discovery of identity. Shah Zaman, as a character who bears the textual ideology, becomes *the enlightened one*, like the Genie and Perseus, in midlife, at the age of the great initiations. He originates in the solar archetype of the hero who defeats the dragon of prejudice and overcomes the "complex of binding" (idem: 162) – a symbol of extraindividual determinations –, which is compared to his status as a sexually disadvantaged subject, a subject who, unfamiliar with reciprocity, cannot become an object. Similarly, his brother, overcoming his status as a "prisoner" of the strategy-story, the web of words that fascinates, seduces, manipulates and, eventually, "binds", comes to know insightful Scheherazade so well that he learns to cherish her. The complementary scenario, that of The Beauty and the Beast, suggested by the Genie (Barth 1973: 30), invites one to reconsider love as a way of going deeper than the superficial layer of the flesh, to where the deep self lies, and breaking the "spell", i.e. the alienating effect of the traumatic experience.

#### 4. The sexuality of storytelling

As Barth has stated many times, Scheherazade is the personal myth of his work – "What Diotima was to Socrates in the *Symposium*, Scheherazade has always been to me" (1984: 220) – that is built, metatextually, around the archetype of the storyteller originating in the literary tradition. Nevertheless, *Dunyazadiad* occupies a special place, because its supercharacter, the *story*, literally dramatizes

the process of identifying the discourse/speech with life and the silence (of the character/narrator/text) with death. This is a major theme of postmodernist self-reflecting fiction, shows McHale (2004: 231), leading to the anamorphosis of the classical theme of creation as a way of saving oneself from death (*exegi monumentum*). “Story-persons” (Todorov 1978: 33-46) like Scheherazade exist only as discourse entities – they live as long as they talk – and the fracture occurs when this conditioning disappears. Hence the search for the never-ending story... The Genie and Scheherazade save themselves from the “inspirational crisis” through each other, which makes *the word* the antidote to *death*, in a multitude of proper or figurative meanings, including the connotation that the past is saved through the future and the future through the past. At this level, *Dunyazadiad* is about “How to save and save again one’s narrative neck?” (Barth 1984: 219).

Love, the most powerful agent of textual significance, mediates the relationship between the story and death, generating a system of mutual investments. Established works (the *Odyssey*, the *Decameron*), says the Genie, illustrate the factual collaboration between the magic of sex and the magic of storytelling, the *Thousand and One Nights* being the best example in this regard. On the other hand, in the Persian alcove, the Eros always acquires an ultimate feature, being threatened either by the Shah’s sword or Dunyazade’s blade, or it is identified with death in the so-called “Tragic View of Sex and Temperament”. The relationship between storytelling and Eros, between storytelling and sex, is exploited to such an extent that it becomes a theory of the “sexuality” of the story developed in the dialogues between the Genie and Scheherazade. From the symbolic sexual scenarios that can be identified in the physical (male) act of writing on the white, feminine page, to writing as a mechanism of seducing the reader, the Eros is involved in the act of writing/storytelling as a linking element that makes creation possible. Barth shifts symbolically from the writing instruments to the sexual ones: the Genie’s magic wand has run dry, a sign of writer’s block, so that, resurrected by the Eros, becomes “the original springs of narrative” (1973: 17); Scheherazade’s pen becomes, in moments of great concentration on the “strategy” of defeating the Shah, one of her sex toys. Even the Genie is seen as ambiguous, both as a narrative rescuer of his idol and a man who, sexually speaking, “has the key to any treasure a woman needs” (idem: 23). At last, writing/storytelling, like sexual intercourse, is technique and rhythm as well as content (“*about* something”), “refinement” as well as “intensity”, or “virtuosity” as well as “passion” (the two couples significantly representing different options on both levels).

As McHale (2004: 222) says,

Love as a principle of fiction is, in at least two of its senses, metaleptic. If authors love their characters, and if texts seduce their readers, then these relations involve violations of ontological boundaries.

The oral stories told by Barth’s Scheherazade could be an illustration of what Roland Barthes calls “the pleasure of the text”, a superior type of seduction resulting from the release of the erotic charge that language encapsulates. Any text expresses a *kāmāsutra* of language, but “writing aloud” is the supreme form of the aesthetics of textual pleasure, a pleasure derived from that “*grain* [emphasis in original] of the voice”, which reveals “the pulsional incidents”, “the language lined with flesh”, “the grain of the throat”, “a whole carnal stereophony” (Barthes 1975: 66).

As far as amorous seduction is concerned, it does not achieve its purpose only through attractiveness; it becomes complete through words, says Gabriel Liiceanu (2010: 226-227), in line with Kirkegaard (who analyses the Don Juan myth in *Alternative*). The word means plot, method, technique, premeditation, i.e. the entire arsenal with which the other is removed from oneself and taken where the seducer wants. This is where storytelling assumes the role of a convincing interaction, one that willingly submits the seduced to their seducer in a “love-relation, not a rape” (Barth 1973: 34); the author stirs and maintains the reader’s interest, while the reader represents the action by inaction, consents, cooperates. The narrator’s and listener’s pragmatic roles, be they masculine or feminine, join in creative effervescence that is valid also in the erotic code of the text, love being the symbol of any kind of fecundity:

‘The reader is likely to find herself pregnant with new images, as you hope Shahryar will become with respect to women; but the storyteller may find himself pregnant too ...’ (Barth 1973: 34)

## 5. Conclusion

Made up of so many masks, Barth’s characters appear before the reader’s eyes as transitory, protean realities, versions of themselves without truth value. As Raluca Nicoleta Șerban (2016: 103) shows in her book on John Barth, behind these decentralised identities one can identify, however, the stable identity of the author who appeals to autofiction, a concept that circumscribes “the author’s projection into the text, hidden behind fictional characters, to (re)create themselves as the only possibility to reconcile with reality”. In my opinion, this stable identity can be associated not only with the so-called “Author’s figure”, but also with the consistent imagery resulting, as Barth (1973: 208) confesses in *Bellerophoniad*, from addressing “the archetypes directly”, those psychic invariants with which the myth operates and which cast light on contemporary reality.

In line with these mythopoetic coordinates, *Dunyazadiad* proves that Barth’s erotic imagery and eroticised discourse converge on a representation of androgyny that, in the double register of the socially determined couple and the “exhausted story”, symbolises the path to the character’s/author’s self-discovery and the condition of Creation at the same time.

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**STRATEGIES OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN  
TONI MORRISON'S *BELOVED*  
AND ALICE WALKER'S *MERIDIAN***

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***Abstract:** Marginalized cultures regularly seek strategies for supplanting the norms of the dominant culture in order to survive the encroaching sovereignty of its hegemonic discourse. This article aims to identify African-American underlying strategies for resisting the “white” culture, as represented in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Alice Walker’s *Meridian*. The subalterns in these novels use faultlines to destabilize the nodal points on which an overarching culture’s field of discursivity is installed. The dissident culture ultimately opens up spaces for residual and emergent signifiers to redefine the existing signs in the supposedly fixed field of discursivity.*

***Keywords:** dominant discourse, faultlines, field of discursivity, nodal points, residual and emergent elements, dissidence*

## **1. Introduction**

Subaltern cultures constantly look for the best way to survive, despite the overarching presence of the hegemonic discourse, and try to find strategies to confront or assimilate the dominant culture’s norms. Therefore, reading ethnic novels would help us realize that the search for the roots of one’s own culture and the struggle to assimilate different cultural codes are not issues specific to one culture. As cases for this analytical study, we will turn to *Beloved* by Toni Morrison and *Meridian* by Alice Walker, each written at a different stage of emancipation, but pregnant with strategies for resisting the encroaching white culture. Here we attempt to see what strategies the marginalized communities adopt to show cultural resistance.

To develop resistance strategies, initially, we need to study the discourse that regulates the marginalized cultures. Discourse is a network of different sources of powers wherein meaning is fixated, and the interests of the dominant ideology are often secured. In discourse, the articulation cannot simply be practiced and confined to linguistic phenomena and involves various sources, which, according to Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 109), “pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discourse formation is structured.” Correspondingly, Althusser explains that ideology is a system of interconnected ideas devised to control the masses. And the ideological beliefs are given credit and receive widespread approval with the help of what Althusser (1968: 701) calls Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) - the institutions that help

language fixate the meaning of fluid signifiers and naturalize the meaning assigned to the signs by the dominant power.

*Meridian* and *Beloved* portray people and societies that attempt to construct counter-discourses which usually put in suspense and then reformulate nodal points –privileged signs around which the other signs are ordered (Laclau, Mouffe 2001: 112) – of the dominant culture. These novels demonstrate how the dominant white discourse could reach what Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 111) call “a partial limitation of a surplus of meaning”; residual elements’ bombardment of the dominant discourse opens up space for articulating the already existing cultural elements.

In theoretical terminology, “as the surplus of meaning constantly overflows society, one can always find elements that have not yet been articulated, and around which there can be conflicts of meanings. This means that society is constantly being subverted and thus cannot determine itself as a ‘sutured totality’” (Grange 2014: 57). In this sense, the banished signifiers in the field of discursivity begin to subvert the dominant discourse. Consequently, the possibility of fixating the meanings and abandoning other significances is ruled out as “the absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely” (Laclau, Mouffe 2001: 112). Stephan Greenblatt (2010: 252) posits that “moments in which the social structure applies the fiercest pressure on the individual may in fact be precisely those moments in which individuals are exercising the most stubborn will to autonomous movement.” He states that resistance is inherent in any social system. Therefore, we can explain how the African American writers develop counter-hegemonic discourses by articulating elements residual to their ethnic cultures.

A discourse always claims fixity, and within it, a wide range of predictable possibilities is available and interconnected. A discourse “stop(s) the sliding of the signs in relation to one another and hence [...] create[s] a unified system of meaning” (Jorgenson and Philips 2002: 27). There are “some privileged discursive points of this partial fixation” of meaning within a discourse which are called nodal points (Laclau, Mouffe 2001: 112). And in our argument, these belong to the white culture around which the marginalized cultures and discourses, such as the African American ones, are defined. The marginalized cultures consciously or subconsciously attach new significance to the already existing signs. This process delegitimizes and denaturalizes the supremacy of the white culture over other ethnicities. Contradictions create what in Sinfield’s (1992) terminology are called *faultlines*, which can be regarded as some specific points in the text “at which the hegemonic surface may crack and reveal the writing forces underneath” (Bertens 2013: 203). Besides, the faultlines can destabilize the nodal points of the dominant discourse.

## **2. *Beloved*: The shameless beauty and the clash of meanings**

Morrison’s strategy for resistance is articulated through the resisting characters of the novel: Baby Suggs started her resistances by constructing and unearthing the emergent residual elements of the past and thus subverting the official version of religion and the white church. She articulates her African slave religion in her outdoor preaching in the Clearing. Throughout her secret outdoor preaching, holy Baby Suggs redefines African American identity, teaches the members of her community to look at themselves from a different point of view,

and remember the past in order to reconstruct it following their African tradition. She abandons the white church for it does not address the lives and concerns of African Americans: "I ain't set foot in one [of the white churches] in ten years. [...] wasn't none. I dislike the place I was before this last one, but I did get to church every Sunday same kind of way" (Morrison 2014: 146). When the norms of the dominant discourse suppress minority groups, dissidences will develop and grow in the form of some faultlines, e.g. "wasn't none", and also they will construct alternative strategies to defy the official version; for instance, Baby Suggs worships, but in "some kind of way." In this sense, the meaning of worship is systematically changed by Baby Suggs, who articulates it as a way of relocating the nodal point in her African American discourse. Dwight Hopkins believes that the religion constructed by the enslaved African Americans is capable of generating cultural resistances:

Assembled deep in the woods [...] African Americans found worship space in which to thrive by maintaining moral in situations they seemed hopeless; preserving mental sanity in the face of the irrational white world [...] synthesizing memories of African religious structure and practices with reinterpreted Christian beliefs to build a unique African American theology under slavery, organizing and plotting slave political and cultural resistance. (2003: 824)

Enslaved African Americans will learn throughout their religious gatherings that the word "irrational" can also be attached to the white world/people. In the Clearing gatherings, the dominant discourse's socio-cultural and economic oppression is resisted and negated. In this sense, Baby Suggs' creation of a specific religious consciousness and cultural awareness can be seen as an emergent element articulated in the African American discourse. Enslaved African Americans' meetings in the Clearing apply floating signifiers in the field of discursivity to redefine the blackness of enslaved African Americans and construct a space in which the oppressed community can resist the dominant culture. Floating signifiers, such as the Ring Shout dance, and Call and Response preaching, and also redefined elements, such as the unusual invitation to laugh, dance, and sing, are all incorporated into her preaching:

It started that way: laughing children, dancing man, crying women and then it got mixed up. [...] In the silence that followed Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meeks or its glory- bound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. (Morrison 2014: 87-88)

The dominant discourse is negated throughout the above faultlines by dissident voices urging the enslaved African Americans to laugh, sing, and dance. Even the language of the white sermons is abandoned in the above Clearing sermon. The white definition of God is deconstructed; God's grace is no longer a divine gift, but a human creation invented by human imagination, and liberation is not just that granted from above, but a human possibility.

Baby Suggs' preaching redefines the fixed meanings in the white discourse. As a result, deconstruction is at the heart of Baby Suggs' resistance strategy. She aims at deconstructing the hegemonic nodal points of the dominant discourse: "Black consciousness is an attempt to recover a past deliberately destroyed by slave masters[...] There is only one course of action for the black community, and

that is to destroy the oppressor's definition of blackness" (Cone 1986: 12-13). In the following sermon, Baby Suggs replaces the hate and contempt for the black of the dominant white discourse with that of love and respect:

"Here", she said, "in this here place, we flesh; flesh that weeps, laughs; flesh that dances on bare feet in grass. Love it. Love it hard. Yonder they do not love your flesh. They despise it. They don't love your eyes; they'd just as soon pick em out. No more do they love the skin on your back [...] And o my people, out yonder, hear me, they don't love your neck unnoosed and straight. (Morrison 2014: 88-89)

The assumption that what the white discourse considered natural is culturally, racially, and ideologically constructed underlies Baby Suggs' deconstructive strategy. Baby Suggs prepares the ground for new alternative meanings.

Both Sides, the white and the black, try to define and attach meanings to the signifiers. On the one hand, the white people try to construct a discourse that justifies their imperialism. On the other, the African American people's counter-discourse exposes the dehumanizing aspects of the hegemonic discourse. Accordingly, discourse construction would seem to be the main factor/player in resisting the dominant ideology.

Baby Suggs's sermons open up the closure already imposed on black consciousness for centuries. As Patricia Hill Collins (1991: 59) states, "self-defined standpoints can stimulate resistance." What Baby Suggs says in her sermons can be regarded as "self-defined standpoints," which the oppressive discourse does not tolerate and tries to suppress. Seeds of resistance will flower in such ground: self-definitions, self-love, self-affirmation, and hope. In this sense, when an oppressed group tries to define itself according to its rules/regulations, closures in the oppressive discourse's meanings will no longer have enough space for articulation.

Deconstructing the hegemonic discourse would also be followed by other dissenting characters' language use. In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison (1992: x-xi) states that "language [...] can powerfully evoke and enforce hidden signs of racial superiority, cultural hegemony, and dismissive 'othering' of people [...] we have to] free up the language from its almost always predictable employment of racially informed and determined chains". Sixo's silences open up gaps/faultlines within the text, asserting reconsideration of the racially constructed language.

Defining actions, behaviours, words, and the whole world of signification belonged to whites, while blacks had nothing to do with assigning and fixing meanings. Sixo resists the predetermined constructions and redefines the situation. In this sense, the word "taking" takes the place of "stealing" and Sixo is no longer a thief but an active subject who can own property.

In *Beloved*, a character like Sixo can destabilize the dominant discourse and redefine himself as a human being: "what's important," Taylor-Guthrie (1994: 223) maintains, "is the process by which we construct and deconstruct reality in order to be able to function in it. [...] to explore how a people [...] absorbs and rejects information on a very personal level about something that is indigestible and absorbable, completely". It seems that Morrison re-territorializes the field of discursivity by introducing new elements into it. In other words, *Beloved* aims at deconstructing the official version of reality articulated by the white and constructing a new one applicable to the African American people. When power-relations are shaken by individual acts of resistance, the floating signifiers, which become visible to the disempowered, offer an unofficial version of reality and fight for room in the field of discursivity.

In order to dismantle the process of cooption, Morrison devises some strategies which aim at constructing alternative representations. Listening to others and remembering the past – which she calls *rememory* – are two effective weapons by which she negates white hegemony and deconstructs its discourse. In *Unspeaking Things Unspoken*, Morrison (1989: 29) believes that the text's faultlines can be filled with other significances:

Into these spaces [faultlines] should fall the ruminations of the reader and his or her invented or recollected or misunderstood knowings. The reader as narrator asks the questions the community asks and both reader and "voice" stand among the crowd, within it, with the privileged intimacy and contact, but without any more privileged information than the crowd has. That egalitarianism [...] places us all (reader, the novel's population, the narrator's voice) on the same footing.

Listening to/ reading Morrison's text is not like receiving some finished stories and living in a kind of isolated capsule. She tells us about invented or emergent elements and recollected or residual ones, which are actively present and participate in articulating alternative voices. Morrison's stories stimulate the listener to reconstruct in a new light what has been told. Listening to the characters' past can transform the present and reshape the future. Thus, the past is not just a mere shameful archive but is actively reconstructed following the discourse of the repressed.

### **3. *Meridian*: Silence as a strategy in negating the hegemonic discourse**

Walker's *Meridian* places the basics of resistance in her transformations, which have gone through some unfamiliar processes starting from silence. *Meridian*'s refusal to affirm the dominant discourse's rules can be interpreted as civil disobedience. She negates the hegemonic cultures' ability to use her as a tool fulfilling its needs. Her silence is launched against the white discourse in school, church, and college and the patriarchal violence of the revolutionaries (Walker 2011: 9-11). Here, Walker opens up another door on dissidence; her strategy is silence in the face of the totalitarian discourse. She grounds her novel in civil disobedience.

*Meridian* opposes nodal points, as she disobeys what has been firmly articulated and inculcated in the masses as natural. She turns to the strategy of storytelling to dismantle the fixed hegemonic meanings of the dominant. She uses folktales – as residual elements – that remind her people of the floating signifiers in their culture. Stories, folk songs, and May dances are reconstructed. It is significant here that the remembered elements are reconstructed with reference to emergent elements; they are about women who perform dissidence and civil disobedience.

In the section "Sojourner," a large tree called *Sojourner*, located in the center of the college, can be seen as the generator of many such stories:

So many tales and legends had grown up around the Sojourner that students of every persuasion had a choice of which to accept. [...] It was the only time in all the many social activities of Saxon that every girl was considered equal. On that day, they hold each other's hands tightly. (Walker 2011: 18)

Here, Walker's strategy to bring unity to her community is storytelling; with the help of stories, one can subvert the hegemonic discourse. Stories carry the

floating signifiers back to the field of discursivity. As a result, with the help of folk songs and tales, the alienated or marginalized subjects find moments to articulate their elements and tilt the fixity of the nodal points.

Louvinie is a storyteller whose stories frightened her Master's children. Her white Master severely punished her for this and had her tongue cut out from the root. She buried her tongue under the tree, and it is under the Sojourner that different stories grew: "other slaves believed it possessed magic. They claimed the tree could talk, make music, was sacred to birds and possessed the power to obscure vision" (Walker 2011: 17). In fact, Louvinie's power was transferred to Sojourner, and now it is the tree that can generate stories that challenge the dominant discourse, unite the African American students, and pay homage to the blacks. Willis (1998: 114) states:

Named the Sojourner, the Magnolia conjures up the presence of another leader of black woman, who, like Louvinie, used language in the struggle for liberation. In this way, Walker builds a network of women, some mythic like Louvinie, some real like Sojourner Truth, as the context for Meridian's affirmation and radicalization.

Walker's web of women reminds us of how discourse can be made, articulating a web of related meanings which signify the culture's interests. Louvinie and Sojourner Truth have weaponized language in their struggle for freedom.

Another notable instance of resistance is Meridian's great-grandmother, Feather Mae, who rejects all organized religions. Her refusal represents the community with alternative meanings and can stand as an excellent example of defiant characters resisting the dominant. By generating questions about the validity of the dominant discourse's rules and regulations, the text aims at reconstructing a counter-hegemonic discourse.

Throughout the novel, the production of meaning is hugely grounded in the readers' consciousness, who must actively participate in constructing meaning. Instead of chapters, readers are confronted with several not chronologically ordered episodes. And the readers can shuffle the episodes in any order without affecting the text's meaning. In fact, as a character in the novel, Meridian creates faultlines within the dominant discourse. Readers are compelled to repeat different sentences that invite them to think and rethink the discursive constructions. In "The Recurring Dream," the reader is urged to repeat sentences referring to an insoluble problem - that of her black existence: "She dreamed she was a character in a novel and that her existence presented an insoluble problem, one that would be solved only by her death at the end" (117). This quotation, constantly repeated throughout the text, urges the readers to pause and think, decoding its fixed meanings and constructing new ones.

Another narrative that has the same function of creating a faultline is the story of Wild Child, whose antisocial behaviour marks her as the antithesis of the standards dominating society. The Wild Child story is embedded in that of the Sojourner Tree, which would also play the same role of constructing a faultline. The Sojourner story is more harmful to the dominant discourse because it is about the power of storytelling in subverting the hegemonic discourse. Walker's emphasis here is on the power of storytelling as a vehicle for constructing a discourse rather than on the violence of revolutionary forces. The embedded narratives portray diversions in the novel's text and represent an alternative



discourse. Such a counter-discourse uses racial and gendered elements, which are disruptive to the totalitarian discourse.

In her attempt to construct a counter-discourse, Walker targets the traditional conceptualization of motherhood. She questions this nodal point, causing a crisis, by directly addressing its validity to the life of every woman. Moreover, she addresses the whole community of women – regardless of their skin colour – to situate her discourse into a larger context. After reading about Mrs. Hill's rejection of her role as a matriarch, which Christianity and the patriarchal white discourse had articulated, the readers are presented with Meridian's rejection of her roles as daughter, wife, and mother (69-70).

By applying residual and emergent elements of African American cultures, Walker portrays them in a new light, using them for political resistance. Residual elements originating from race, gender, and nature are turned into sites of political and cultural reformation. She also applies African spirituality from the field of discursivity to suspend the white bourgeoisie discourse, as it is filled with fixed meanings referring to African American women as sexual beasts. In other words, the African American spiritualization of nature as a residual element creates faultlines and becomes a source of energy, with political dimensions negating the oppressive policies of white discourse. In this sense, Walker's use of the Sojourner Tree and the Sacred Serpent Indian Mound can be analyzed as politically devastating to the hegemonic discourse (19). The Sojourner Tree can be regarded as the community's means of reclaiming and regaining the African American oppressed culture. The sacred tree becomes a source of discursivity for the whole community, whose political rebellion is fueled by the floating signifiers coming from the Sojourner.

The Sojourner tree and the Sacred Serpent Indian Mound, "sites of memory," contain what the dominant discourse has banned and denied. In an episode called "Indians and Ecstasy," Meridian overhears her parents talking about a piece of land called the Sacred Serpent:

"But the land already belonged to them [Native Americans]," her father said, "[...] That Mound is full of dead Indians. Our food is made healthy from the iron and calcium from their bones. Course, since it's a cemetery, we shouldn't own it anyhow."

[...]

"But to give our land to a naked Indian"

"Naked? He ain't naked. You believe all that stuff they put on television. He wears a work shirt and blue jeans. His hair is the only thing that looks like Indians look on TV. (23)

What has disappeared from the face of the earth is recalled in order to challenge the white supremacy propagated on TV as an inevitable and natural way of the world. The mound and the tree bring back lost and banned histories, as the writer-archeologist narrates incidents concerning the two. Moreover, Walker subverts the dominant discourse's articulation of African American women as beasts of burden. As a result, the western objectification of enslaved African American women as beasts of burden, sexual beasts, and breeders loses its validity and stability as a nodal point in the white patriarchal discourse. Various issues have been articulated around such a nodal point: treating blacks as human "cattle," the conflation of the blacks with apes, the close relationship between African American women and nature, as they were forced to do field labour. In addition, African American

women are also held responsible for having animalistic sexual desires, even by African American male standards. The Assistant's words clarify the point: "The Assistant said later that the girl was his now, whenever he wanted her, because he had discovered a secret few men knew: how to make a woman come by using nothing but his penis and his beautiful voice. There were his gifts" (31). African American women were used as property and tools; they were reduced to the status of lecherous animals that must bear children, work in the fields and gratify the sexual pleasure of both black and white men. But as Walker works on deconstructing the dominant discourse, tracing the words articulated by the novel's male characters sends the dominant discourse into a crisis. When the Assistant tries to seduce a girl, the words create faultlines in the text, and the readers can see that the sexual beast is not the girl but the Assistant (30-31).

Comparing men to sex machines who use women for sex and articulating the word "voice" with capital V signify faultlines in the dominant discourse. Walker portrays females who seek solace in the arms of men and security coming from the words articulated by them. Such purposeful acts of subversion are at work throughout the novel, whose readers are compelled to question the validity of the dominant discourse's norms.

In subverting the dominant, Native and African Americans take sides with each other through one character, who is Meridian's great grandmother, Feather Mae. The residual elements collected by Meridian around the legends of Feather Mae enable her to present the blacks and the Natives as victims of the same hegemonic process. Feather Mae's spiritual experiences at the Sacred Serpent mound are transmitted to Meridian through her rememory of Feather Mae, thus, transforming her from a sexually exploited object to a politically active individual.

As Feather Mae merges into the spiritual experiences of Sacred Serpent, her objectivity as a sexual tool turns into a kind of subjectivity whose power can control even her husband. In this sense, Feather Mae, gaining power by living among the residual elements, becomes Meridian's model for resistance. Meridian comes to understand that women can have their subjectivity. She veers her way and heals herself through acts of political resistance, civil disobedience, discourse construction, and service to her people in different towns in which she chooses to live.

#### **4. Conclusion: A strategy for cultural resistance**

*Beloved* and *Meridian* were written during the years of turbulent transformations in the lives of African Americans. Acts of resistance and dissidence of African American communities hugely transformed the dominant discourse at that time. One of the most fundamental transformations was a new recognition of what had been eliminated from the field of discursivity. After centuries of adoring beauty and power and decades of longing to look like white bourgeois people and thinking that it was appropriate to do so, African Americans began to push in new signifiers in the field of discursivity, to redefine the significance of the already existing signifiers, and re-territorialize the meaning of the nodal points in the culture of a nation. In an afterword to *The Bluest Eye*, Morrison writes:

The reclamation of racial beauty in the sixties stirred these thoughts, made me think about the necessity for the claim. Why, although reviled by others, could his beauty

not be taken for granted within the community? Why did it need wide public articulation to exist? (Morrison 2014: 212)

Morrison's and Walker's novels aspire to "racially benign inclusiveness" of the banned signifiers. But the dominant discourse wants the resisting voices to be contained within its own parameters. As the dominant discourse holds the hegemonic social order in place by reinvigorating the nodal points fixated in the field of discursivity, the subaltern cultures seek ways to dispel the illusion of balance the hegemonic representations give us. When the subaltern people are entangled within the web of articulated moments, initially, they presume that it is the natural way of the world. But because the hegemony is constructed by fixating several limited significances for the signs and because the signs have unlimited alternative significances, characters who try to articulate elements in the field of discursivity will become a menace to the pretensions of stability, naturalness, and fixity of the dominant discourse. Also, they question the accepted social order in two different forms: either by unearthing residual elements like folktales, folk songs, and folk dances, or by producing new cultural elements, which might or might not be in any way related to the traditional values of an ethnic people and are used only to disempower the dominant discourse.

Story-telling has been regarded as one of the main strategies by which one can give life to the residual and emergent elements. The resisting characters' narratives generate faultlines in the text and help us check the legitimacy of the dominant. Thus, counter-narratives subvert the hegemonic web of meanings. Morrison's and Walker's novels reveal the use of residual and emergent elements to create faultlines within the field of discursivity present in their texts. When alternative articulations destabilize the nodal points on which the field of discursivity is installed, the possibility of having new moments becomes strong. Storytelling has the power to help the communities reappraise their cultural signposts and catalyze the process described above. Storytellers reintroduce floating signifiers, already banished by the dominant discourse. By the time the listeners take into account the floating signifiers, the official version of history, which claims naturalness, is weakened and dislocated, and this opens up the path for counter-discourses to come into existence.

Both novels follow a relatively similar pattern of resistance. The resisting agents begin to consciously or subconsciously introduce residual and emergent elements into the dominant culture. Consequently, they will create faultlines in the con-text, which claims universality and naturalness. The nodal points on which the dominant discourse places the field of discursivity, are rusted away by the faultlines created by the elements articulated by the resisting agents. Thus, new possibilities of interpreting the signs become possible.

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## THE POWER OF MUSIC AS CULTURAL MEMORY IN BERNARDINE EVARISTO'S *BLONDE ROOTS*

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**Abstract:** *This article analyses the construction and transmission of cultural memory through the use of music and lyrics in Bernardine Evaristo's neo-slave narrative Blonde Roots. The first section introduces the term 'cultural memory' and the subsequent sections engage in close textual analysis of songs in their original version, the usage of spirituals, the creation of new songs through inspirations, and the creation of music lyrics through repetitions. My paper tries to increase the understanding of how music in Blonde Roots constructs and functions as cultural memory, and to contribute to future research on similar topics.*

**Keywords:** *cultural memory, lyrics, music, neo-slave narrative*

### 1. Introduction

"It was so stirring that the song stayed with me long after it faded into the distance. Where had I heard it before?" (Evaristo 2009:14)

Doris, the protagonist of Bernardine Evaristo's *Blonde Roots*, hears a song that awakens feelings and memories during her arrival at the plantation. The main story of *Blonde Roots* is about Doris Scagglethorpe, the daughter of a poor cabbage farmer, who is abducted from her family in England by slave traders, a reversed version of slavery, where the white people are enslaved and the black people are the enslavers. However, this neo-slave narrative is more than a satirical prose novel that imagines an alternate version of the transatlantic slave trade. This specific usage of music and sound in *Blonde Roots* establishes a rich resource for the construction of cultural memory.

### 2. Music as cultural memory

It was Jan and Aleida Assmann who made the social basis of collective memory their starting point and took a further step toward establishing its cultural basis. Cultural memory refers to the steps undertaken by society to ensure cultural continuity both by preserving collective knowledge for the next generations and by making "references to the past" that reassure the members of a society of their collective identity, thus creating a shared past (Assmann, Czaplicka 1995: 126). According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory has fixed points, and its horizon does not change over time. By fixed points, he refers to fateful events in the past, "whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (text, rites, monuments)

and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)” (idem 1995: 133). Cultural memory, therefore, encompasses remembering and forgetting. Aleida Assmann (2004: 47) defines the process and multidimensionality of cultural memory by categorizing it into functional memory and memory of archive. An element of functional memory that enters the archive and vice versa is music.

Music is one of the most powerful vehicles in the construction of cultural memory. Since the beginning of human history, music has played a crucial role and has been used for political, social, and religious events, as well as for diverse gatherings. But more than that, music is an obvious continual phenomenon whose emotional impact may persist until death. Michael Pickering defines this continuity through “nostalgia”, which is also immensely influential upon the human memory:

... for both individuals and members of specific generations, the music heard in one’s youth very often forms the source material of musical nostalgia later in life. This is a widely noted phenomenon and generally referred to as the ‘reminiscence bump’. As a result of this, we do not so much forget our general past experience because of the passing of time as remember a particular span of such experience all the more intensely. (Pickering 2018:193)

This “reminiscence bump” constitutes the fixed points defined by Assmann. While Pickering (2018:191) even argues that “Songs seem to evoke memories more powerfully than written prose, because of their combination of rhyme and rhythm, tempo and timbre”, the “reminiscence bump” is cleverly interwoven in many literary works. Novels such as Gayl Jones’ *Corregidora* (1975), which is recognized as a blues novel, where she uses “call and response and repetition in dialogues between characters” (Allen 2002: 257), or Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), where “music is everywhere and all around” (Eckstein 2006: 271), more recent works like *Blonde Roots*, which uses the power of music and combines it within its narration, have not received enough critical attention. In this last novel, music works specifically for the construction of cultural memory by creating new music lyrics and using known music lyrics.

### 3. Songs in their original version

The use of original song lyrics or original lines in a novel enables the reader to hear them in their mind while reading the story. This experience allows the reader to understand and directly reach the message and the emotion that is evoked in the novel. Through the lyrics, the reader can find the song and also listen to the sound, and therefore become part of the scene. Furthermore, the original song lyrics in *Blonde Roots* are foreshadowing future events in the novel.

The very first use of original song lyrics is an old traditional English Ballad known as the “Scarborough Fair”. When Doris carries the food to her father, she recognizes the “child” in her father’s voice who is singing while he is working:

His heart was full of yearning, for something he’d lost or wanted to have.  
Are you going to Scarborough Fayre?  
Parsley, sage, rosemary and thyme,  
Remember me to one who lives there,  
She once was a true love of mine. (Evaristo 2009: 13)

Corneeltje Van Bleijswijk (2013: 91) notes that “[t]his traditional English folk song operates on many metaphorical levels, but by recalling the requirement of lovers to

fulfil a series of impossible tasks, it implies the idea that it is impossible to escape the subjugation of this kind of economic and social system". Indeed, the Scagglethorpe family and its future generations are doomed to work for the Montagues and stay in poverty. Doris remembers that they are charged for extras by using Montague's "...cart to go to market or using his grain mill or bread oven, which, if we had poor harvests, meant a debt carried over on our annual accounts for several years" (Evaristo 2009: 8). Doris's heart, however "crumbled" because she realizes for the first time that her father is a sad and miserable person rather than the humorous man he usually pretends to be.

Similarly to Morrison (1987), who in *Beloved* foreshadows a traumatic event in her protagonists' life with a children's song, Evaristo uses a lullaby. During her pregnancies, Doris makes use of her cultural memory by singing nursery rhymes from her own culture:

Little Bo Peep has lost her sheep  
And doesn't know where to find them.  
Leave them alone, and they'll come home  
Bringing their tails behind them. (Evaristo 2009: 22)

Here, Doris represents the unfortunate shepherd, a humble figure who is isolated from human society, and who is near poverty. David Clines (1998: 17) comments on this rhyme, stating that it is a tale "of the downfall of one who is originally a merely unfortunate shepherd but who soon becomes a wilful and deliberate loser of sheep, an unshepherdly shepherd. The circumstances are against her: her sheep have gone missing". Bo Peep ignores the reality that she will have to tell her master that she has lost his property and that she is going to be punished. Reflecting on Clines' analysis here, Doris is an unfortunate mother who is soon going to lose her children. She, like Bo Peep, is dependent on the owner of her children, the plantation master, Bwana. In contrast to Bo Peep, Doris is not careless, but she is unable to recognize the master's economic intentions concerning her babies. When Doris's children are sold away, she is not able to find out where they are, and she has to accept their absence. While Bo Peep, however, finds her sheep, Doris will never be reunited with her children. Doris's pregnancy makes her remember and use the nursery rhyme, which is an element of her cultural memory, but the slave system does not allow her to transmit it to her children.

Another folk song and nursery rhyme that serves as foreshadowing the future is "Lavender's Blue". While the original version dates back to the 17th century England and is usually very "bawdy" (Waltz, Engle 2021: 1), Doris uses this rhyme to tease her elderly sister Sharon, who dreams romantically of a prince on a white horse that will come to rescue her. Doris remembers singing:

Lavender blue, diddle daddle  
Lavender green,  
When he is king, diddle daddle  
You shan't be queen. (2009: 48)

Doris sings especially this rhyme, because Sharon's eye colour is lavender blue. Although Sharon dreams of becoming a princess one day, she ends up being enslaved and the concubine of Bwana, the man who enslaved her whole family and

caused their death and sufferings. Sharon becomes a kind of queen, but a concubine queen, on the slave plantation.

Consequently, all music lyrics, lullabies, and songs should be read and analysed with caution. The lyrics are carrying hints and hidden messages. Lyrics with a message are not a new phenomenon. Evaristo makes use of this method, which was helping enslaved people to communicate with each other secretly. The following section presents the way gospel songs delivered messages and how Evaristo applied this in her novel.

#### 4. The function of spirituals

Not only Doris, but also other characters in *Blonde Roots* are singing songs. Evaristo has no limits and includes gospel songs, English ballads, lullabies, and unique songs, created for the novel. While the unique songs are creative and underlining the story, other well-known songs create a sense of familiarity and certain emotions, present in those songs. Besides the feelings and the messages involved in the lyrics, this intertextual approach, by storing and transmitting the song, functions as a part of cultural memory. Some of the chapters in *Blonde Roots* are named after original songs, such as “Oh Lord, Take me Home”, “The Gospel Train”, “Oh Sweet Chariot”, “A Balm in Gilead” and “Wade in the Water” and give hints for the following events.

The first chapter of Book One is titled “Oh Lord, Take me Home”. In this chapter, Doris is a grown-up woman and receives a note from the Resistance, an anti-slavery organization, that she can escape her enslavement. During her escape, however, Doris describes her present condition as a slave and remembers her past as a serf’s daughter. The title “Oh lord, Take me Home” does not reappear in the text itself, but summarizes Doris’ yearning for freedom and home as well as of many other enslaved people in the novel. The title “Oh Lord, Take me Home” recalls “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” (1938), a gospel song written by the African American musician, composer, and Rev. Thomas A. Dorsey. As Michael Hawn (2019: 1) notes, “many hymns are conceived in the throes of tragedy”; the lyrics for “Precious Lord” were written after the death of Dorsey’s wife, Nettie, and infant son during childbirth. The lyrics of the three stanzas capture the grief of people who have experienced loss:

Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, let me stand  
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn  
Thru the storm, thru the night, lead me on to the light  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

When my life is almost gone  
Hear my cry, hear my call, hold my hand lest I fall  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

And the day is past and gone  
At the river I stand, guide my feet, hold my hand  
Take my hand, precious Lord, lead me home.

As the opening lines suggest, there is someone in pain, who reaches out for help and who walks through a “storm”; similarly, Doris fears the consequences of her escape. While the second stanza continues with a journey symbolized by the “long



road”, in the third stanza the singer reaches the final destination, which is the river – “at the river I stand”, and which is going to carry the person back home. Doris too, at the end of her journey, has to reach the ocean for her final step to freedom.

Another gospel song title, “The Gospel Train”, is given to the second chapter, which is still describing Doris’s attempt to escape. Doris meets the Conductor and reaches the Underground Railroad of the city, which does not work officially and is secretly used by the anti-slavery Resistance to carry enslaved people. Cross (2010: 27) writes that the Underground Railroad in history was a network of secret routes and safe houses established in the United States during the early to mid-19th century, used by enslaved people to escape into Free states. People who helped the enslaved people were former slaves or “just hated slavery” (Ford 2004: 24) and were usually called Conductors. The title “The Gospel Train” is inspired by a real traditional African American spiritual, called “The Gospel Train” or “Get on Board, Little Children”, published in 1872 and written by John Chamberlain, a Baptist minister from New Hampshire (Carter 1906: 461). The most prominent version is as follows:

Chorus:

Get on board, little children,  
 Get on board, little children,  
 Get on board, little children,  
 There’s room for many-a more.  
 The Gospel train’s a-coming,  
 I hear it just at hand,  
 I hear the car wheels rumbling  
 And rolling through the land

[To Chorus]

I hear the train a-coming,  
 A-coming’ round the curve,  
 She loosened all her steam and brakes,  
 She is straining every nerve.

[To Chorus]

The fair is cheap and all can go,  
 The rich and poor are there,  
 No second class aboard this train,  
 No difference in the fare.

[To Chorus]

While this kind of spirituals allowed enslaved people to communicate through hidden codes, “The Gospel Train” became a symbol for the Underground Railroad, resembling a fast means of transportation away from enslavement. The “children” (Chorus, line 1) are the enslaved people, the information that the train is about to arrive is given by the “wheels rumbling” (stanza 1, line 3), and “I hear the train a-coming, A-coming’ round the curve” (stanza 2, line 2-3); this is also a secret message that a conductor is among them. This chapter, therefore, announces Doris’s escape from slavery, but this time she travels literally by a real underground railroad.

A similar gospel song, which is about freedom and is connected to the Underground Railroad, is “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”; this is close to the title of the first chapter of Book Three in *Blonde Roots*, “Oh Sweet Chariot”. In this chapter, Doris is on a ship and is carried towards freedom. It is the first time when Doris is hopeful - “I was going home, oh Lord” (2009: 163). The song, according to *Hymnary.org*, runs as follows:

Refrain:  
 Swing low, sweet chariot,  
 Coming for to carry me home.  
 Swing low, sweet chariot,  
 Coming for to carry me home.  
  
 I looked over Jordan, and what did I see,  
 Coming for to carry me home.  
 A band of angels coming after me,  
 Coming for to carry me home. Oh, [Refrain]

Like “The Gospel Train”, this spiritual is loaded with secret messages for the enslaved people. The “sweet chariot” (Refrain, line 1) refers to the Underground Railroad, which “swing[s] low” (Refrain, line 1) and arrives from the North. Doris’s “sweet chariot”, in this chapter, however, is a ship. “Coming for to carry me home”, a line that is repeated twice in every stanza, announces that an enslaved person is going to be carried to freedom soon. While “I looked over Jordan” (stanza 1, line 1) stands for the Mississippi or the Ohio rivers, Doris’s ship is also moving on a river. Evaristo’s description of the river recalls Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), foreshadowing that Doris is still in danger:

Waterborne creatures rippled in the river.  
 Airborne creatures flapped around me.  
 The darkness wrapped me up.  
 The darkness held me.  
 The darkness carried me. (2009: 162)

The gloomy description as well as the repetition of the word “darkness” suggest that she is carried to the unknown. While darkness does not scare black enslaved people (Morrison (1987: 55) writes, for example, that Sethe is “not so afraid at night because she is the color of it”), Doris is white-skinned and the darkness surrounding her represents her unknown scary journey. However, like “a band of angels” (stanza 1, line 2) mentioned in the lyrics, which were the people who volunteered for the Underground Railroad (Liebergen 2005: 143), there are also people on the ship who provide shelter, food, and guidance to Doris.

“A Balm in Gilead” is the title of the fifth chapter of Book three in *Blonde Roots* and it refers to the spiritual bearing the same title. Doris finds herself at Sunday prayers, in a cave with the congregation and a white slave priest, who conducts Ambossan rituals proceeds with Christian rituals known from Europa that are evocative for Doris; she experiences: “It was heavenly. For a moment I was back singing ‘Loving Shepherd of Thy Sheep’ accompanied by the old organist Mr. Braithwaite inside the damp chapel at St. Michael’s Church, surrounded by a family I’d taken for granted until I lost them” (Evaristo 2009: 201).

Besides hearing the old church hymn, Doris feels the smell of incense, which is described as heavenly, and which also helps her to remember her past; and soon she finds herself “praying in a public place of worship to my own God” (2009: 202). In particular, religious rituals are important for communities, in order to carry on cultural memory. Since the balm of Gilead is known in many cultures literally as a rare healing potion, this collective singing activity is not only Doris’s balm, but also the “balm” for all enslaved people who endure the horrors of slavery. The original lyrics to “There is a Balm in Gilead”, which was sung as an African American spiritual, underlines the process of healing:

*Refrain:*

There is a Balm in Gilead  
To make the wounded whole,  
There is a Balm in Gilead  
To heal the sin-sick soul.

Sometimes I feel discouraged  
And think my work’s in vain,  
But then the Holy Spirit  
Revives my soul again.

*[to Refrain]*

Don’t ever feels discouraged,  
For Jesus is your friend;  
And if you lack for knowledge,  
He’ll ne’er refuse lend.

*[to Refrain]*

If you cannot sing like Peter,  
If you cannot preach like Paul,  
You can tell the love of Jesus  
And say, “He died for all.”

*[to Refrain]*

The refrain encourages hope for those who are desperate. Rather than to list the inhuman conditions and sufferings of slavery, the refrain mentions a spiritual illness, “sin-sick soul”, (refrain, line 4). Michael Hawn (2019:1) notes the connection of the balm with religion by focusing on Matthew Henry’s (1662-1714) explanation for the balm in Gilead: “The blood of Christ is a balm in Gilead, his Spirit is the Physician there, all-sufficient; so that the people may be healed, but will not. Thus [they] die unpardoned and unchanged, for they will not come to Christ to be saved”. Indeed Henry’s reading of the Old Testament text is reflected in the stanzas of “The Balm in Gilead”. Other people, such as “Peter” and “Paul”, are mentioned by name “for their capabilities in preaching and prayer, respectively” (ibid.). The lyrics reflect Doris’ experience: she is praying in a public place of worship to her own God for the first time since her enslavement. The worship is a balm to her heart and stirs up the feeling of belonging, hope, and healing.

“Wade in the Water” is the title of the last chapter of Book Three of *Blonde Roots*. It is known that “Wade in the Water” is an African American jubilee song, highly associated with songs of the Underground Railroad (Bradford 2008: 8). According to Steve Sullivan (2017), this song was first published in the 1901 edition of “New Jubilee Songs as Sung by the Fisk Jubilee Singers”, when it was already an “anthem” for the enslaved people:

Refrain:  
 Wade in the water,  
 wade in the water, children,  
 wade in the water.  
 God’s gonna trouble the water.

1 See that host all dressed in white,  
 God’s gonna trouble the water.  
 The leader looks like the Israelite.  
 God’s gonna trouble the water.

[Refrain]

2 See that band all dressed in red, ...  
 Looks like the band that Moses led.

3 If you don’t believe I’ve been redeemed, ...  
 Just follow me down to Jordan’s stream.

Here the song lyrics present the “Israelitis’ escape out of Egypt” and, “according to a legend”, Harriet Tubman too instructed the enslaved people to “get off the trail and into the water” to avoid the dogs of the enslaver (Sullivan 2017: 387). Similarly, in this chapter, Doris has enough support to try to escape and lead a group of slaves into freedom. Her courage and determination mark her survival instinct and her success. In this way, she becomes a heroic figure and a legend that constructs cultural memory.

Although the gospel song lyrics do not appear in the novel, they are still used as titles for several chapters. With the use or close use of well-known gospel songs, Evaristo prepares the reader for the following events. Not only does the reader have background music playing in mind while reading the chapter, but s/he is also able to guess the emotions that the story is going to evoke. Evaristo keeps up with this construction when she creates new songs inspired by well-known songs.

### 5. The creation of new songs

Evaristo does not hesitate to mix and play with European and African elements. As a result, not only does Doris find plenty of exotic food while she walks through the streets of Londolo, but she also sees cabbage and potatoes and suddenly comes upon popular coffee houses called Starbright. The same colourful and playful attitude continues over the whole novel and is also present in the music lyrics. Doris finds herself intermingling traditional music from her own culture with the culture of their master in order to create new songs.

At the plantation of Bwana, called “Home Sweet Home,” which also recalls the plantation name “Sweet Home” in Morrison’s *Beloved*, Doris is finally able to

meet and communicate with other enslaved people. As soon as she arrives, Doris recognizes that she is going to be close to her own culture: when the cart she is in rolls past the field workers, Doris can hear the women sing while working:

Gahd save we grashus chief  
 Long live we nobel chief  
 Gahd save we chief  
 Send him victorias  
 Happee and glorias  
 Long to rane ova us Gahd save ... (2009: 175-176)

The song that the women are singing influences Doris immensely, and she finds it “so stirring that the song stayed with me long after it faded into the distance” (2009: 176). Moreover, the song stirs a memory, and Doris asks herself, “[w]here had I heard it before?” (ibid.). The song is a version of the British national anthem, and Doris senses a familiarity, for it is as if she is remembering something that she had known before, a feeling of familiarity that is stirred by her cultural memory.

After some time, Doris starts working in the fields herself. Again, singing is prominently influential upon emotions. Doris describes the scene:

Out there in the fields the vibrations of sound reverberated from deep within our bellies with a power to match our physical exertions. We had to be loud enough to be heard in an outdoor space filled with a chorus of a cappella voices, and we were always so full of soul because we poured our hearts into the music. Even the overseers and drivers could sometimes be spied gazing off into the middle distance, as if transported.  
 The newly arrived Border Landers among us broke down when we sang:

Shud ole akwaintance be forget  
 An neva bring to mind  
 Should ole akwaintance be forget  
 An ole lang zine... (2009: 215)

As Laurie Treat (2019: 1) points out, “the power of singing as an individual and group provides significant mental and physical well-being”. While singing as a community, the enslaved people can announce their suffering through their voices.

Indeed, a lot of artists and academicians do not deny the healing power of singing. Robert Switzer (2001: 1) notes that “Doubtless it is part of the captivating mystery of the blues experience that it feels good to sing the blues, and to listen; that one is feeling bad, but somehow feeling good about it”. The field slaves are singing from their hearts and even the overseers are touched. Although the feeling that music evokes is much more prominent than the lyrics, it is no coincidence that the word “forget” is used twice. Contrary to forgetting the past by singing about it, the enslaved people are remembering their families and culture.

Another song inspired and changed according to its purpose is sung for the arrival of the master Bwana at the plantation. All enslaved people are dressed in their “Sunday best” and are enforced in a joyful welcome, singing a song in a chorus (2009: 250):

Yu iz we sunshine  
 We onlee sunshine.

Yu mek we happee  
 When skes iz gray.  
 You neva know, Bwand  
 How much we loves yu.  
 Please don't tek we sunshine away. (2009: 251)

The original song is called "You are my Sunshine" and it became famous with Jimmie Davis and Charles Mitchell in 1939. According to Colin Larkin (2007: 34), the song "has been recorded by so many artists over the years that it is reputed that its copyright is the most valuable in the country music". While this popular song is usually categorized as a love song or a children's song, it is ironically sung by the enslaved people for a person who was the reason for their trauma and suffering.

Music creates an opportunity to express feelings that the singer may not be able to put in words. *Blonde Roots'* enslaved people take the songs of their own culture and create new songs for diverse purposes. A national anthem may well be turned into a work song for the fields or a children's song can be applied to praise the master. With minor changes of the original lyrics and the application of the vernacular language, Evaristo has successfully created new songs from the original songs. However, some practices enable the creation of unique songs to present the emotions of the characters.

## 6. The creation of music lyrics through repetition

During her first attempt to escape from slavery, Doris introduces her memories of her family into the narrative, starting with "I AM PROUD TO DECLARE that I come from a long line of cabbage farmers" (2009: 7). Doris incorporates other stories into her narration by using hints such as, "the story goes that" (2009: 17), or "I'd not seen it, but I'd heard the stories" (2009: 210), thereby turning herself into a storyteller. She continues to share her memories as part of an oral tradition. Doris grows up with the joy of music and rhythm, when their "NIGHTS WERE SPENT singing songs", which also influences her storytelling (2009: 55). Moreover, besides her poetic voice and account of her memories, Doris creates music lyrics with repetitions of words or phrases.

Doris' repetitions while remembering certain events in the past creates the illusion of a song. This is a phenomenon "in which a spoken phrase is perceptually transformed to sound like a song rather than speech, simply by repeating it several times over" and which is called "speech-to-song illusion" (Deutsch et al. 2014: 2245). Doris uses repetitions especially when she needs to present and signal the intensity of her emotions. Rather than list the things she missed from her childhood, she starts her sentences with "how I longed":

But oh, how I longed for those cloudy gray skies.  
 How I longed for the incessant drizzle and harsh wind slapping my ears.  
 How I longed for my snug winter woollies and sturdy wooden clogs.  
 How I longed for Mam's warm dripping sandwiches and thick pumpkin broth.  
 How I longed for the fire crackling in the hearth and our family singsong around it.  
 How I longed for the far northern district from whence I was taken.  
 How I longed for England.  
 How I longed for home. (2009: 7)

The words “how I longed” do not only focus on Doris’ feelings, but also have a trancelike effect upon the reader. However, Doris does not hesitate to shift the focus to other characters as well. When she is on the ship with the other enslaved people, Doris tries to explain how much a mother longs for her daughter and how she tries to find consolation for her separation from her biological daughter:

I was the girl her child might have become.  
 When she stroked my cheek, it was her daughter’s.  
 When she looked into my eyes, she didn’t see me.  
 When she spoke, it was to Rosie-May.  
 In the absence of family, we all became surrogates. (2009: 81)

Doris creates here the song of a mother who laments the death of her daughter. Doris as a child herself observes the pain of the mother’s actions “when she stroked”, “when she looked”, “when she spoke” (81). The reader can observe the mothers’ suffering and the repetitions strengthen her depiction as someone whose contact with external reality is lost.

Another speech-to-song illusion is created with the repetition of single words or questions. Doris’s mind is sometimes wandering around and her worries construct a rhythm of a song:

Madge. Sharon. Alice.  
 Beloved. Beloved. Beloved.  
 Slave or dead? Slave or dead? Dead or slave?  
 Not knowing their fate put my sleep on the torture rack for years. (2009: 46)

While each of her sisters is called “Beloved”, Doris’s main concern is her uncertainty about her sister’s fate. The use of “Beloved” recalls Toni Morrison’s novel, *Beloved*, which is a “musical” neo-slave narrative that displays the consequences of slavery upon black women, men, and children alike (Eckstein 2006: 217). The repetition of specific words and the wordplay recalls *Beloved* and therefore musically reflects trauma and death.

Doris repeats words, phrases, or whole lines, creating the impression of a song. As a result, when Doris remembers her past, it goes beyond a poetic voice and the reader can listen to Doris’s song lyrics.

## 7. Conclusion

The application of music and song in *Blonde Roots* is Evaristo’s way to deliver not only emotions and feelings, but also hidden messages and hints. By using known songs, ballads, or lullabies, she creates intertextuality; as a result of Evaristo’s giving her chapters the title of gospel songs, transforming well-known songs into new songs, creating unique songs through repetitions, the novel emerges as a musical neo-slave narrative. Moreover, with the utilization of music as a “reminiscence bump”, Evaristo is able to apply music and song for the transition of cultural memory. The songs or hints of songs remind the reader of a feeling and message that are already collectively constructed and continue to exist as a work of literature. Consequently, besides many other descriptions, Evaristo’s *Blonde Roots* deserves to be pointed out as a unique musical novel.

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## SYMBOLIC MEANING OF *BLACK* AND *WHITE* IN CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH POETRY

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***Abstract:** The article seeks to illuminate the symbolic meaning of black and white in contemporary English poetry. The paper suggests that, when used in a poem, black symbolises some negative feelings or states, while white – positive ones. Data analysis shows that, on the one hand, black and white oppose each other and represent contradictory forces, two extremes, which is the basic idea of Western dualism. Furthermore, the poets often juxtapose black and white with chromatic colours. On the other hand, they embody two complementary forces, the union of which helps to maintain the balance of life – Chinese dualism.*

***Keywords:** black and white, dualism, metaphor, symbolic meaning*

### 1. Introduction

A human eye perceives a great variety of colours. They surround us everywhere and we can't imagine our life without them. Colours have a profound, long-lasting effect on our emotional and psychological states; they easily evoke memories and associations as well as strong positive and negative feelings. It has long been acknowledged that colours mean different things in different cultures, which stems from their geographical position, historical development, social and political events, religious context. Consequently, “the uses and meanings of colour have never been totally consistent across cultural boundaries” (Harshani 2019). Even though the symbolism of colours across cultures around the world varies greatly, there are still some universal, generally accepted symbolic meanings of basic colours. My paper is focused on the symbolism of two primordial ones – black and white.

The choice of the object of my study is not random. Black and white are achromatic colours. According to MAU art & design Glossary (n.d.):

Depending on the presence or absence of saturation, colours can broadly be divided into chromatic and achromatic. An achromatic colour is a one that lacks hues such as white, grey and black, and a chromatic colour is a colour which has even the slightest amount of hue.

Moreover, most languages of the world have colour terms that refer to black and white. There is one more fact that has greatly influenced the choice of colours: it has been proved that the evolution of colour terms began with only two terms, black and white, all the others (there are 11 basic colour terms) developed gradually:

Stage I in the evolution of lexical color categories is represented by just two terms, (i) black plus most dark hues and (ii) white plus most light hues. For convenience, we will call these categories BLACK and WHITE. (Berlin and Kay:14)

This in turn means that:

In the lives of all human beings, light [white] and dark [black] are fundamental experiences, and there is no culture which has not built an edifice of symbolic meanings and value systems upon this fundamental experience – even though different cultures have done so in different ways. (Kress and van Leeuwen 2002: 355-356)

The present paper aims to outline the universal symbolic meanings of black and white fixed in dictionaries of symbolism and research articles and distinguish the symbolic meanings that dominate in contemporary English poetry.

## 2. Universal symbolic meaning of *black* and *white*

In the current research, I use the words *symbolism* and *symbolic meaning* interchangeably and consider the latter to be a connotative secondary meaning that does not have any motivated connection with a primary denotative meaning (Alekseev 2016: 107).

Colour symbolism is one of the most universal of all types of symbolism, and has been consciously used in heraldry, art, and literature (Cirlot 1997: 52). In general, the symbolism and semantics of colours are based on the objective features of our intellect. In psychology, there is a theory of associations (associationism), which states that complex mental processes can be wholly or mainly explained by the associative links formed between ideas (APA n.d.). Primitive peoples related colours to the most important elements and substances that surrounded them, such as: fire, water, earth, milk, and blood. Thus, traditionally, green represents spring, awakening, and hope; blue – sky and purity; yellow – sun and life; red – fire and blood; black – darkness, fear, and death. This motivation is complemented by mythological, religious, and aesthetic views, historical, national, and regional features, the level of spiritual and cultural development of society (Pryshchenko n.d.).

White is a basic achromatic colour that fully reflects visible wavelengths of light. It is the colour of snow, bone, and milk. The symbolic potential of white is pointed out in a Dictionary of symbols (Protas n.d.):

White may be defined either as the absence of all colour or the presence of all colours of the light spectrum, and can represent either innocence or the ultimate goal of purification. White is often the heavenly, while BLACK is the underworld. It is LIGHT, AIR, life, holiness, love, redemption.

On the one hand, white is the colour of purity, divinity, eternity, and light, and is said to promote creative thoughts (a blank whiteboard) and is also synonymous with fresh beginnings. On the other hand, this sacred colour can symbolise death, disease, alienation, and suffering, due to the fact that in some countries it is worn during funerals and is strongly associated with ghosts and

phantoms, as the souls of dead people are traditionally depicted as transparent white (Lenina and Ivanov n.d.; Potapenko 2015: 66).

White is conventionally regarded as the opposite of black. According to the Dictionary of symbols (Protas n.d.),

Black represents a lack of colour, the primordial void, emptiness. It can also mean sorrow or mourning, in the Christian tradition of wearing black to funerals. In this respect it can also symbolise death. Black is also linked to witchcraft (Black Magic), evil, and the unknown, as the predominant colour worn by "evil witches" in colonial America. The stock market crash of 1929, dubbed "Black Tuesday" further links the colour with loss, depression, and despair.

Evidently, black is a universal symbol of death, mourning, and slavery. Nonetheless, a new symbolism of black has firmly established itself in the modern world, namely power, wealth, authority, and strength.

As can be seen, both black and white have positive as well as negative connotations, but they are traditionally viewed as complete opposites. Thus, Cirlot (1997: 56) points out that:

The conception of black and white as diametrically opposed symbols of the positive and the negative, either in simultaneous, in successive or alternating opposition, is very common. Black and white often represent the contrast between light and darkness, day and night, male and female, good and evil.

This understanding of black and white is reflected in the philosophy of Western dualism.

However, there is an alternative vision of these extremes that can be traced in Chinese dualism. In Taoism, two complementary natures of the universe, yin and yang, are drawn in black and white. The yin-yang is a symbol of opposites in balance – dark and light, passive and aggressive, female and male, cold and hot etc. The union of yin and yang illustrates an endless life circle. It shows that all is in harmony in nature, and nothing exists by itself. The end of one stage is the beginning of another (Mark 2016). This concept is emphasised by the fact that yin and yang include the dot of the opposite colour, in order “to symbolise that every mode must contain within it the germ of its antithesis” (Cirlot 1997: 380).

The concept of the dualistic nature of the world is inherent in many cultures. For example, in Ukrainian mythology there are two gods: Belobog and Chornobog that symbolise an eternal struggle of good with evil, life with death. They represent the very essence of the world and its laws, and exist as an indivisible unit, inseparable and contradictory opposites. Life is born and fuelled from the struggle and cooperation of these forces (Dovbnia 2015: 67).

Thus, there are two points of view on the correlation between black and white that I attempt to delve into: on the one hand, they are two extremes that oppose each other; on the other hand, they complement each other and, consequently, exist as one close-knit unit.

### **3. Data gathering and processing**

The data for the analysis are derived from 33 poems retrieved from the Internet site Hello Poetry, “a community built around sharing... an uncluttered, peaceful space to read and share poetry” (Hello Poetry n.d.). The site promotes

poetry sharing, and each poem starts with the name or nickname of its author and the date it was posted. Initially, I planned to select a corpus of poems that had one main thing in common: either *white* or *black* as key word. When I started choosing the poems from the site, I noticed that a lot of them contained both key words, so I decided to focus on them and identify the symbolic meanings that the achromatic colours convey within each poem. I have selected poems that were written over the period of 2019 to 2020, grouped them according to the symbolic meaning of the two words, and carried out linguistic and stylistic analyses, to ensure that my interpretation was explicit and as grounded in facts as possible. In my research, I have tried to preserve the authentic graphical representation of the poems.

#### 4. Western dualism: two opposite forces

As has been pointed out in the previous paragraphs, the symbolic potential of *black* and *white* is varied, and each meaning is realised in accordance with the poet's intention. In different cultures, and English is not an exception, from time immemorial *black* and *white* have existed as two opposites: negative-positive, dark-bright, hell-heaven, male-female etc., and this division forms the basis of Western dualism. Berce states that it started with Rene Descartes's body-mind dualism and was later transferred to all themes; "this polarisation is very strict and does not allow any big or small interconnection and/or interdependency." (Berce n.d.)

All the poems where *black* and *white* embody the principles of Western dualism can be divided into two groups:

- Two extremes – BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)
- [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS.

##### 4.1. Two extremes – BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)

###### (1) Depression

I see black everywhere I look  
 but I know people that see white  
 and people who understand my black  
 and I envy their white (Blackmay 2020)

This very short poem clearly renders the ideas that *black* and *white* embody. Thus metaphor "I see black everywhere I look", refers to the poet's state of mind and foregrounds his deep sadness, misery and an acute sense of melancholy. The pessimistic and hopeless mood influences the poet's perception of the world. Consequently, everything around him becomes black – depressing and irritating. In the poet's view, people who surround him are content with their lives, they look on the bright side of the situation and "see white". The closing line contains the metaphor "I envy their white" that underscores the poet's deep-seated desire to be happy, optimistic and fully enjoy his life. Thus, black symbolises misery and sadness, white, on the contrary, – positivity and happiness. The juxtaposition is highlighted by the division of the poem into two dimensions – I (my black) ::

PEOPLE (their white). Hence, a depressed artist distances himself from the fulfilled and contented people. It can also be assumed that the choice of verbs in the poem is not random. Almost all of them are state verbs (*see, know, understand, envy*), which emphasises the depth of the feelings, pointing out the poet's constant state of depression.

## (2) Monochrome

Paint me white,  
Let all the colors splash.  
To mark their presence  
and show the colossal  
happiness of soul.

Paint me black,  
Let all the color disappear.  
To mark their absence  
and hide the immense  
pain of soul. (SimPrey 2020)

The poem consists of two dramatically opposing parts and is built on vivid contrasts. The first part is a mirror reflection of the second. Taken together, they present an astonishing artistic form of the poet's self-examination. If one part of the poem is layered over the other, the difference in one word in each line can be easily seen. These words (or, more precisely, their opposition) form the semantic core of the poem and are put together to bring forth the polarity between *black* and *white*. The poet makes perfect use of lexical antitheses by means of absolute antonyms: white::black; to splash::to disappear; presence::absence; to show::to hide; happiness::pain. Thus, white symbolises happiness, the splash of colours that is metaphorically used to denote enjoyable experience and abundant emotions. The first part of the poem sheds light on the poet's vision of happiness as something that people tend to share. When the author refers to the concept of *white*, he uses verbs of outward movement, which in turn creates some strong kinaesthetic associations. For example, when we hear the verb *to splash*, we imagine the drops of liquid going in different directions and, as a result, everything gets covered in them. The same kinaesthetic association is triggered by the verb *to show*, because we can show something only if it hasn't been seen or noticed before, if it has been hidden or kept away from prying eyes. The poet astutely conjures up the image of a fountain when he describes positive emotions and feelings, stating that they gush out briskly. *Black* stands in stark contrast to *white* and employs a different kinaesthetic potential, as it is expressed by means of verbs of inward movement. Thus, when something *disappears* or *hides*, it can't be found or seen, it vanishes from sight. Consequently, *black* symbolises sadness and pain, the absence of emotions, and a burning desire to run away. These negative feelings make us want to hide and disappear; they are so unbearable that we naturally try to suppress them. Unsurprisingly, the clash of *black* and *white* is created not only by lexical and syntactical stylistic devices, but also by graphical means. Hence, the space between two parts of the poem enhances the poetic effect of the dichotomy.

**(3) white & black**

your mind  
 like canvas  
 pure white  
 till you get  
 hurt  
 and paint it  
 deep black  
 (Cassandra 2020)

The poem entitled “white & black” provides further insight into the opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive), which is based on the antithesis that is reinforced by the simile “your mind like canvas pure white” and the metaphor “[you] paint it deep black”. Simile underscores the affinity between the human mind and a canvas, and the ground for the comparison is the colour “pure white”. It discloses the poet’s general perspective on the quality of thoughts and emotions, presupposing that initially they are impeccable and free from moral faults. In the poet’s perception, the human mind stays untouched until someone harms it (physically or emotionally). Once it is hurt, negative feelings take over and cloud our judgement, “paint it [the mind / canvas] deep black”. The qualifier “deep” presents the intensity of the negative emotions caused by the offence.

**4.2. [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS**

Apart from a traditional dualistic interpretation of *black* and *white* as two extremes, the analysis of English poetry reveals that a number of poems contain the opposition [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS. A brief explanation may be required here. The opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive) illustrates the struggle between two timeless notions: good and evil. Yet, *black* and *white* as two extremes oppose other colours (usually bright, chromatic ones).

**(4) Monochromatic**

All your cards are black,  
 And all your thoughts are white.  
 All the colors you see,  
 Are found in an old movie.  
 This pallet of thought renders you blind.  
 The world is made of many shades,  
 Stop thinking in one hue.  
 And think of the entire spectrum,  
 That is screaming out at you. (MisfitOfSociety 2019)

The first line of the poem can be said to refer to the status of the addressee, as we know that a black card is an exclusive card that is given only to the privileged, wealthy clients. It can stand for a serious and conservative personality, who works a lot in order to make a living, and sometimes, in pursuit of money,

forgets about real life. The metaphor “your thoughts are white” suggests that the person is fair and honest; however, it can also imply that his / her mind is not preoccupied with deep thoughts. The neutral mood of the first two lines gradually changes. The poet addresses the reader, highlighting the lack of emotions and scarce pleasures of the life he leads “All the colors you see / Are found in an old movie”. This prolonged metaphor develops in the next lines: “This pallet of thought renders you blind / The world is made of many shades”. It is common knowledge that an ordinary palette contains a wide range of different colours that an artist mixes together to bring his ideas to life. By saying that the person’s thoughts are limited to two colours – *black* and *white* –, the poet emphasises the idea of an incomplete, run-of-the-mill life, as he is convinced that the addressee doesn’t live his life to the fullest, experiencing various emotions and feelings. The final lines, “Stop thinking in one hue / And think of the entire spectrum”, encapsulate the essence of the poem and contain an electrifying call to action. The poet motivates the reader to follow the powerful urge to transcend all the limitations and plunge into emotionally abundant life, as the world around is full of extraordinary, offbeat emotions.

#### (5) Black and white

Chain smoking in the car  
 Life’s hard  
 But I’m livin large  
 Just tryna make a means  
 I don’t know what all this means  
 So all I can do is try to live my life  
 In the best way, sometimes I know it ain’t right  
 Bad habits and good times  
 Just may be the death of me  
 But all I’m lookin for is the light  
 Because this world just doesn’t seem right

I know there has to be more  
 Than simply black and white (Bluejay 2019)

This poem tells the story of the poet’s life, full of daily struggles to survive, earn a living, and lead an existence that makes very little sense. Danielle Bluejay tries to enjoy her life, but life on the edge of “Bad habits and good times” can only inflict pain and trouble – “Just may be the death of me”. The poet understands that life should be different and searches for “the light”. Light figures significantly in the poem as the symbol of “optimism, energy, and enlightenment” (Protas n.d.) and it stands for everything the poet strives for. The modal verb *has to* reveals the artist’s strong conviction that life consists of various moments and can’t be comprehended just in terms of good and bad, *black* and *white*; it has plenty of hues, as it is more complex and diverse: “I know there has to be more / Than simply black and white”. The line “Because this world just doesn’t seem right” contributes to the overall meaning of the poem, pointing out that life should be purposeful, well-balanced and full of various activities and events. It is indicative of the poet’s unshakable belief that we have to grab every opportunity our life offers us and enjoy what we are doing at a given moment. Yet, most importantly, the poet believes that despite the aridity of life, of drudgery and false pretences, this world

is wonderful and everybody should strive for more, and not allow adversities, our dark imaginings, and ignorant people get us down.

**(6) Add**

You can't  
add  
*black and*  
*white*  
and end up  
with  
gold.  
(Yurkevich 2019)

It goes without saying that, if we mix *black* and *white*, we get grey. Evidently, the poet seeks to explain that if we see only the *white* (positive, good) and the *black* (negative, bad) side of a situation, we obviously can't expect to get gold, a chromatic colour that is symbolic of life in all its nuances. The poet chooses gold to intensify the opposite. It is a bright colour that is associated with "illumination, passion, wisdom and luxury" (Protas n.d.). Everything that gold embodies represents the diversity of life.

Poems (4), (5), and (6) lay bare an urgent psychological problem that a lot of people face in their daily life: this is called *Black and white thinking (dichotomous or polarised thinking)*, when the person thinks in absolutes. It is considered a cognitive distortion, because it keeps us from seeing the world as it often is: complex, nuanced, and full of all the shades in between (Stanborough 2020). This way of thinking can hold us back from experiencing some of the richness of our lives and relationships (Gattuso 2018). The poems reflect the poets' deeply held beliefs in the necessity of change that will bring about the liberation from the strict rules and dogmas of a modern society that generates the problem of dichotomous thinking.

**5. Chinese dualism: two complementary forces**

According to Chinese dualism, yin and yang (two contradictory opposites) complement each other. They are interdependent and inseparable. In turn, life is born in/out of their fight and cooperation.

**(7) LIFE**

Everybody say life is a series of moments  
Be it good or bad  
Your life is void without moments  
So today let's talk about mine  
It got both good and bad moments blended  
When I look at the good ones I feel so delighted  
When I look at the bad ones I feel so gratified  
Because if the bad ones wouldn't have been there  
This black shadow would have never been laminated  
And white shadow would have never been born  
So I am contented to have this life. (White Shadow 2019)



In the poem solemnly entitled “Life”, the poet maintains that life consists of sequences of different events, as she later adds, both bad and good. She creates an eye-catching metaphor “Your life is void without moments”, underscoring that life is empty, meaningless and pointless without them. The poet deliberately emphasises that each moment, good or bad, is precious. Bad and good things that happen to us leave a deep imprint on our memory and without them our existence gets bland and emotionless. Parallelism and anaphora in the lines “When I look at the good ones I feel so delighted / When I look at the bad ones I feel so gratified” create a certain rhythm and reinforce the affinity between these stages of life, showing their equal significance, since both moments evoke positive feelings (*delighted, gratified*). The final lines deepen our understanding of the balance between *black* and *white*. They conjure up the image of a circle: one is born out of the other, one is impossible without the other, a life circle that cannot be broken. These lines are illustrative of the major principle of modern life: only after we endure severe hardship, are we able to fully appreciate every moment of our life. The deep meaning of the closing lines intensifies the key idea of the poem and encourages the readers to perceive the world as a unified whole. The poet calls on us to be grateful for the little things in life that we sometimes take for granted and find something pleasant in the annoying and frustrating situations that we get into. If we take a cursory glance at the poem, we shall see that the poet seems eager to disclose that all the dire perils that people face in their daily life provide them with powerful impetus for further achievements and fulfilments, personal expansion and growth.

#### (8) Black and White

The only difference between  
black and white  
is that  
The danger hiding within black is visible,  
while the danger within white is not.  
(Goswami 2020)

This poem is very contradictory, but still I included it in this group because, according to the Chinese yin-yang concept, yin contains a particle of yang and vice versa. There is nothing completely negative and totally positive in this world, everything is relative. In the poet’s vision, *black*, since the dawn of time, is associated with danger and darkness, so everybody intuitively expects *black* to pose a threat and is cautious of it. Undoubtedly, *white* symbolises truth and innocence and nobody foresees as a source of danger. Still, according to the yin-yang concept, there is a white dot in yin and a black one in yang, so everything contains an amount of its opposite. Consequently, there is nothing totally bad in this word and nothing completely good, it is a matter of perception. It must be noted that the lines “The danger hiding within black is visible, while the danger within white is not” contain an antithesis and pose something of a paradox. As mentioned earlier, *black* is the absence of colour, everything *black* is without light, so nothing can be seen on a black background, and a hidden danger is not an exception. It gets visible, so to speak, only because people associate *black* with negative things and stay alert when encounter them. On the contrary, *white* reflects all colours, and everything can be easily seen on a white background, but, as we

usually associate *white* with positive and harmless things, we tend to miss the danger. Paradoxically, the poet alters the traditional understanding of *black* and *white*: *white* acquires negative connotations, because it conceals the menace, while *black*, on the contrary, sparks off neutral or even positive associations, as it makes the threat visible and, thus warns us about it.

### (9) Dualities

having the audacity  
to accept the duality  
of man, of time, of life  
rather a causality  
in itself  
of things, of people, of emotions  
you can finally let go  
the loss of innocence  
before you even know  
not hopelessly muddled anymore  
like the grey colour  
in the middle of black and white  
no more under the pressure  
now off to where the air is fresher. (Shubhankar 2020)

The duality of the world is brought into the spotlight in this poem. The first lines “having the audacity/ to accept the duality” show the poet’s point of view on the issue. Being both good (white) and bad (black) is an “audacity”, as according to the standards of the modern world, we should be perfect. It can be assumed that the poet’s choice of form is not random, as he actually highlights that accepting the duality of everything is inevitable and parallelism contributes to the idea. Life is diverse in all its forms. The metaphor “the loss of innocence” refers to the idea of growing older and getting more experience of the world, even if it means facing some unknown, terrifying things, and overcoming our deepest fears. The poet uses simile and draws parallels between a person and grey colour - “not hopelessly muddled anymore like the grey colour”. Grey is a mixture of *black* and *white*, it is something that is neither the former nor the latter, so the poet genuinely believes that a person who doesn’t understand himself/herself is confused, disoriented and, evidentially, dejected. The closing line is an impassioned call to action, a friendly word of advice to accept who we are – complex thinking creatures, human beings whose contradictory uniqueness is our greatest value. If we embrace our binary nature, we will let go of all our worries and uncertainties. As soon as this happens, we will be free “now off to where the air is fresher” and other people’s expectations won’t weigh on us anymore. The poet is firmly convinced that we don’t have to conform to the existing social and ethical norms (i.e. be only white/good); on the contrary, he emphasises our need to achieve liberation from old dogmas and finally set ourselves free. Thus, the poem generates a new modern ideal of a person – one who has accepted his/her own duality and has come to terms with it.

### (10) Piano Keys

Piano keys are like humans,  
Both black and white  
Alone as notes,

Just producing sounds  
But together as chords,  
They produce symphonies. (Shubhankar 2020)

The last poem, “Piano keys”, is based on a simile that the poet expands on, so there is no difficult interpretive work involved in understanding its hidden meaning, but still I feel obliged to highlight some points.

The simile “Piano keys are like humans / Both black and white” suggests that people are different. As individuals, they are unique, but not always capable of incredible achievements and discoveries. Hence, when people come together and unite to achieve a common goal, they work miracles. I can’t help but add that in music “the white keys represent the musical tones and the black keys represent the half step intervals between those musical tones. The coloured keys help pianists decipher between the natural pitches and semitone pitches” (Ross n.d.). Only the combination of *black* and *white* piano keys makes the creation of symphonies possible, as they perfectly complement each other. The same is true for people; we are unique and, due to this, all together, we are capable of extraordinary things.

## 6. Conclusion

It can be stated that *black* and *white* are basic colours that have corresponding colour terms in most languages, which can be explained by the fact that our ancestors imagined the world as a constant fight between good and evil. This contrast indicates the duality of the world and everything in it and is as perennial as life itself. The concept forms the basis of Western dualism, the philosophy of the binary nature of the world. My study demonstrates that, in contemporary English poetry, *black* symbolises some negative feelings and states, while *white* ☐ positive ones. Basically, when used together within one poem, they oppose each other. The opposition BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive) can be traced in the poems under consideration, where *black* symbolises depression, hopelessness, pain and an overwhelming desire to hide, while *white* symbolises happiness, positivity and a burning desire to share these emotions.

The most interesting finding, though, was the second opposition [BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS. This consists of two constituents: the first dichotomy, BLACK (the negative)::WHITE (the positive), establishes opposing relations with the chromatic colours (usually bright). The resulting opposition reveals an urgent problem that has engulfed the modern world, and the English-speaking countries in particular. It is the issue of polarised thinking, which is a kind of cognitive distortion and a great psychological problem. People who suffer from this disorder perceive the world in contrasts, they are either happy or depressed, and everything is either very good or extremely bad for them. These people can’t enjoy life in all its manifestations. Thus, in the opposition [BLACK (the positive)::WHITE (the negative)]::CHROMATIC COLOURS, *black* and *white* symbolise life in contrast, while other colours are associated with an extraordinary, joyful existence, with all its ups and downs. The poets use this juxtaposition to induce the readers to appreciate every moment of their life and not follow the principle “all or nothing”, because they strongly believe that the world and human life is much more complex than that.

My study also reveals that BLACK (the negative) and WHITE (the positive) can be presented as complementary forces. This principle lies in the heart of

Chinese dualism. The dualistic nature of *black* and *white* does not always render the idea of good against evil. Sometimes it embodies the general principle of existence, interdependence of everything in the world. The most common application of this correspondence in the poems concerns the binary nature of people and the life they lead. The poets allude to the uniqueness of every man and woman on Earth, emphasising that we have to accept our strengths and weaknesses, embrace the concept of our own duality and, by doing so, together, we can make this world a better place to live in.

To sum up, when used in one poem, *black* and *white* usually present their conventional symbolic meanings: *black* ☐ the negative, *white* ☐ the positive. Still the correlations of these meanings are very complex. They can be depicted as complete opposites, they both can oppose chromatic colours, and, most importantly, they may form one indivisible unit.

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**MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIPS IN JAPANESE  
IMMIGRANT FAMILIES: MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN  
*SEVENTEEN SYLLABLES*  
AND  
*AND THE SOUL SHALL DANCE***

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***Abstract:** The focus of this study is the mother-daughter relationships depicted in Japanese American literature in the mid- to late 20th century. I analyse the short stories of Hisaye Yamamoto (1921-2011) and Wakako Yamauchi (1924-2018), to illustrate how the mother-daughter relationships are closely connected to different ethnic and cultural identities in the Japanese immigrant families.*

***Keywords:** Japanese-American literature, mother-daughter relationship, Hisaye Yamamoto, Wakako Yamauchi*

## **1. Introduction**

The aim of this study is to analyse how *issei* (first-generation) Japanese mothers, are presented in stories written by *nisei* (second-generation) Japanese American authors. The introduction of *Memory and Cultural Politics (MCP)* (Singh et al. 1996) began with a hypothesis by Marcus Lee Hansen, who was a historian researching the history of immigration to the United States. Hansen's Law, which argues that "what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember" (idem: 3), indicates that "Hansen's exemplary 'son', the second-generation immigrant, forgets the cultural past in the process of becoming an American, whereas the third-generation grandson, in the quest of a new identity shaped partly by disillusionment with the promises of American democracy, attempts to recover the ethnic past" (ibid.). As this hypothesis shows, each generation has different feelings and thoughts about their old countries and their current country, the United States. Moreover, it indicates that the second-generation immigrants, who were born and raised in the US, were not American from the beginning, but they 'become' American. Thus, the gap between each generation is also a matter of how American society perceives and treats them. Further, the nature of their connections or relations with their new country's society and the majority also differs within each ethnic group, along with how they are treated by the majority of the new country.

Japanese American literary stories also show a gap between generations. Elaine Kim (1982: 156) points out that one of the themes in Japanese American literature is the conflicts between *issei*, who moved from Japan, and *nisei*, who were born in the United States. Especially for those who were born before World War II and survived during the war and in the relocation centres, living in America

with the label ‘enemy alien’ was inconceivable. Many *issei* kept their connections to Japan while they were ‘Aliens Ineligible to Citizenship’ and experienced discrimination and rejection (Takezawa 2017: 8-9). On the other hand, *nisei* grew up in the American society, but maintained the Japanese tradition at home. Thus, especially during and after the war, they tried and needed to prove to the American society that they were ‘Americans’. As Yasuko Takezawa (2017: 132) comments, it was often said that *nisei* tried to be ‘120% American’ to be accepted by American society. However, at the same time, this meant that they had to deny their Japanese roots. Therefore, focusing on *issei* and *nisei* in stories gives readers a clue to understanding how they live between their old and new countries and how they are viewed by the majority groups. How one minority group is treated and what is happening in the group are often ignored by the majority in the new country, as well as by other minority ethnic groups.

Each immigrant group has its own cultural and historical background, which makes its members distinctive. For some distinctive groups, Hansen’s law is not easily applicable. In *MCP*, it is also mentioned that “serious complications arise, however, when Hansen’s Law is applied to the experience of such diverse groups as immigrant women from Europe, Native Americans, African Americans, Japanese Americans, and new immigrants of colour” (Singh et al. 1996: 4). As women and Japanese Americans are specifically pointed out in the quote, this intersection is worth examining, because Japanese American women are one of the minorities who have experienced being ignored, betrayed, and oppressed by their own culture as well as by the American society. Thus, my focus here is on *issei* mothers and *nisei* daughters.

According to Naoko Sugiyama (2007: 15-20), the literary portrayal of mother-daughter relationships has long been studied. In the 1970s, when many minority women authors, such as Toni Morrison, made their debut in the literary world, the identities of mothers and daughters began to be included in the themes of those studies. Since the 1980s, it has been argued that researching mothers only through the eyes of a child or daughter effectively silences the mother (idem: 20). Marianne Hirsch is one of the important figures highlighting mothers’ silence and the absence of mothers’ voices. Specifically, she focused on how silence was imposed on mothers. According to Mizuho Terasawa (1992: 447), Hirsch’s theory explains that the independence of daughters is connected to the absence or death of their mothers or mother-daughter cohesiveness. In studying mothers in the Western patriarchy, Hirsch (1989: 29) argued that it would not fully apply to another culture. She argues that in African American society, mothers have different characteristics, based on their cultural and historical backgrounds (ibid.). Just as African Americans had a different mother-daughter relationship than White Americans because of their unique cultural background and the historical background of slavery, Japanese Americans are a minority with a unique historical and cultural background. By referring to the pattern of Hirsch’s mother-daughter narratives, a unique mother-daughter relationship and mother image that is different from that of mainstream White America will be revealed. How are mothers portrayed in Japanese American literature and how do daughters grow up beside their mothers? I will look at how Japanese American mothers are presented in two short stories written by *nisei* Japanese writers, *Seventeen Syllables* by Hisaye Yamamoto and *And the Soul Shall Dance* (from now on *ASSD*) by Wakako Yamauchi.

Hisaye Yamamoto was born in California in 1921. Her parents had emigrated from Japan; thus, she was a second-generation (*nisei*) Japanese. Based



on her real-life experiences, she wrote about Japanese Americans. Kim (1982: 157) states that “Hisaye Yamamoto has chronicled Japanese American social history in her short stories”. Yamamoto met her life-long friend Wakako Yamauchi at the Poston Internment Camp (Cheung 1994: 10–11). Yamauchi was also a *Japanese Nisei*, born in California in 1924. Yamauchi (1994: vii) said, “My stories are about immigrants” and “my resources are only myself”. Yamamoto and Yamauchi both lived in the same era, shared experiences as *nisei* Japanese in America, and wrote stories about mothers and daughters on California farms. *Seventeen Syllables* by Yamamoto and *ASSD* by Yamauchi are examples of such stories. As the two short stories have different plots and atmospheres, it is worth comparing them in order to examine the mother-daughter relationships of Japanese Americans and their psychological portrayal.

As Mie Hihara (2001: 244) remarks, there are many stories about *issei* stories that were told through the voice or points of view of the *nisei* daughters. In addition, *issei* mothers are often repressed by both the traditions of the Japanese community and racial discrimination (Kim 1982: 208). *Seventeen Syllables* and *ASSD* are also told from the viewpoint of *nisei* daughters and readers can see that *issei* mothers have been oppressed. These stories can be read in various ways. As Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong (1993: 167) states, they can be read as “a woman’s domestic tragedy, as an account of female initiation into adult sexuality and suffering, as a matrilineal story of mother-daughter bonds and secrets, as an immigrant tale of shattered dreams and intergenerational estrangement”. However, in this paper, I would like to read *Seventeen Syllables* and *ASSD* with a focus on the mothers’ silence and on how daughters understand their mothers. This is relevant because *issei* mothers are not just silent and voiceless.

## 2. Mothers as narrated figures and their silence

Hihara (2001: 244) points out that, in Japanese American literature, there are many *issei* mothers’ stories that were told in the *nisei* daughters’ voice or from their point of view. *Seventeen Syllables* and *ASSD* are also told from the *nisei* daughters’ viewpoint.

*ASSD* starts as follows:

It’s all right to talk about it now. Most of the principals are dead, except, of course, me and my younger brother, and possibly Kiyoko Oka, who might be near forty-five now because, yes, I’m sure of it, she was fourteen then. I was nine, and my brother about four, so he hardly counts. (Yamauchi 1994: 19)

This beginning shows that the story is narrated by Masako, the protagonist, and is told from her perspective. Throughout the story, Masako, now 40 years old, recalls her childhood and her neighbours, The Okas. On the other hand, *Seventeen Syllables* is narrated in the third person. It begins as follows: “The first Rosie knew that her mother had taken to writing poems was one evening when she finished one and read it aloud for her daughter’s approval” (Yamamoto 2001: 8). It is evident that the protagonist, the *nisei* daughter Rosie, is not the narrator. However, the things happening around Rosie are written in detail, so the story is close to Rosie’s perspective. Researchers of *Seventeen Syllables*, including Fukuko Kobayashi (2006: 166), and Elaine Kim (1982: 160) agree that this is a story told from the *nisei* daughter’s point of view. Thus, both stories are told through the daughters’ eyes, and the mothers are “narrated” by their daughters.

When the mothers' lives are told by their daughters' voice or from their point of view, the mothers are silenced and their voices are removed. One of the reasons for this silence is the language barrier. Many *issei* mothers could not speak, read, or write English well, and generally, *nisei* Japanese Americans could only speak conversational Japanese; therefore, they could not share complicated and delicate feelings and thoughts (Takezawa 2017: 76).

At the beginning of *Seventeen Syllables*, Tome Hayashi, an *issei* mother and the wife of an *issei* Japanese American farmer, writes haiku poems for a Japanese-language newspaper. One day, Tome shows her haiku to her *nisei* daughter, Rosie, and she reads it out loud to her. Rosie grasps only that "it was about cats" (Yamamoto 2001: 8); she could not fully understand it, but she "pretended to understand it" (ibid.). For Rosie, "Japanese had to be searched for and examined, and even then, put forth tentatively" (ibid.), and, therefore, it was much easier to just say "Yes, yes, I understand" (ibid.). At the same time, Rosie wants to share with Tome an English haiku she read, because she knows that Tome is intrigued by haiku. However, Rosie is unable to do so. The language barriers between mother and daughter make it impossible for the mother to express her inner feelings. This is a limitation of the *nisei* daughters; they do not try to ignore their mothers - indeed, Rosie wants to talk about haiku with Tome. Similarly, other *nisei* daughters are simply unable to fully understand their mothers, given their limited knowledge of Japanese and their mothers' limited English.

In addition to the lack of language abilities, *issei* mothers conceal and do not talk about their inner self and problems to their daughters. Miki Shinoda (2011: 54–55) points out that, because *Seventeen Syllables* is told from Rosie's viewpoint, and she is just a high school girl, things that she does not notice are left out and not explained, and readers can only notice them in the background. However, what Rosie did not notice were things that her mother did not tell her or explain to her. For instance, when Rosie's father hurried home from the Hayanos, because he could not stand his wife talking about haikus with Mr. Hayano, his excuse for leaving was "work tomorrow" (Yamamoto 2001: 11). Tome surely knew what displeased her husband, but she just said, "I'm sorry" and "You must be tired" (ibid.). By watching them, Rosie "felt a rush of hate for them - for her mother for begging, for her father for denying her mother" (idem: 12). Her hate made her wish that the old Ford they were in would crash; she imagined "the three contorted, bleeding bodies" (ibid.).

In *ASSD*, the protagonist, the *nisei* daughter Masako, asks her mother whether another *issei* woman, Mrs. Oka, who lived near her house, was insane, because Mrs. Oka was different (Yamauchi 1994: 20). Mrs. Oka was shy, loved cigarettes, and liquor. She sometimes appeared with bruises on her face, and "some nights she disappeared altogether" (ibid.). Knowing and seeing Mrs. Oka's unusual behaviour, Masako's mother "shook her head and smiled with her mouth drawn down and said that Mrs. Oka loved to drink" (ibid.). It was obvious that something was wrong, something caused by more than just enjoying a drink, but Masako's mother did not explain why Mrs. Oka had bruises.

Separated by a language barrier and an inability to communicate much about their lives to their mothers, daughters understand that their mothers are different from them and are like other people whom they do not know well. *Seventeen Syllables* is told from Rosie's point of view, but is narrated by a third person. When Rosie saw Tome's pen name, Ume Hanazono, she regarded her as just another woman: "Rosie and her father lived with two women" (Yamamoto 2001: 9). From

Rosie's point of view, her mother (as Ume Hanazono) seemed to be a 'stranger'. Masako in *ASSD* is the narrator, but she does not talk much about her mother, and thus the mother is silenced by her own daughter. Instead of talking about her own mother, Masako describes Mrs. Oka, who was the *issei* mother figure for her. However, when she sees Mrs. Oka from outside, she seems "insane", an "unusual woman" (Yamauchi 1994: 20), and "strange" (idem: 21).

Kobayashi (2006: 160) compares Japanese American mothers and daughters to Chinese American mothers and daughters. According to her, women in the Japanese American family are generally silent and submissive, and therefore, conflicts and relations between mothers and daughters are often ambiguous. When mothers do not talk much about themselves and things around them, and keep silent, their daughters lose the chance to understand them.

### 3. Patriarchy and silenced mothers

The mothers also have their voices taken and silenced by the patriarchy of Japan and Japanese American society. Hihara (2001: 246) points out that mothers described by their daughters were oppressed by their husbands in their home, which was dominated by Japanese values like obedience, and were depicted as women who pursued their freedom. *Seventeen Syllables* and *ASSD* are the stories that Hihara mentions as examples; Tome in *Seventeen Syllables* and Mrs. Oka in *ASSD* are both repressed under Japanese patriarchy. When they pursue freedom and liberation, the shadow of death is always behind them.

Tome Hayashi in *Seventeen Syllables* writes haiku under the pen name Ume Hanazono. Ume refers to Japanese apricots and the flowers on Japanese apricot trees. Hanazono is a flower garden in Japan. Thus, the name is blossoming, cheerful, and bright. When Tome explains the haiku to Rosie as "a poem in which she must pack all her meaning into seventeen syllables" (Yamamoto 2001: 8), it is Tome's other, better self who is guided by her own inner voice. However, flowers do not bloom forever, and nor does Ume Hanazono. Ume's life seems to end suddenly when her haiku wins the first prize. It was a hot day, and everyone in the Hayashi family had to pick and sort tomatoes at their farms, before they went bad. Just then, the haiku editor of the Japanese newspaper visits Tome and gives her a Hiroshige artwork as a gift. She does not return quickly to the farm to help her husband. Instead, she welcomes and talks to the editor. That makes her husband so mad that he burns the picture. With that violent act, Ume's life ends suddenly, and so does Tome's other self, as if Rosie's wish for a car crash had come true. Ume loses her voice and her free soul. Her body is unable to escape her husband. As Rosie saw, her mother "kept house, cooked, washed, and along with her husband [...] did her ample share of picking tomatoes out in the sweltering fields and boxing them in tidy strata" (idem: 9). There was a great deal of work to do, and all of it was her responsibility, as the wife of an *issei* farmer. According to Masako Iino (2000: 47), *issei* on farms had to work 13 to 16 hours per day to support themselves. Thus, Tome had too much work to do.

On the other hand, just as the bruises on her body tell, Mrs. Oka was abused by her husband. Even though her husband used to beat her, she could not escape. Iino (2000: 48) argues that *issei* wives could not escape their husbands and return to Japan; first, they could not speak English well and did not have enough money to make it on their own. Second, those who fled to Japan were called "demodori" (Iino 2000: 48). The word, meaning "boomerang woman" in Japanese, is often

used pejoratively for women who return home because they have divorced or lost their husbands. Under the Japanese patriarchy, a woman had to obey her husband or her family, so divorce left a bad impression. For these reasons, Mrs. Oka had no choice but to stay with her abusive husband.

Both Tome and Mrs. Oka are silenced under the pressure of patriarchal society. And as described, mothers are doubly silenced, both by their daughters' stories and the Japanese patriarchy.

#### 4. Voices of mothers

The mothers' silence, however, reveals their isolation. Shinoda (2011: 54-55) mentions that readers can notice the background stories; the more the mothers were silenced, the more things needed to be told. When Tome apologises demurely about being into haiku by saying "I forgot what time it is" (Yamamoto 2001: 12) and calmly watches her prize being burned, she is deeply isolated because she has not been understood or allowed to pursue her happiness. When Mrs. Oka "would wait out our visit with enormous forbearance, quietly pushing wisps of stray hair behind her ears and waving gnats away from her great moist eyes" (Yamauchi 1994: 20), she says nothing. However, her appearance suggests that she was enduring something by herself, in isolation. When the mothers' voices are almost heard at the end of both stories, they are extremely powerful. But these voices are actually heard only from the daughters' points of view.

In *Seventeen Syllables*, when Tome's prize is burnt by her husband, Tome opens up and shares her secret with Rosie. Her secret is followed by Tome's urgent request to Rosie, "Promise me you will never marry!" (Yamamoto 2001: 19), and this is her own voice. Therefore, even though Tome was doubly silenced, she tries to use her voice. In *ASSD*, Mrs. Oka seems not to have a voice until the end. When Masako sees Mrs. Oka in the desert one night, she was singing songs in Japanese. Masako hides from her, so Mrs. Oka does not notice her at first. She sings, "Red lips / Press against a glass / Drink the green wine / And the soul shall dance" (Yamauchi 1994: 24). The red lips could be the blood or lip colour of young women. Western liquors are called 'green wine' in Japan, and they were popular among young people in the 1920s and the 1930s (Takita 2002: 37); thus, this song evokes images of her youth. However, Mrs. Oka's situation is far removed from that of this song. She was physically and mentally abused by her husband, and she never had a moment when her soul danced. She was also sent away from Japan, because when she was young, she "had foolishly become involved with a man of poor reputation" (Yamauchi 1994: 21). That was the last time Masako saw Mrs. Oka; thus, her singing was important to Masako and it could have been her own voice.

Both stories are told from the daughters' perspective and in recollection of their childhood days. Kobayashi (2006: 156-157) compares Japanese American women to Chinese American women and concludes that Chinese American daughters stand on their own and thrive on the strong Chinese women in the old Chinese stories told by their mothers. Their roots, China, and their Chinese mothers are the anchors in their own lives. In contrast, what Japanese daughters get from their mothers is a warning that they might inherit the world of their mothers, stifled and circumscribed, might be condemned to lives of drudgery, devoid of romance or beauty, with only their strength and quiet endurance to keep their spirits alive (Kim 1982: 162). While hearing their silenced mothers' voices, Japanese daughters

become witnesses of their mothers' lives and of the way the society they live in treats them.

## 5. Conclusion

As described before, Japanese mothers are doubly silenced - by their daughters and by the Japanese patriarchy, which is strongly tied to *issei*. Mrs. Oka's death at the end of *ASSD* and those silenced mothers are in line with Hirsch's theory of 'mother's early death' (Hirsch 1989: 21). However, when a daughter becomes a witness to the process of her mother's death, the daughter earns a chance to learn what was happening to her mother. That makes the daughter able to 'tell her mother's story.' By telling the story of her mother, of her silence and oppression, the daughter shows others that such a mother existed. By re-telling her mother's story the daughter seems to revive her mother. Masako in *ASSD* can finally talk about her story when she is 40 years old; the time difference shows that it takes time to finally understand what happened to Mrs. Oka under the pressure of the society and the times. In Japanese American mother-daughter relationships, to be able to tell a mother's story from the daughter's viewpoint, what the mother was like or what was happening to her is not easy and sometimes takes time, because of the mother's silence. However, by telling the mother's story, the daughter finally understands her mother and the society they have been in.

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## **THE CENTRAL MOTIF OF A ROAD IN THE NOVELLA *PIC* BY J. KEROUAC**

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***Abstract:** The novella *Pic* by Jack Kerouac is the author's last work which reveals how his characters continue wandering on the roads of life. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the central motif of the road in this novella, which includes both a real geographical space (the characters' route from the East to the West of the country, where they hope to find their "paradise"), and a symbolic-philosophical space (the search for oneself and one's place in life, God in oneself, truth, inner maturity, etc.). The guide on the road (Slim) is especially important here. He turns out to be not just a companion, but also a spiritual mentor of the main character (*Pic*), a new saint, who is eager to spread his religion and share it with others. Thus, the road is not only a way of travelling, but it is a way of learning about life.*

***Keywords:** Beat Generation, the central motif of a road, chronotope, Jack Kerouac, the novella *Pic*.*

### **1. Introduction**

The motif of the road in the consciousness of the Beat Generation writers, such as Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and others, has various manifestations: a search for oneself and one's way of living, endless mental travelling, a journey as a way to reach God, an escape from the society back to nature, refusal to grow up, an acid trip, a way to show urgent social problems, etc. The impressions received on one's way are the most important. All this is reflected in the concept of the Beat Generation writers, who were always on the road – literally and metaphorically. The road for these writers is equal to the life itself: a real trip in a real space is closely linked to the life and mental experience of a person. The freedom from all social conventions is only born on the road. Movement is the unconscious impulse of a person, something completely natural. The Beat Generation follows the first American pioneers, with the difference that they discover new space inside themselves. Thus, the motif of the road as a symbol of eternal human search comes to the fore.

### **2. Jack Kerouac's novella *Pic* as his final work**

The novella *Pic* is about the themes and motifs that were most important for Jack Kerouac and other Beat Generation writers. The central motif here is the motif of the road, which is typical of all Kerouac's works, and *Pic* is no exception. Jack Kerouac is interested in the endless movement as a manifestation of one's

unconsciousness in his novels as well, for example, *On the Road*, *The Town and the City*, *The Dharma Bums*, etc. and in his essays.

### 2.1. Jack Kerouac's novella *Pic*: the background

Jack Kerouac's novella *Pic* is one of his last works and is "probably Kerouac's most curious book; it is unlike anything else he ever wrote" (Theado 2000: 171). The novella is a mixture of his early and late works, which he decided to combine in order to complete his book. It was published after Kerouac's death, in 1971. "Hunt also suggests that there were five drafts of *On the Road* overall: the first two unpublished, the third draft published as *Pic*, the fourth as *On the Road*, and the fifth as *Visions of Cody*" (qtd. in Dittman 2004: 118–119). The writer was inspired to create the story of an African American teenager, Pictorial Review Jackson, by his trip to visit his sister in North Carolina, at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, where he heard interesting stories of African American boys. The book also draws on his personal impressions, recollections and adventures from his travelling around the USA. Gerald Nicosia (qtd. in Theado 2000: 172) explains that the book combines various early pieces of writing that Kerouac had saved throughout his writing career: "the central plot and characters came from the story he had written in 1951 about a North Carolina black boy named Pictorial Review Jackson [to which he added] the story of the Prophet on Times Square, first drafted in 1941 for the Young Prometheans' study group, a chapter about a fudge factory deleted from *The Town and the City*, and the full story of the Ghost of the Susquehanna, much of which had been cut from *On the Road*". All these fragments became part of the plot of Kerouac's novella *Pic*.

The story is written in the first-person. The dialect the main character speaks confused some of the critics and seemed to be not quite what the real speech of African Americans sounds like (McKee 2004: 114, Dittman 2004: 119). However, Kerouac manages to render the authenticity with which *Pic* tells us his story, the conversational manner of speaking of the narrator.

It is quite possible that, in the novella, the writer wanted to employ the exact same motifs as in his novel *On the Road*, but using a different social group. Kerouac's novel *On the Road* is autobiographical, it describes the real travels of the writer and his friend Neal Cassady across the USA. It is about four journeys of the writer around America. The novel is subjective, it is based on the perception of the road by an intellectual, who makes up his mind to travel across the country for some new experience. *Pic* tells us about completely different people, mostly hipsters. A hipster is an ideal character for the Beat Generation writers: s/he is anti-intellectual, s/he does not study, does not want to create anything, and distances himself/herself from any work. Thus, the novella shows a typical hipster on the road and also tells us about one hipster bringing up another in his own image, as the teenager *Pic* is being brought up by his brother Slim.

If the novel *On the Road* is about the travel of the characters over several years, the novella gives brief descriptions of *Pic* and his brother's trips on the road of life. It follows that a set of main motifs from the novel are reflected in the novella, either fully or by common features. We should also note that some motifs are presented in broader lines in the novella than in the novel. Thus, the central motif embracing all the others is the motif of the road, the eternal way (central for the whole Beat Generation), as the characters of the novella *Pic* are experiencing an eternal search.



One may say that the novella *Pic* is a synthesis of the creative author's ideas, a summary of the writer's whole life and experience; it is some kind of experiment. It is an example of Beat Generation literature – a work that touches upon motifs typical of the Beat Generation writers.

## 2.2. The road as a system

In the novella, the road is presented as a complete system: it is a real geographical space and a symbolic-philosophical space. Besides, the road can be seen from a historical perspective: Jack Kerouac is interested in the parallel between pioneers and contemporary young people, going along the same way. Thus, in the novella, the road is something sacred and forbidden, and it is also the way of the main character in his new life.

A story about the facts of life of the Beat Generation is presented through the perception of an eleven-year-old African American boy, Pictorial Review Jackson, who is talking about his adventures firstly to God, and then to his deceased grandfather. The images of God and grandfather are inseparable in the mind of the character. His grandfather's disease, with his subsequent death, was a great shock for Pic. Suddenly, his elder brother Slim appears in his life, but the relatives are strongly against his taking Pic with him to New York:

No, Slim, no, that boy's sick and go hungry and catch cold and ever' single thing in the world will happen to him and he'll turn bad, sinful bad, with that man, and the Lord shall drop it on my soul like the hot irons of hell and perdition, on your soul too, and on this house. (Kerouac online)

Slim is Pic's spiritual mentor and guide into a new life. Matt Theado (2000: 174) writes: "Slim, is a black version of Dean Moriarty. He is city-smart and wily, both energetic and able to live by his wits". He was rejected by his family just like Dean. It is Slim who opens the road to Pic and turns it into a spiritual search. It should be noted that a reader cannot perceive Slim as a person who takes upon himself the responsibility of bringing up his younger brother. The character is in fact immature, he is an eternal child. In reality, what we see are two teenagers, one of whom rebels against the world, escapes from reality (literally) on a real road (roads) and unconsciously teaches his brother how to live.

Pic and Slim feel like orphans of the universe, they are complete strangers to this world, discarded onto the road of life. They are not only travelling in search for happiness in a physical realm, but are also trying to find their roots that seemingly do not need to be looked for, as they have relatives. But kindred blood means nothing in this case, since it doesn't accept vagrants like Pic and his brother. This alienation is revealed not just by a simple blood relation, but by the trip that the characters undertake, a trip that speaks first and foremost about their search of themselves, of their own identity. Slim has been wandering about for quite a long time and knows who he is, while Pic is facing a moment of initiation.

Starting on the way that Slim will lead him on, Pic fears to face the unknown, but, despite his fear, he follows his guide. Pic is looking for an excuse for himself, as if he had forgotten something, but, at the same time, he clearly realizes that all this is his fantasy. The further he goes, the more involved in the road he becomes. His brother understands Pic's state and tries to relieve his mind

by citing from the Bible, and emphasizing that Pic is getting old and is afraid like an adult:

“Po little boy,” he say, and give a sigh, and hitch me up higher on his back. “I guess you’re as much scared of ever’thing like a grown man is. It’s like the man say in the Bible – A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. You ain’t scarce eleven years old and already knowed that. I don’t guess you didn’t. Well, I come and made a vagabond out of you proper,” and we walk along and come to see the lights of town up ahead, and he don’t say nothin. Then here we go step on the road.” (Kerouac online)

It is obvious that, for Slim, wandering is not the worst way. Wandering is a kind of destiny when every person becomes an outcast and a wanderer; that is why Slim sees nothing wrong in such a lifestyle. Slim and Pic are two outcasts, they are different from all the others and their family. They are two lonely strangers who have met now and are going together: “Then we’ll unnerstand each other fine and be friends to go out to the world together” (idem).

It is not surprising that the characters of the novella are a teenager and an adult male. This is a reference to Ross Posnock’s book “Philip Roth’s rude truth. The art of immaturity” (2006), in which the author introduces the phenomenon of immaturity and defines it as a way of existence which is opposed to the prevailing norm. Posnock cites Dean Moriarty from Kerouac’s novel *On the Road* as an example of “immaturity”:

The ultimate hipster and “holy goofball,” virtually a Platonic model of midcentury American bad boy immaturity, Dean is oblivious to norms or routine, feasts insatiably on what comes his way, relies on his prodigious energy to get the maximum kicks. Driving back and forth the length of the United States whenever, Dean’s anarchic, improvised life of spontaneity mocks obligation and is at first exhilarating to his friend Sal. In his openness and immunity to inhibition, Dean’s consciousness is rapturous, pure, sensuous receptivity. But, finally, for all his energy, an air of futility surrounds him, exhausting Sal and everyone else. The painful ending, when a desperate Dean arrives impromptu in New York to see his old friend only to be turned away, expresses Kerouac’s own unease with Dean’s empty freedom. Immaturity as valiant protest against spiritual torpor is not confined to hipster hedonism (Posnock 2006, online).

Immaturity is a rebellion that can be realized through an escape from society or a search for alternative ways of existence. Jack Kerouac called this phenomenon of immaturity a “revolution of morals”. A tendency towards “immaturity” has been traced in literature since the period of Romanticism, where a rebel character stands for the freedom of choice and life. In American literature of subsequent periods, there are a number of examples of works about children and adolescents, their rejection of reality, and rebellion (e.g., M. Twain *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, J. D. Salinger *The Catcher in the Rye*, etc.). Literature about children is becoming more adult literature, which is proved by Pictorial Review Jackson from Jack Kerouac’s novella. It is important that immaturity is not defined by the age of the character. “Adulthood” means seriousness, and “immaturity” – creativity. “Adulthood” disturbs spiritual life, makes people think about material things. The Beat Generation wanted to be “Peter Pans”. Their rebellion against the absence of action and against rigidity shows how they feared to grow up, to self-identify and

admit that life will inevitably end. A road becomes the most important motif for going away into eternal life, into a “childhood paradise”. The two characters of different ages were introduced in the novella on purpose: Pic is eleven and his brother Slim – 20-25. Jack Kerouac wanted to show how real physical age cannot comply with the psychological age. Spiritually, Pic and Slim are, obviously, peers. As the novella progresses, we continuously notice Pic’s unusually wise thinking, his reflections are deeper than those of Slim. Slim pulls Pic out of the adult world to save him from growing up.

However, the characters become internally mature during their travel – real and mental. The chronotope of the novella includes real geographical (the motif of movement to the West) and symbolic-philosophical spaces (the search for Paradise, the way to a new life, a search for oneself and a search for God in oneself).

### 2.3. A road as a real geographical space

The road as a real geographical space is presented in the novella through the route of the characters: a no-name tiny town, North Carolina – Washington, district of Columbia – New York, New York – Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania – Sacramento, California. A movement from east to west shows the way to “paradise”, to sacred California, a beloved place of the Beat Generation, where a spirit of freedom is felt. Moreover, the journey of the brothers is a repetition of the itinerary of the first American settlers, who discovered new spaces. A literary parallel with a frontier novel by F. Cooper is appropriate (Spanckeren 1994: 49). In his novels, F. Cooper mirrors the history of America in the context of frontier exploration, a gradual movement from the north-east of the continent to the west. Moreover, “Cooper evokes the endless, inevitable wave of settlers, seeing not only the gains but the losses” (idem: 24). Slim compares himself and Pic with the pioneers:

In those times ever’body was here, and come from New York where we was, with pushcarts and oxes over the hills that truck groaned on, in rain and high weather, and suffered and died jess to reach it here. It was the beginnin of the big long push to California... (Kerouac online)

Pic indeed goes on the same way as the pioneers: he sees everything for the first time, learns a lot of new things about his country, experiences new feelings. He is close to the national tradition of frontier in this respect. Pic reminds us of F. Cooper’s character Natty Bumppo (known as Leatherstoking), who is the first famous frontiersman in American literature: “He is idealized, upright individualist who is better than the society he protests. Poor and isolated, yet pure, he is a touchstone for ethical values and prefigures Herman Melville’s Billy Budd and Mark Twain’s Huck Finn” (idem 1994: 23). Pic tends to identify himself as a real American, i.e. a man who is close to nature and loves freedom (Native Americans were such people). The journey takes Pic’s breath away, stirs a peculiar, strong feeling of life in him; he thinks he sees the world for the first time only now. The character opens new horizons and transits from the old world to a new one as he steps on the road. For Pic, there is no way back to the previous life; now it is important to move forward, without looking back at the past. The whole space, together with Pic, is rushing forward. A man’s movement is in the movement of the world’s energy. Internal development happens due to the external movement.

The essence of the West is discovered in the novella in comparison with the East, namely with New York. Kerouac uses motifs associated with a confrontation between God and the Devil. New York is associated with Devil's nature:

Atlantic Ocean is got the Devil for the wind in the wintertime, and the Devil's son carries it down the streets so's a man can freeze to death in a doorway. God brought the sun over Manhattan Island, but the Devil's cousin won't let it in your window unless you get yourself a penthouse a mile high and you don't dass step out of it for a breath of air for fear you'll fall that mile, if you could afford a penthouse. (Kerouac online)

If New York is associated with Devil's nature, then "God" itself is going to be California. New York introduces itself to Pic in Times Square: it is a big city, with a busy life and a lot of people of different nationalities, a city which lives its own life, and Pic feels there like a speck in the ocean.

The character's attention is drawn to the figure of a grey-haired old man of 90, with a sack on his back, who appears as a "preacher" threading his way through a crowd in Times Square during the sermon of the Salvation Army. He says that time has come "to mourn for humanity" (idem). His gesture – a raised right hand – seems to show the direction one needs to go for happiness, to the West. The old man is like a sign for Pic and his brother; the old man appears suddenly in front of the crowd, and disappears just as suddenly. Later, Slim and Pic will see this old man from a lorry window, when he was going to the West, in spite of the bad weather and rain. The image of the old man is shown in contrast to the "preachers" of the Salvation Army in Times Square, whose speeches sound ironic to the public and to Pic. The old man symbolizes freedom; he doesn't invite people to follow him, while members of the Salvation Army try to persuade people that their way is the only right one and that they are the only carriers of true faith.

The main characters are saying good-bye to the city in their minds, but there are hints of a possible return, which reflects the perception of the world of the Beat Generation: a road without a specific route, and ideas born along the way. Slim says:

We'll come back to Times Square sometime, but now we gotsa go across that night, like the old man with the white hair, and keep goin till we get on the other side of this big, bulgin United States of America and all the raw land on it, before we be safe and sound by the Pacific Sea to set down and thank the Lord. (Kerouac online)

For Pic, New York is becoming a place where technology has supplanted nature. Skyscrapers obscure the sky:

I look straight up oncet and I look again and don't see but the most p'culiar brown air in the sky above the tall walls, and I seed it was on account all the lights of New York paint-up the nighttime way high yonder, and do it so much it don't need no more'n a few feeble stars in it. (idem)

Scary and foggy New York appears in Pic's imagination as something huge. Technology has also supplanted spirituality, and this is evident in a "sermon" about the mystery of television, which fills a person's entire life and does not leave one time for oneself. Thus, New York is represented in Pic's mind as a frightening agglomeration of glass and concrete buildings.

Another major city is also connected to the east coast of the country – Washington, the capital and political center of America. Pic gets to know the capital in transit, while sitting in a bus. He only hears how the city hummed and does not have time to really see anything. His brother's only remark about Washington is that it is the capital where the president and "all those others" live (Idem). This is not the city where people come to earn money, but the center of political life. The novella does not pay much attention to the city, because this place cannot attract Slim; he needs to move on, to the west, where there is more nature than people.

At the end of the journey, the characters come to Sacramento Valley – this place is associated with purity and hope for a new life. Jack Kerouac leaves his characters here and puts an end to their wanderings. However, the text does not indicate that California is the final destination in the "route" of the characters. Slim is a hipster, which means that he will not stop when he reaches his "Promised Land", since movement is associated with freedom – both physical movement and the choice of one's life path. Slim's way is mental, while Pic will continue the physical path in the future. This is how the characters' rebellion is realized, which may look like an escape from society or a search for alternative ways of existence.

#### **2.4. A road as a symbolic-philosophical space and motifs associated with it**

A symbolic-philosophical space is presented in the novella through a number of motifs that complement the main one: music as a rhythm-forming motif and the motif of madness as an approach to God.

It should be mentioned that on their way to the West, Slim and Pic meet the same "old white man with the silver hair flowin around his head (...) he looked pitiful and grand all at the same time for an old man" (Kerouac online), he resembled Christ, "trackin along like that in this dismal world" (idem). For the Beat Generation, not only the presence on the road and the journey along it become important, but also the motif of searching not so much for oneself as for God in general and for God in oneself, in particular. The way that God himself walks along acquires sacred motifs. In this movement to the West for a better life, one can see the movement of the characters in search of God, who seems to show them the direction. Slim embodies a generally accepted thought by the Beat Generation: all people are wanderers on Earth. The Beat Generation is known to have shown an interest in Zen Buddhism by looking back at oriental values. Zen is not a religion, but an interreligious individual practice, a return to the unconscious. There are no teachers and mentors in Zen, one has to learn for oneself what is important for returning to the unconscious. Zen is based on meditation, it is a state of feeling emptiness, which is the basis of everything. A person is drawn into the stream of life and becomes emptiness. The goal of Zen is pure enlightenment, when a person separates himself/herself from the things, and culture, and religion imposed on them. Consequently, the Beat Generation does not accept what comes from the outside, they look for the divine in themselves. This is their way of building a relationship with God.

In addition to meditation, the energy of movement contributes to the entrance into the unconscious: "A man's got to live and get there, Slim always said about that. 'Life is a sneeze, life is a breeze,' he said" (Kerouac online). It is movement that measures time and life. First, you need to move for practical reasons, because the only way to survive on the road is to walk. Secondly,

movement is given a sacred meaning, where it symbolizes movement from oneself to God, or vice versa, movement to oneself, to the depths of one's self. It is no coincidence that the church becomes a staging post for the characters, where Pic sings prayers in the choirs. It is interesting to note that religion is becoming an important vector for the entire work. God is mentioned in every chapter in different contexts. So, the beginning of the novella is marked by the story of the grandfather, who saw how God climbed over their shabby fence. The figure of God is not the last one in Slim's mind. God blessed the land for which the brothers are heading. There is an overground layer in the novella: spiritual motifs prevail over earthly ones, and then a road becomes not just a real reflection of physical movement, but the path to God of two lost souls.

One can also find a motif of madness in the novella. This is associated with the motif of the sacred in the novella. The first ghost, resembling God's apparition, that goes to California is the old man in Times Square, mentioned above. The second ghost appears first in the novel *On the Road*, and then, in more detail, but in the same context, it is displayed in the novella *Pic* as a separate chapter. This image is totally copied from the novel: Kerouac uses the same name and a similar plot twist. The two characters meet the ghost of Susquehanna on the road:

He was a funny old man, was short and thin, all weazled up his face that had such a long horny nose, and looked so shrunk and wan under his hat I wouldn't recognize if I seen him again. (Kerouac online)

Slim and Pic, interested in a strange character, rush after the old man who talks continuously, does not hear anything around, speaks into the void with himself. Soon the characters realize that this old man is a madman, who goes no one knows where, and his shadow, like a ghost, disappeared into the darkness. This character is a ghost who migrated from the novel *On the Road* to the novella and becomes a significant image in the context of Kerouac's entire work. The Beat Generation was looking for an entrance into the unconscious through drugs. The madman is the brightest embodiment of the energy of the unconscious, since he is free in his actions and he is most often driven by the impulse of a mad idea. Hence, the madman on the road is the one who sees everything at the source as it is. Madness allows you to go out into the over-reality, which is associated with the mental way of the characters, in particular, feverishness and Slim's eternal desire for movement. He also seeks a way into the unconscious through music, which will be discussed below.

So, speaking about the motif of madness and its significance for the mental path of the characters, it can be noted that there are scenes in the novella in which they meet madmen; they arouse genuine interest in Slim, since it is they who are the bearers of faith and truth, no one can show them the way, they choose their own path. In the context of the novella, we associate this with a spiritual search for oneself, when nothing can prevail over one's own vision of the world. It is important to enter the unconscious when a person becomes a sage. A madman for the Beat Generation is equal to a sage who knows everything. Slim strives for such "pure" wisdom.

Another important motif connected with the road and the reflection of internal life of a spirit is music. Slim is African American, a bebopper. It is known that the Beat Generation associated their art with the bebop music performed by African American musicians in bars. The motif of music is an important aspect of the novella. Certain music preferences have become fundamental symbols of the

common cultural and philosophical movement represented by the Beat Generation writers. The motif of movement correlates with the motif of music in Jack Kerouac's works. The writer included jazz music – bebop, bop – in his works. Slim, like Dean Moriarty in the novel *On the Road*, thinks and acts in the rhythm of jazz, improvising. Playing the saxophone, he understands this music, feels connected with it, believes in the power of art that doesn't divide people by the colour of skin, financial status, etc., but unites people. He tries to awaken the best qualities in people and to give them joy by playing the horn. On stage, he is ready to tell the audience his story, even reads them a prayer that can unite all people. Slim has his own faith, despite the fact that he often refers to the Bible. He is an eternal child, but at the same time he tries to teach his brother to live according to his commandments. Thus, music becomes the fundamental principle of motion for the character:

Slim, he was walkin up and down where he was and jess carryin along that jump-song goin as fast, well, like that bus I was tellin you about earlier. (Kerouac online)

It is the nervous improvisation of bebop that helps Slim feel the pulse of life, as it fills it with bright colours – this is a continuous movement of life. The penetration into the unconscious is carried out through music, which often becomes the most important element of John Kerouac's works and the Beat Generation writers in general. Bebop is a transformation of movement into music.

### 3. Conclusion

The motif of the road can be considered as one of the central motifs of the novella. In a real geographical space, this is the movement of the two brothers from New York to California, where they dream to find their “paradise”. Pic goes the way of a pioneer, moving from fear to acceptance. We can observe the spiritual formation of the characters in a symbolic way. Pic is searching for his own truth, which lies beyond religious boundaries, the characters are searching for themselves, for God in themselves, and this search is endless. The road is an important meaning-making element in the novella *Pic*, since it is not only a way of travelling or escape, but also a method of understanding life.

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**DON DELILLO'S "TIME" IN *THE SILENCE*.  
A CORPUS-BASED APPROACH**

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***Abstract:** Stylistically, *The Silence* (2020) does not stray far from most of Don DeLillo's 21st-century novels. As early criticism has noted, the key to decoding this slim volume's significations lies not in its plot, setting, or character, but in theme and, significantly, in its language. By using corpus stylistics' keyword approach, my paper argues in favour of "time" as a thematic binding element between *The Silence* and DeLillo's other 21<sup>st</sup>-century novelistic endeavours. Moreover, the paper explores the ramifications of this theme in the post-technological setting posited by the novel.*

***Keywords:** contemporary American literature, corpus stylistics, Don DeLillo, keyword method, time*

## **1. Introduction**

Since the advent of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Don DeLillo's novels have usually been brief, yet intensively topical writings. Starting with 2001's brief and poetically-infused *The Body Artist*, DeLillo's novelistic output in the last two decades has marked a sudden and unexpected change from the narrative length and intricate thematic layering of his landmark 1997 novel *Underworld*. When questioned about this palpable mutation in his writing, the author himself acknowledged that a paradigm shift had taken place following the events of 9/11 (DeLillo 2005: 90-95). Moving beyond this obvious redrawing of the socio-political map, one can also attribute the condensation of DeLillo's narratives to the swift permutations of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century's cultural landscape, mirrored by remarkable technological strides and the ever-growing sense of interconnectivity, fuelled by the advancement of the Internet. Thus, DeLillo's 21<sup>st</sup> century novels unfold against a backdrop of atomised individuals inhabiting what has become a global digital network, in which each event reverberates across hemispheres and networks, leaving none unaffected.

*The Silence*, published in October 2020, arguably addresses the global network and ceaseless reliance on technology more aptly than DeLillo's other novelistic outputs of the last two decades. Set on Super Bowl Sunday 2022, when a technological blackout wipes out all devices and makes all screens go dark, this short novel concentrates on the coming together of a group of characters, who witness, in their intriguing ways, the end to a historical logic that has become commonplace. Nevertheless, critics have relegated the technological debate to a second-place standing, choosing instead to focus on DeLillo's signature dimension:

the mastery of language and the power of suggestion. As Cornel Bonca (2020) observes while reviewing the novel for *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, the key to decoding the significations of this slim volume lies not in plot, setting or character, but in theme and, significantly, language, which carefully frames a brand of contemporary dread that reduces all to “paralyzed human slivers”.

In fact, language has consistently occupied a prominent position for DeLillo. As the writer himself confessed in a 1997 interview, when probing whether he found academic criticism of his work to be pertinent as to his original intent, “what’s almost never discussed is (...) the language in which a book is framed” (Remnick 1997: 47). Taking this idea forward, upon receiving the Jerusalem Prize in 1999, he viewed the mission of the writer as “working on commas and dashes”, as “before history and politics, there is language. (...) The way an ascetic goes sunward into wilderness, this is how the writer pitches headlong toward language” (DeLillo 1999: 14-17). Language is thus converted into much more than a means-to-an-end for DeLillo: it becomes the very focus of the writer’s endeavour, the centrepiece of his novelistic explorations.

Moreover, what unites DeLillo’s 21<sup>st</sup> century short novels is the exploration of a core set of universal themes, among which none other appears to have been more recurrent than his preoccupation with time. Whether approached in the form of the period required in order to effectively overcome trauma in *The Body Artist* (2001) and *Falling Man* (2007), the possibility of compressing existence into the expanse of a single day in *Cosmopolis* (2003), the deconstruction of chronology as an artistic statement in itself in *Point Omega* (2010), or the reframing of death as a conquerable instance in *Zero K* (2016), time has been a constant theme for DeLillo. Given that “a theme (...) helps the writer deal with the superabundance and profusion of real existence” and “the theme is an element that structures a work in a perceptible way” (Guillén 1993: 192), one may safely consider that the theme of time may be used to unify DeLillo’s works not only on a singular level, but also taken together, as a corpus of texts united by the same stylistic choices, vision, and language.

The publication of *The Silence* raises the issue of integrating this latest novelistic exploration within the larger body of DeLillo’s 21<sup>st</sup> century novels. While ostensibly focused on the experience of the series of characters surprised to find themselves in the midst of a technological blackout, *The Silence* does not stray far from DeLillo’s hallmark approach of evoking recurring themes. Deliberate word choice and the intricate repetition of keywords are elements that have pervaded the author’s literary oeuvre in the past two decades, observable even at the level of a casual reading. In what follows, I shall apply the “key words” method, stemming from corpus stylistics, in order to demonstrate that “time” may serve as a binding element between *The Silence* and DeLillo’s other 21<sup>st</sup> century works, thus signalling the author’s proclivity towards not only certain themes, but to an entire manner of writing.

## **2. Materials and methods - stylistic key(word)s**

### **2.1. Corpus stylistics**

As a hybrid approach between corpus linguistics and stylistics, corpus stylistics has become part and parcel of the recent development in the digital humanities, with its reliance on software in order to provide raw data from literary

texts, only to be later supplemented by more traditional methods of stylistic analysis. While initially considered a fringe movement, corpus stylistics has benefitted recently from increasing exposure and practice, from explorations of discourse presentation in Early Modern English writing (McIntyre and Walker 2011), to macro-analyses of the fiction of Charles Dickens (Mahlberg 2013). A pertinent overview of the developments in corpus stylistics across the last decade can be found in McIntyre and Walker (2019: 1), who also stress that, despite the numerous possibilities outlined within this emerging field, no clearly-cut definition of it exists yet and the methods employed have not achieved full development.

However, Mahlberg (2007: 221) stresses the capacity of corpus stylistics to move beyond the mere provision of quantitative data and offer a means by which the comparison of a text with a group of texts at the macro level might reveal “tendencies, intertextual relationships, or reflections of social and cultural contexts”, thus “the features that make a text distinctive.” In other words, what corpus stylistics proposes is essentially a two-stage analytical undertaking, as the scrutiny of the corpus serves only as a point of departure, to be necessarily followed by an in-depth analysis of the targeted features in context. Therefore, the most apparent benefit brought about by corpus stylistics is, arguably, the capacity of grounding interpretation in more systematic and rigorous data.

## 2.2. The “key word” (KW) method

Among the potential approaches fleshed out under the dome of corpus stylistics, the “key word” (KW) method offers a pertinent overview of the characteristics of a text in contrast to others and may serve as a primary means towards defining an author’s style at the macro level. What may start on a purely observational basis can be mapped out with more significant precision by using various software suited to corpus stylistics, which may pinpoint the ‘keyness’ of certain terms. For Scott and Tribble (2006: 55-56), “keyness is a quality words may have in a given text or set of texts, suggesting that they are important, they reflect what the text is really about, avoiding trivia and insignificant detail.” Therefore, KWs may be viewed as functional elements that decisively influence the interpretation of a text. They may also be employed at the corpus level to establish thematic and stylistic links to other texts.

As outlined by Scott (2006: 55-59), the main principles behind the KW method, as applied in the case of literature, are predictable and non-ambiguous. The first step presumes to notice the repetition of a word within the text, as frequent repetition is the first indicator of a word’s potential keyness. Secondly, to account for the correct identification of KWs in a ‘node-text’ (the text subjected to analysis), a significantly larger reference corpus must be compiled, which should ideally include tens of thousands of words. Finally, to qualify for keyness, the term in question should appear at least as frequently as a pre-established threshold level. A successful application of this method, used as reference here, is Scott’s (2006) endeavour to identify KWs in *Romeo and Juliet* by using all of Shakespeare’s plays as a reference corpus. This approach was later taken forward by Culpeper (2009), who employed the ‘tagging’ of KWs according to specific semantic domains. Yet, these approaches represent only the initial quantitative step in the larger framework of corpus stylistics, arguably anchored in the interpretation of such data.

### 2.3. Tool: Corpus Query System – Sketch Engine

In order for large-scale corpus analysis to become possible, technology has gradually been developed not only to compile corpora, but also to enhance their querying by as many interested parties as possible. Thus, Corpus Query Systems (CQS) grant the flexibility of searching for keywords, phrases, collocations, grammatical and syntactic patterns and to produce swaths of data according to various criteria. The CQS chosen for this particular analysis is Sketch Engine, whose first version dates back to 2004; in the words of its creators, it “allows the user to view word sketches, thesaurally similar words and ‘sketch differences’, as well as the more familiar CQS functions” (Kilgarriff et al. 2004). In the years since its launch, this online software has been constantly expanded to allow users to produce wordlists, view concordance, generate keywords, and compile their own corpora, which can be compared against each other or to preloaded corpora (Kilgarriff et al. 2014).

### 2.4. Focus text and reference corpus

For this analysis, a reference corpus containing all six of Don DeLillo’s 21<sup>st</sup> century novels, in the commercially available e-book format, has been compiled using Sketch Engine. The basic datasets of this corpus can be found in the following table:

Title	Tokens	Words	%
<i>The Body Artist</i> (2001)	30.727	~ 25.522	10.3
<i>Cosmopolis</i> (2003)	58.833	~ 48.868	19.7
<i>Falling Man</i> (2007)	80.353	~ 66.743	26.9
<i>Point Omega</i> (2010)	31.894	~ 26.492	10.7
<i>Zero K</i> (2016)	78.569	~ 65.261	26.3
<i>The Silence</i> (2020)	18.200	~ 15.177	6.1
Total	298.576	~ 248.007	100

**Table 1.** Reference corpus

For clarifying purposes, a token is considered the minimal unit of a corpus, containing both words and nonwords, which explains why the number of tokens will always be higher than the number of words; spaces are not counted as tokens.

Out of the reference corpus, two subcorpora have been compiled: a focus corpus with the text of DeLillo’s *The Silence* (18.200 tokens, ~15.117 words, 6.1% of the reference corpus) and a reference subcorpus compiled from the remaining five of DeLillo’s 21<sup>st</sup>-century novels (280.376 tokens, ~ 232.889 words, 93.9% of the reference corpus). The need for two separate subcorpora is obvious: if one were to simply compare the text of *The Silence* to the rest of the reference corpus, the results would not accurately reveal the extent to which the frequency of keywords found in the focus corpus may be compatible with that of the reference corpus, as the latter would also contain as an integral part the entire extent of the former.

Subsequently, “time” has been used as lemma to query the two subcorpora alongside each other. The lemma is the base form of the word, as encountered in

dictionaries; the wordlist generated based on the lemma in Sketch Engine enables one to also encounter compounds which include the lemma (e.g. “halftime”, “spacetime”, “daytime” etc.), which may prove useful in a larger linguistic analysis of the text. For the purposes of this study, however, only the results containing the lemma “time” in its base form (singular and plural) will be discussed, while compounds will be disregarded.

### 3. Results

The querying of the two subcorpora using the lemma “time” has yielded the following results:

Lemma	Frequency		Frequency per million		Novel frequency	
	Focus	Reference	Focus	Reference	Focus	Reference
“Time”	63	833	3,461.5	2,971	1	5

**Table 2.** Frequency of the lemma “time”

Of the 63 occurrences found, fifteen have been chosen as part of a conscious sampling decision on a contextual basis, listed in the order in which they appear in the novel:

#	Sentence
1	<b>Time</b> to destination three thirty-four.
2	'The beautiful and airy concepts of space and <b>time</b> .'
3	'Space and <b>time</b> ,' she said.
4	Or is it the blank screen, is it a negative impulse that provoked his imagination, the sense that the game is happening somewhere in Deep Space outside the fragile reach of our current awareness, in some transrational warp that belongs to Martin's <b>time</b> frame, not ours.
5	People begin to appear in the streets, warily at first and then in a spirit of release, walking, looking, wondering, women and men, an incidental cluster of adolescents, all escorting each other through the mass insomnia of this inconceivable <b>time</b> .
6	The way in which <b>time</b> has seemingly jumped forward.
7	Has <b>time</b> leaped forward, as our young man says, or has it collapsed?
8	In other <b>times</b> , more or less ordinary, there are always people staring into their phones, morning, noon, night, middle of the sidewalk, oblivious to everyone hurrying past, engrossed, mesmerized, consumed by the device, or walking toward him and then veering away, but they can't do it now, all the digital addicts, phones shut down, everything down down down.
9	In the dwindling spirit of this astonishing <b>time</b> , she isn't surprised.
10	When we're finished with all this, it may be <b>time</b> for me to embrace a free death.
11	Losing track of <b>time</b> .
12	The physics of <b>time</b> .
13	Absolute <b>time</b> .
14	<b>Time</b> 's arrow.
15	The words carry me back into dead <b>time</b> .

**Table 3.** Representative instances of “time” (DeLillo 2020)

#### 4. Discussion

As concerns the employment of the lemma “time”, one may notice from the onset that it appears in all of DeLillo’s 21<sup>st</sup> century novels with notable frequency. This demonstrates that “time” has been a consistent preoccupation for Don DeLillo throughout his recent novelistic output and may be considered an umbrella theme for many other instances derived from it, such as the deconstruction of time and chronology in *Point Omega* or post-traumatic time in *The Body Artist* and *Falling Man*. In *The Silence*, DeLillo arguably proposes a macro-contextualization of the role of time within a technology-dependent society, suddenly thrown into the blankness and timelessness of a technological blackout, in which previously entrenched digital connections are abruptly terminated.

Specifically, while the focus subcorpus has a higher frequency per million of the lemma “time” (3,461.5) than that of the reference subcorpus (2,971), this is not necessarily a significant difference, but rather proof that *The Silence* is consistent with DeLillo’s post-2001 novelistic output concerning the author’s preoccupation with “time”. Indeed, the larger presence of this particular lemma in *The Silence* may be derived, at least in part, from the fact that the novel’s first chapter takes place in an airplane, on a flight from Paris to New York, where one of the characters, Jim Kripps, is fascinated by the aircraft’s small screens tracking the progress of the flight; he makes a habit of reading the data on these screens to his wife, Teresa Berens: “Time in New York twelve fifty-five. (...) Arrival time sixteen thirty-two (...) Time to destination three thirty-four” (#1) (DeLillo 2020: 4), which betrays a fascination not only with technology, but also with the ways in which flight tracking mechanisms manage to incessantly keep track of time. Given the technological blackout which will render these screens blank, cripple the plane’s apparatuses and compel it to crash-land later on, these employments of the lemma “time” suggest, from the novel’s onset, the pivotal role of this theme in the entire novel.

On another level, the highly significant nature of “time” can be grasped from the adjectives used to individualize the various occurrences of this noun. Thus, in the representative samples selected for analysis, “time” is described as “inconceivable” (#5), “astonishing” (#9), “absolute” (#13), and “dead” (#15). Two aspects are striking about these labels. Firstly, their meaning already presumes a superlative dimension or, in the case of #15, degrees of comparison are not prescriptively used; this not only reveals different facets of time, but also yields further significance to this theme within the entire span of the novel. Secondly, there is a stark contrast between instance #15 and the other aforementioned adjectives; this may be explained through the fact that instance #15 occurs in the final pages of the novel, when the characters begin to accustom themselves to the extensive and perhaps permanent nature of the blackout, which effectively proclaims the end of a time; whether this automatically means the beginning of another is largely left open to question. However, it is perhaps not surprising that instance #15 comes from the perspective of Teresa Berens, a poet, the only character in the novel who is a writer, who reminisces about the notebooks she had written and which may now serve as a living archive: “Ideas, memories, words, one notebook after another, a huge number (...) it amazes me to read what I thought was worth writing. The words carry me back into dead time” (DeLillo 2020: 112). Thus, memories written on paper can make a “dead time” come alive, even when digital memories have been wiped out.

The connection between death and time is a pivotal one across DeLillo's works, especially those published since 2001. *The Body Artist* (2001) posited a post-traumatic time, which revealed a proclivity towards artistic creation in the midst of overcoming the loss of a loved one; in *Point Omega* (2010), the deconstruction of time offered valuable insight into minute aspects of existence, coupled with palpable and repetitive depictions of death, first through film running at two frames per second (the ekphrastic representation of Douglas Gordon's real-life art installation *24 Hour Psycho*) and later through the characters' seclusion in the desert, where the connection between time and death is continuously foregrounded: "Time falling away. That's what I feel here (...). Time becoming slowly older. Enormously old. Not day by day. This is deep time, epochal time" (DeLillo 2010: 72); *Zero K* (2016) is centred around one of the character's endeavours of conquering death through cryopreservation, effectively stripping away the boundaries of time that govern human existence. *The Silence* is no different, in that Teresa Berens speaks of the "dead time" of memories (#15), and Martin Dekker, a former physics student obsessed with Einstein's *1912 Manuscript on the Special Theory of Relativity*, a fellow guest at the Super Bowl watch party hosted by Max Stenner and Diane Lucas, tries to comprehend the moment of the blackout as a threshold towards the ultimate stage of existence: "When we're finished with all this, it may be time for me to embrace a free death. *Freitod*" (#10) (DeLillo 2020: 102). Both of these views reinforce the fundamental connection between death and time, made significantly more revealing in light of the blackout. In fact, one may argue that the technological death surrounding them is a catalyst for intense ruminations on the relative nature of existence and the dependency manifested by humanity on technology.

Finally, the notions of time shifts, and time frames represent key instances in DeLillo's exploration of the connection between time, space, and technology in *The Silence*. Martin Dekker pinpoints the origin of these explorations in a quote from Einstein's *1912 Manuscript*: "The beautiful and airy concepts of space and time" (#2) (DeLillo 2020: 29), a connection reinforced by Diane Lucas, his former physics teacher (#3). At a later point, when the characters internalize the glitch in the global network, impressions of a different time begin to take hold of the characters: Diane Lucas perceives different time frames and divergent flows of time between herself and those around her (#4, #12, #13, #14), Martin Dekker talks about a different temporal perception following the blackout, in the form of time 'jumping forward' (#6, #7), and Max Stenner faces challenges comprehending the new time frame he now inhabits, in which the devices that governed people's existence as they walked down the street have been reduced to blank screens (#8). Thus, through the careful framing of language and the attribution of these lines to most of the novel's characters, DeLillo reveals that one of the dominating discussions in the aftermath of a potential future blackout will indeed revolve around the role of time in a post-technological world.

## 5. Conclusion

While these explorations are limited both in scope and dimension (the nature of the two corpora under discussion and the focus of the interpretation in a single direction, on a single theme or KW), they still manage to reveal not only the essential role played by the theme of time in DeLillo's latest novel, but also how this particular theme acts as a bridging element between *The Silence* and the author's previous novelistic creations. It is hoped that this analysis may pave the

way for future corpus-based explorations on other key themes in DeLillo's 21<sup>st</sup> century novels (such as spatiality or death), for extensions in both focus and reference corpora at the level of the author's entire literary output, or for the application of the KW method on works pertaining to other contemporary authors, which might showcase thematic bindings between various works across a partial or complete literary trajectory.

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## **A JOURNEY THROUGH THE FEMALE GAZE: MEDIA AND ART PERSPECTIVE**

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***Abstract.** The aim of this paper consists of identifying the specific nature of the phenomenon “female gaze” by discussing several topics from the study area of feminist aesthetics. It is shown that the predominance of the male perspective in the media makes modern society less tolerant towards gender equality, and, at the same time, the patriarchal society imposes gender-stereotyped values. On the one hand, mass media has the power to promote values due to its performativity, but on the other, it can contribute to the destabilization of the established social stereotypes due to the phenomenon of remediation. Besides, mass media can intra-act with the society, which results in the reconstitution of society’s agential reality.*

***Keywords:** agential realism, female gaze, gender equality, mass media, performativity, remediation*

### **1. Introduction**

The very nature and spirit of society are represented in modern films as part of contemporary art and media. Having analyzed the modern film industry one can easily conclude that it is characterized by fewer female protagonists in comparison to the male ones. The charts of the top-grossing movies prove the films made mostly for men and about men to have the highest numbers. For example, in the year 2020, the most selling films were “Bad Boys for Life” (two male characters fighting against a criminal gang), “1917” (two British soldiers in the First World War), and “Sonic the Hedgehog” (cartoon highlighting another story about two male protagonists). Following these statistics, there is a lack of female vision represented in modern media, even though, according to the study conducted by Webedia. Movies Pro (Rethinking Targeting: How Untapped Segments Drive Box Office Admissions: online), the female cinema audience is approximately as large as the male one.

The lack of female vision led to the creation of the “female gaze” which is now an interdisciplinary concept. Invented in the film circles of the 1970s, now it hits the high spots in all cultural spheres, including arts. Endless collections, exhibits, articles, journals, websites, and platforms are dedicated to female perspectives. However, the definition of the “female gaze” still remains ambiguous. It originated from the “male gaze” theory, which was defined by Laura Mulvey (1975) in her essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema”. As Alicia Malone (2018: 25) rightfully claims, Mulvey was simply interested in what happens to women when most of the films we watch are made by men and seen through the male gaze. In other words, the male gaze embraces a way of viewing

visual media from the perspective of a male. Laura Mulvey's theory manifested the male as an active "onlooker" or one who has the power of looking, while the female was featured as the passive object or performance.

The aim of our paper consists of discovering whether the predominance of the male perspective in the media influences society and makes it less friendly to gender equality. Or, on the other hand, whether it is the patriarchal society that imposes particular values on the media, and accordingly, whether mass media merely mirror the social trends, without suggesting anything new. Moreover, we would like to contemplate the topic of what the possible ways of representing the "female gaze" in art and media could be.

To answer these questions, we shall use the methods of content analysis and social role analysis. These methods will help us reveal the connection between media, art, and society by referring to the theories of performativity, remediation, and agential realism. We will also try to identify the specific nature of the phenomenon "female gaze" by discussing several topics from the study area of feminist aesthetics. Furthermore, we shall illustrate the process of constructing the "female gaze" using the example of Céline Sciamma's film "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" (online), as we consider it to be one of those films that redefine the position of a woman among creators and recipients of media and art.

## 2. Media and society

### 2.1. Performativity and remediation

In one of her works in the domain of Gender Media Studies, Judith Butler (1999: 381) introduces the idea of a performative quality of the gender stereotypes in the media. She explains the notion "performative", using an example of the relation of the law to an individual:

There is the policeman, the one not only who represents the law but whose address "Hey you!" has the effect of binding the law to the one who is hailed. This "one" who appears not to be in a condition of trespass prior to the call [...] is not fully a social object, is not fully subjectivated, for he or she is not yet reprimanded. The reprimand does not merely repress or control the subject but forms a crucial part of the juridical and social *formation* of the subject. The call is formative, if not performative, precisely because it initiates the individual into the subjected status of the subject.

Understood in this context, a performative is such that can socially construct the subject it is referring to. In the example above, a performative address to the subject conditions its social formation. Characterizing gender stereotypes in mass media as performative means asserting that they can create the phenomena they display by imposing particular values and behavioural patterns upon their recipients (defining their social performances). For example, if the media put stereotyped labels on men's and women's social positions, its recipients accept them as essential constituents of their public and private life.

On the other hand, the specific nature of mass media is such that they tend to constantly repeat themselves (an old song reappears in a new film, a TV-Series refers to a famous book or another TV-Series, etc.). Andrea Seier (2007: 108) describes the phenomenon of "mass media" as unfinished processes of mediatization that relate to, with, and against each other. She claims that a medium

is that which remediates, whereby the process of “remediation” is, at the same time, the process of “refashioning” or “remodelling” itself or other media. What is new about new media is the way they imitate, repeat, and re-enact older media.

The process of remediation, to which Andrea Seier (2007) refers, among other things, implies that the images appearing in older media reappear time and time again in newer media, surrounded by different updated contexts. The same ideas immersed in new contexts might gain other meanings and contribute to the destabilizing of existing stereotypes. For this reason, she characterizes media as items that constantly redefine themselves. To visualize this statement, we would like to provide an example from an episode of an American TV-Series “Castle” (“The Lives of Others”, online) that refers to Alfred Hitchcock’s “Rear Window” (1954: online): the protagonist is watching his neighbours through the window out of boredom and accidentally spots one of them killing his girlfriend. Contrary to the original film, the female protagonist in “Castle” (who does the same thing) is a working woman and cannot stay at home all day long, looking for evidence of her husband’s accusation. Thus, although both media share the same story pattern, when immersed in different realities, they tend to communicate different values.

Summarizing everything mentioned so far, we assume that mass media contribute significantly to both establishing and undermining social conventions and stereotypes, including those related to gender. It follows that there is a deep connection between media and society, and we would like to take a closer look at it further.

## 2.2. Film and agential reality

Karen Barad’s (1998) theory of agential realism offers a plausible approach to understanding the relationship between mass media and society. One of its fundamental terms is that of “intra-action”, which she (1998: 96) defines as a contrast to interaction:

I introduce the neologism “intra-action” to signify the inseparability of “objects” and “agencies of observation” (in contrast to “interaction”, which reinscribes the contested dichotomy).

Understood in this way, the term “intra-action” implies that its constituents not only affect one another (not only interact), but also mutually enable each other’s existence. The interrelation between, for example, such media as film, and society can also be considered an intra-action: on the one hand, films (along with the social environment, books, music, etc.) significantly contribute to establishing the society (it cannot be as it is without the influence of the film industry), but on the other hand, films are created by and for the society and, for this reason, must follow its social conventions and aesthetic canons.

According to Karen Barad (1998), the intra-action of an object (for example, a film) and an agency of observation (for example, a viewer, as s/he decodes and interprets the pictures on the screen) has the power to reconstitute the agential reality (the reality, which is not independent of human practices). Thus, if the relationship between film and society is an intra-action, one can conclude that this relationship has the capacity to contribute to the reconstitution of society’s agential reality.

To illustrate this statement, we would like to refer to Eisenstein's technique of intellectual montage (*Ocherki istorii kino SSSR. Nemo kino: 1918–1934 god*: online). Its basic assumption is that, by combining different unrelated narratively shots, possessing a symbolic quality, one might impose intellectual activity on the audience, which can result in particular thoughts and even concepts. Their meaning, however, should not be understood logically, but rather unconsciously, associatively, and emotionally. Accordingly, within the framework of this method, the intra-action of human cognition and symbolic images constructs ideas related to what the state of reality is.

The scene from Eisenstein's "Strike" (ibid.) which juxtaposes the shot of killing the workers with the one of killing cattle in the slaughterhouse is a vivid example of how one can integrate the above-described technique into a feature film. This juxtaposition aims at making the audience associate the shooting with the slaughterhouse, which imposes the idea that the bourgeoisie treats the proletariat like cattle and thus triggers social hostility towards the bourgeoisie.

One can conclude that the strong interdependency between film and society lies in the fact that the film has the power to reconstitute people's agential reality and, simultaneously, is significantly dependent on them, as it is made by them and for them. For this reason, the film industry must not merely deliver patriarchal values, but also provide enough space for a so-called female subjectivity. The reason we consider it to be important is that, on the one hand, a film has the power to influence the position of women in society, and, on the other hand, it indicates social progress in terms of gender equality. In this regard, we would like to pose a question: what are the ways of expressing female subjectivity in the film? In our perspective, one of the possible answers to this question can be found within the framework of feminist aesthetics.

### **3. Through the female artists' gaze**

#### **3.1. The problem of female art**

One of the most fundamental ideas of feminist film theory is that of Laura Mulvey (1975): she states that society's patterns of representation are instituted within the framework of patriarchal order and dominated by a so-called "male gaze". The notion of a "male gaze" defines, among other things, the process of framing the objects of visual art in such a way that perceiving their value implies accepting the "masculine" perspective of appreciation. In other words, the feminist theory asserts that, when it comes to visual arts, there is either little or no space for a woman as a viewer of it, but only for a woman as an object in it.

When contemplating the topic of art, Teresa de Lauretis (1985: 160) once said:

Art is what is enjoyed publicly rather than privately, has an exchange value rather than a use value, and that value is conferred by socially established aesthetic canons.

Karsten Harries (2012: online), on the contrary, suggests that it is the work of art, the power that establishes the space of meanings within the society: the way of life and thinking, the cultural context, etc. Understood in this way, art has an ethical function: it establishes a particular ethos. It is thus concluded that the

interrelation between art and society follows the same paradigm as that of mass media and society.

The assumption that the historical domain of art and aesthetics is patriarchal created the new area of research for feminist scientists – the “feminist aesthetics”. Despite the way it sounds, this term does not refer to a particular aesthetics or style but rather comprises a collection of perspectives that question assumptions concerning gender-role stereotypes. Gisela Ecker (1986: 15), for example, describes feminist aesthetics as a mere catchword under which many points against essentialism are normally brought forward. Thus, feminist aesthetics can be defined as a collection of works that aim at speaking against the socially contracted concept of “gender” and discrediting many of the quasi-genuine features characteristic to either women or men.

The research in the field of feminist aesthetics started with the query posted by Linda Nochlin (1988) in her famous essay “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?”, which was followed by several other texts, with titles such as *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (Greer 1979), *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (Parker, Pollock 1981), *Art and Sexual Politics: Women’s Liberation, Women Artists, and Art History* (Hess, Baker 1973), *Feminism and Aesthetics* (Brandt 2003). etc. As one can see, the words “art” and “women” were the most common among the titles of the research at that time, and, thus it is easy to conclude that feminist aesthetics started as an attempt to more or less systematically contemplate the role and position of women in art.

Silvia Bovenschen (1986: 49) made an important statement regarding the status of feminine aesthetics as a phenomenon:

Is there a feminine aesthetic? Certainly, there is, if one is talking about *aesthetic awareness* and *modes of sensory perception*. Certainly, not, if one is talking about an unusual variant of artistic production or about a painstakingly constructed theory of art.

In the author’s perspective, women do have aesthetic awareness and perception and, therefore, the right to, on the one hand, express themselves as artists and, on the other, fulfil their aesthetic needs as the appreciators of art. At the same time, one should not mistake the phenomenon of feminine aesthetics for a particular style or technique that needs separation from male art.

Gisela Breitling (1986: 167) highlighted in detail the issue of female artists being classified due to their gender:

You won’t find Paula Modersohn-Becker’s pictures in the Worpswede room of the Kunsthalle in Bremen – they hang in a special room. However, when displayed in the context of her male contemporaries, as in the Städelische Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt, her qualities become apparent – only then does her power, her expansiveness, her sensibility for color become apparent – or in the National Gallery in Berlin where two of her pictures hang side by side with Schmitt-Rotluff and Otto Müller. The company of her male contemporaries highlights how no one so far has adequately allotted her rightful place [...]. She needs to be placed in the context from which she comes, on which she calls, which she defies, and which she transcends, for otherwise her achievement and the goals of her art remain hidden [...]. We cannot do women’s creativity justice so long as we consider it in an exclusively female context.

Accordingly, one of the significant issues within the framework of feminist aesthetics is that of classification and comparison: female artists should be placed amongst and compared only to those who possess the same artistic style, background, etc., but not to those of the same sex. Understanding the value of the piece of art is much more complicated if it is not placed among the representatives of the same movement or period. Such positioning leads to its underappreciation. Another valid argument speaking for this approach is that it secures the position of women among the audience, as it provides them with an opportunity to identify with the female vision without leaving the realm of the “general” art and media.

Providing men and women with an equal position among creators and recipients of arts and media products is what we consider one of the possible approaches to rooting the phenomenon of the “female gaze” in society. To demonstrate one of the possibilities for the implementation of this idea, we would like to refer to Celine Sciamma’s film “Portrait of a Lady on Fire” (online) and analyse several particular aspects of it.

### **3.2. Celine Sciamma’s perspective**

“Portrait of a Lady on Fire” (online) tells the story of an affair between a female artist, Marianne, and her sitter, Heloise, that took place in the 1760s in France. Marianne was hired to paint Heloise’s portrait, which is to be sent to Milan to Heloise’s potential fiancé. Another artist had already been hired for this job, but he never finished the painting: Heloise refused to sit for him, as she didn’t want to get married. This is the reason why Marianne was introduced to Heloise not as an artist, but as a companion for walks, whereas Marianne’s actual intention was to paint Heloise from memory.

The first aspect we would like to bring to attention is the beginning of the film, where the female protagonist continues the work of the male artist and is supposed to fulfil the same function as he did earlier. Moreover, their paintings will later be compared, which implies certain similarities of their works and places the artists on the same level: at the beginning of the film there is a shot of Heloise’s unfinished portrait painted by him, and approximately in the middle, there is a shot of Heloise’s portrait made by Marianne. In this way, the film raises the idea of artistic equality of men and women: Marianne and the male artist are working in the same field, on the same subject, and for this reason, she has a right to continue his work. Also, the finished portraits are allowed to be compared, and accordingly, aligned, regardless of their authors’ gender. Such an approach emphasizes their mutual right to express their visions and allows appreciation of the quality of Marianne’s work, in spite of her gender.

This film also solves the problem of the insufficient possibility for the audience to identify with the “female gaze”, as it creates double female subjectivity, by telling a story about a female artist, written and directed by a woman. Moreover, it is not for this reason banished into the special field of exclusively “female” cinema: it got the prize for the Best Screenplay at Cannes, where it was nominated along with films directed by men.

There is another peculiar feature of the film, which we would like to discuss in more detail: there are no male characters in the entire film and it makes every viewer, male or female, identify with a woman while watching it. To prove this point, we would like to refer to Carl Plantinga’s (2004) article “Die Szene der Empathie und der menschliche Gesicht” (“The Scene of Empathy and the Human

Face’). In the article, he reports on an experiment in which the students’ reaction to short films, which display speakers telling either happy or sad stories, was secretly recorded. It turned out that the audience always mirrored all the facial expressions of the storytellers. Following Carl Plantinga, such imitation facilitates developing imitated emotions. Thus, due to the unconscious imitation of the facial expression of the characters, the audience tends to develop empathy for them. Sigmund Freud (1982) once made a statement that empathy can only arise from identification with others (which can range from strong and intense to partial and extremely limited). Consequently, when watching films, the audience always assimilates (at least partially) with the characters on the screen. And the fact that “Portrait of a Lady on Fire” displays only female characters can only mean that its audience, regardless of their gender, has no other choice but to identify with a woman and with a “female gaze” accordingly.

Thus, we would like to conclude by stating that “Portrait of a Lady on Fire” offers one of the possible ways of constructing the “female gaze” in the film industry. Firstly, because, by raising the question of artistic equality of men and women, it secures the position of a woman among creators and emphasizes her right to express an artistic vision without being banished to the “female domain”. And secondly, because by giving her an opportunity to finally identify with the “female gaze” (moreover, by offering the same possibility to the male audience), it secures her position within the audience.

#### 4. Conclusion

The predominance of the male perspective represented in mass media has the power to promote patriarchal values in society. The reason for this lies in the fact that, firstly, mass media is performative (it can create the subjects it is referring to), and secondly, because it intra-acts with the society, which can result in the reconstitution of the society’s agential reality. Since the media is made by and for society, it must follow all its canons and conventions. Thus, the answer to the question of whether media imposes particular values on society or merely mirrors the existing ones would be that it does both. Moreover, as the media tend to remediate, they can contribute to the destabilization of the established social stereotypes by immersing existing ideas into new contexts and creating new ones.

Consequently, mass media, on the one hand, can influence the position of women in society, and, on the other hand, indicate social progress in terms of gender equality. It also has the capacity to discredit established gender stereotypes. In this regard, the female vision must find sufficient representation in it. Nowadays, there are some successful media projects which offer approaches to constructing the “female gaze” and making it as powerful as the male one.

We can name, for instance, Celine Sciamma’s film “Portrait of a Lady on Fire”, firstly, because it highlights the story about a female artist, written and directed by a woman. Secondly, because it solves the issue of female artists’ classification (at least within its framework). And thirdly, because it does not leave the audience any possibility other than identifying with a female perspective.

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**VISUAL TRESPASSINGS:  
EXPLORATIONS OF THE LIMIT IN CONTEMPORARY  
AMERICAN VISUAL ARTS: SALLY MANN'S DEAD BODIES**

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***Abstract:** Drawing on cultural studies, visual culture and semiotics, the present study investigates the particular ways in which contemporary visual arts approach the ontological issue of the limit, in a culture that has gradually and persistently blurred all limits to near erasure. In this sense, this study looks at American photographer Sally Mann's visual explorations of the body-as-flesh, as bold interrogations of cultural taboos, as well as innovative visual cues of ontological and epistemological transgression and inquiry.*

***Keywords:** body, death, limit, representation, visual culture.*

## **1. Introduction**

Despite the fact that, ultimately, death is as natural a phenomenon as birth, the history of mankind reveals that, as a species, we have spent incredible amounts of energy and have used impressive and intricate artifices of the intellect to conceal its implacability. Moreover, we have constructed true edifices of imaginative and narrative creativity to avoid contemplating the unavoidable. Thus, over millennia, death seems to have shifted from a natural phenomenon that Neanderthals must have succumbed to just as unwittingly as mammoths or wild boars, to an intensely culturally embedded mythology, designed to numb our fears and anxieties. As Homo Sapiens rose, so did his terror of his own demise. And so did his therapeutical strategies of containing and redirecting his fears. Culturally speaking, these strategies gradually developed into complex religious and philosophical systems. Their role was to promote heroism and sacrifice as means of transcending death and ascending to a superior ontological reality called *afterlife*, as the mortal aspect of the body remained beyond debate. The soul was thus invented, as a superior, ethereal, invisible, impalpable, untraceable, but immortal entity that could ensure the continuity of the human project in the afterlife. The body was consequently either demonized, trashed, downgraded, as the despicable reminder of human limitations, or, more recently, hysterically glorified as the only visible and palpable trace of human existence and a timely victory of culture over nature. In both cases, the denial of death was thus sealed. And mankind could go on with its projects of immortality.

Representing death should therefore be regarded as a cultural effort to efface and overwrite a natural phenomenon rather than an attempt to accurately portray it. Consequently, representations of death should be studied as cultural expressions of

human intellect and creativity during a particular time and within a certain space rather than imitations of reality. And more importantly, they should all be circumscribed to a certain cultural and ideological frame of mind, which unavoidably produces stereotypes, clichés, and patterns.

The present paper attempts to look at 20th century American photographer Sally Mann's visual representations of death and decay as provocative insights into the real nature of the relationship between the body, nature, culture and the human spirit in the contemporary Western world. In doing so, this paper considers some of the most important discourses on the body as the junction site of nature and culture, ranging from Freud's bodily fixated psychoanalytical theories (2016: 117-135) to Foucault's (1995: 3-32) rewarding recuperation of the body as cultural text, as well as to contemporary theories in visual representation and semiotics. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge the role that Ernest Becker's 1973 *Denial of Death* had in the production of this text, as it placed into a much wider context many of the concerns and conclusions of the present investigation. Despite its modest visibility, Becker's work is a compelling insight into the Western attitudes towards death, as well as a bitter reminder of the constant terror of death we have to put aside every day, in order to function as individuals and communities. As a cartographer of contemporaneity's philosophical solutions to this terror of death, Becker's central thesis is that all human activity, individual or collective, past or present, is in fact a flee from death or, as he (2011: 3) calls it, a denial of death. The immortality projects that mankind has imagined throughout the millennia have taken a plethora of forms and expressions, all of which have served as therapeutic denial mechanisms. It is in this context of social psychology and cultural history that the present paper places its inquiry. To what extent can the blunt contemplation of uncosmetized dead or diseased bodies subvert the denial of death and trace the limits of a culture? How can contemporary art photography interrogate cultural taboos and question the Western heroic projects? And finally, is there anything other than beastly nature left once the body has been stripped of its cultural layers and meanings?

## **2. Cultural attitudes towards limits and death in the contemporary Western world**

The world must have been terrifying to the early humans. And it must have been so primarily due to the world's apparent limitlessness. Consequently, as Neanderthals evolved into Sapiens, human activity gradually intensified towards setting limits. Creating communities, naming the world around and all the things in it, mapping, bordering, regulating actions, behaviours and relations, all of these became soothing initiatives in setting out limits. The limit seems to have had an almost therapeutic role in human development. It still does. It controls fears, normalizes behaviours, appeases anxieties and turns the world from a terrifying, uncontrollable chaos into a friendly, predictable haven. But the limit also provokes. It invites trespassings. It ignites progress. Hence, there is an inherent ambivalent nature in the limit. It organizes, yet narrows down, it regulates, yet creates categories, it soothes, yet provokes. In Western culture, attitudes towards the limit have therefore oscillated between acceptance and rebellion, surrender and challenge, according to the dominant ideology, social and cultural variables.

As Yuval Noah Harari argues in his recent works, *Sapiens* (2011) and *Homo Deus* (2015), in the theocratic West, life, death and all the norms regulating them

were dictated by a superior divine entity, generically called God, by means of the sacred Word (the Holy Books) and were, therefore, outside the reach of humans. Death and the representations of it were therefore standardized in normative narratives and imagery, generally emulating from the Bible. Religion provided a safety net for people's terror of death, by putting forward the improbable, yet utterly enticing concept of afterlife. As Harari (2014: 2) puts it in the opening of his study, "Homo sapiens rules the world because it is the only animal that can believe in things that exist purely in its own imagination, such as gods, states, money and human rights". As the first valid hero system in the history of mankind, religion relied on collective heroism and on collective reward. The concept of afterlife provided both an impulse to heroism and a reward for it. As generated by an ontologically superior entity, God, the limit could not be transgressed or transcended other than in/under His terms and was therefore out of human reach. In addition, as Becker (2011: 12) argues, Christianity, in particular, won the battle with other mystery cults by putting forward a hero who came back from the dead and thus epitomized people's uncanny hope for eternal life. The terror of death became the main source for religious control and domination, as death became heavily mythologized as a threshold to Heaven or Hell. But thus, it became manageable. Therefore, in the classical Western visual arts, representations of death range from various personifications of mythological or religious inspiration (generally moulded on biblical imagery), to skulls (Albrecht Durer, 1521; Frans Hals, 1626; Van Gogh, 1885; Cezanne, 1898; Picasso, 1908), still nature or gracefully dying humans (the Passions of Christ, Michelangelo's *Pieta*) (Stewart 2019).

As religion gradually started to lose its grip on people and the Church, as an institution, came under increasing criticism from a constantly growing part of the society, previously unquestionable limits came under scrutiny and challenge and the terror of death was again on the loose. New systems of repression had to take over in order to make human existence bearable. New heroic narratives had to replace the declining allure of religion. With Nietzsche's 1884 proclamation of the death of God (Nietzsche 2006: 5), secular humanism came into place. With man replacing God starting with the Enlightenment, the entire Western attitude towards limits and death was reconfigured. Life, death, moral and aesthetic norms came under the governance of human reason and later, emotions. As a consequence, Western narratives and representations became increasingly heterogeneous and diverse, while death a reality to be avoided at all costs. Left by himself, man had not only to seek for the meaning of life on his own (Becker 2011: 194), but also to come up with innovative narratives to keep the *Angst* of death at bay. Consistently, the myth of the immortal soul was gradually replaced with that of the more vulnerable *self*, an entity that situated the pursuit of happiness and, alas, the source of all unhappiness inside man. If the soul was externally defined mostly by religious grand narratives and was, therefore, located in a region beyond human intervention, with redemption as the sole pathway to Heaven, the birth of the self sealed the death of God. In the 20th century, psychoanalysis and psychology reconfigured the world's limits and located them in the human mind. Freud's lifework is a long study of human anxiety as a response to "the terrors of nature", "the painful riddle of death", "nature's dreaded forces" (Freud qtd. in Becker 2011: 53). The limit is, all of a sudden, insurmountable other than through repression, deceit, and, again, mythologizing. The self becomes the foundation of individual identity, the new myth of the 20th and 21st centuries. And identity, a collection of socially and culturally acceptable attributes, meant to safeguard man in the face of

the death dread. If, in the theocratic West, collective identity prevailed and was mostly externally determined by a set of norms meant to keep people culturally homogenous and functional as a group, with humanism, identity gradually slid towards the individual and more personal coordinates. Even though, to the modern man, this must have felt as a huge step towards personal freedom and progress, from the point of view of the relationship with limits and death, this put a heavy weight on his shoulders. He was now to set his own limits, deal with death his own way, find meaning on his own terms. All of which led, as Becker argues, to the emergence of the neurotic individual that characterizes contemporaneity. As he (2011: 191) puts it, “modern man became psychological because he became isolated from protective collective ideologies”. If history is “a succession of immortality ideologies”, then “modern life is the failure of all traditional immortality ideologies to absorb and quicken man’s hunger for self-perpetuation and heroism” (idem: 190).

In the same matter, Yuval Harari (2014: 34) embarks on making some daring predictions about the near future of mankind, claiming that we are on the brink of a momentous leap from *Sapiens* to what he calls ‘*Homo Deus*’. This would actually represent the next step that secular humanism takes in replacing divinity with humans, not only at the level of decision-making and norm and pattern generation, but also at the level of literally creating life, and, therefore, deleting death from human experience altogether. To Harari (2014: 45), what Becker labeled as modern neurosis in the 1970s, is in fact the expression of a brave new world at its dawn. One which will entail a new paradigm in discourse and representation, where the absence of death (even if only at a conceptual level) will certainly lead to an exacerbation of standardized corporeality, already visible in practices and rituals such as dieting, exercising, plastic surgery, the wellness industry, etc. The healthy living body will therefore become the only possible body, while art an end-product of algorithms.

### 3. The body as limit

Ernest Becker (2011: 51) provides a chilling definition of what he calls the human paradox: men are gods with anuses. Beyond the intended oxymoron of such a statement, there is an underlying painful truth: the body is what stands in the way of human self-sufficiency. The body is a constant reminder, as well as the cause of our mortality, frailty, vulnerability, limitations and unhappiness. The body *is* the limit. That is why the body has systematically been vilified as the source of man’s fall, weaknesses, passions and addictions. Historically, religion has enclosed the body into a rigid corset of rules, regulations and disciplinary practices, meant to minimize the consequences of what Becker (idem: 96) calls the “creatureliness” in man. Man’s body was a “curse of fate” and culture was built upon repression”, because “man was primarily an avoider of death” (ibid.). The body/soul dyad dominated the Western thought for nearly two millennia, if not more. While the soul was an expression of the divine spark, one to eventually return to its Father, the body was a prison, a cage, a carcass, meant to remind man of the Original Sin. Which, in Kierkegaard’s existentialist reading of the myth of the Fall was the fall into self-consciousness. This fall resulted in the existential *Angst*, a dread which translated man’s inability to fully identify as either animal or angel (idem: 69).

Despite Freud’s groundbreaking body-centred psychoanalytical theories at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which in fact accentuated the body-as-limit

ideology, it was Foucault's major contribution to the 20th century episteme to recuperate the body from the negative conceptual framework it had been historically exiled to:

[...] to man's experience a body has been given, a body which is his body – a fragment of ambiguous space, whose peculiar and irreducible spatiality is nevertheless articulated upon the space of things; to this same experience, desire is given as a primordial appetite on the basis of which all things assume value, and relative value; to this same experience, a language is given in the thread of which all the discourses of all times, all successions and all simultaneities may be given. This is to say that each of these positive forms in which man can learn that he is finite is given to him only against the background of its own finitude. (Foucault 1995: 314)

For Foucault, the body is a cultural space rather than anything else. It represents a locus, where discourses, power and ideologies compete for supremacy. Far from being a mere physiological entity of the animal realm, the human body is the product of the culture it lives in. Consequently, its significance to cultural studies should be paramount. Following Foucault's line of thought, contemporary Western culture gives centrality to the body's connection to identity as a cultural construct. As Mark Currie argues in *Difference*,

personal identity is not really contained in the body at all; it is structured by, or constituted by, difference. [...] identity is not within us because it exists only as narrative. By this I mean two things: that the only way to explain who we are is to tell our own story, to select key events which characterise us and organise them according to the formal principles of narrative to externalise ourselves as if talking of someone else, and for the purposes of self-representation; but also that we learn how to self-narrate from the outside, from other stories, and particularly through the process of identification with other characters. (Currie 2004: 17)

The body becomes thus central to Western culture in the past century, as both a medium and a locus, a performance and a representation, a source and an end, a map of mankind's advances and failures. As Nicholas Mirzoeff argues in his introduction to *Bodyscape*,

if the body changes, then everything has been transformed; the body is at once the final point of resistance to the global imperatives of postmodernism and the first to be affected by them. (Mirzoeff 2005: 2)

#### 4. Sally Mann's dead bodies. A case study

In contemporary Western art, the body has been taken as far away from standardized representation as possible. Today, it carries the subversive potential for transgressing stereotypical representation and for performing a critique of old idols. Representations of the queer body abound in contemporary visual arts, in order to mark the interrogation of limits and boundaries, the transgression of cultural norms and taboos. However, there is an intriguing and persistent avoidance to represent dead bodies, even though these would be similar in meaning to the body-as-flesh trope, so extensively used in representing the female body, for instance. When representations of dead bodies do occur, however, they are either instrumental to another field of study, mostly documentary or forensic photography, or conventionally beautified and thus heavily cultured. Representing

dead bodies *per se* should, therefore, be seen as a strong cultural and artistic statement in contemporary Western visual arts and an exploration of the limits of Western culture itself.

Born in 1951 in Lexington, Virginia, Sally Mann's relationship with death began in early childhood. Her father was a country doctor and hence well acquainted to disease and death, which added to Sally's own keen observations of the rural life (and death) of the American South, with its vast landscapes and isolated vibes. There were several momentous instances that she spent in the proximity of death that ignited her seemingly morbid interest in photographing dead bodies: the death of her dog and that of her father, juxtaposed with an artistic audacity and undisputable talent that made Time magazine call her "America's best photographer" in 2001. The choice of her photographic series *Body Farm* as the subject of the present analysis was primarily motivated by Mann's explicit disregard for the cultural taboos that Helene Cixous so well pointed out in her feminist *Laugh of the Medusa*:

Men say that there are two unrepresentable things: death and the feminine sex. (Cixous 1976: 885)

Uncommitted to Cixous's feminism, Mann publicly acknowledged the Western world's reluctance to visualize death, at the opening of her exhibition in New York in 2004:

There's a new prudery around death. We've moved it into hospital, behind screens, and no longer wear black markers to acknowledge its presence. It's become unmentionable. (Mann qtd. in Morrison 2010)

As a matter of fact, Mann's straightforward statement is a very accurate account for what has happened with the dying human body in Western culture over the past few centuries. As previously stated, with the demise of religion as a functional system of meaning, the reality of death brutally invaded the individual sphere, without the mediation and regulations of religion. Therefore, man was forced to conceal it behind new and diverse mystifying screens in order to restore the meaning of life and make life itself manageable. Looking at death right in the face would be, as American psychiatrist Irvin Yalom (2008:1-5) argues in his eponymous book, like staring at the sun: unbearable, painful, mindblowing.

Sally Mann does exactly that in her two photographic series dedicated to death: not only does she stare at the sun, looking at death from an angle unprecedented in visual art, but she also forces everyone else to do the same. *What Remains*, also known as *Body Farm*, is a collection of photos taken at the University of Tennessee's anthropological facility, a place where, for the sake of research, bodies are left to freely decompose in nature. Some of these bodies were donated to research, some belonged to homeless people, as Mann confessed. In various stages of decomposition, these naked bodies speak about human vulnerability at its peak, while exploring their metamorphoses in nature. There is a definite shock effect that Mann is looking for in all her photos, one that seeks to provoke, take the viewer out of his comfort zone, unculture him and strip him naked. Mann's photos are subversive in an obvious way, as they are targeted towards mankind's grand narratives: history, religion, culture itself. *What Remains* is a question that the spectator has to answer once he decides to look at these photos. Mann's photos render the human body generic, as all the subjects are not

only dead, but also naked and beyond recognition, due to decay. Cultural attributes, such as gender, race, age, social status are effaced and overthrown by death's work.

One must not forget, though, that Mann's work is not forensic photography, but art photography. What makes it art? How can showing appalling images of rotten bodies be art, after all? And how can one appreciate such images? The answer is to be found in the abrupt change of paradigm that Western art has undergone in the past century. Gradually moving away from figurative representation and embracing new forms of expression, contemporary Western art made a remarkably bold step in the 1960s, best epitomized by Andy Warhol's commodification and relativization of the artistic product. Art was no longer to serve a fickle aesthetic purpose and please a handful of educated connoisseurs, but was to be more about cultural diversity, globalism, identity and questioning limits. Therefore, ever since, contemporary art has come to encompass a wide spectrum of materials, subjects, modes of expression and concerns that are often met with a critical eye by the established art critics. As Nicholas Mirzoeff argues,

rather than presuppose an opposition between art, history and theory leading to a series of intellectual compromises, the artwork should be seen as the meeting place for all three, requiring a fluid and diverse approach to its interpretation that cannot be limited. (Mirzoeff 2005: 11)

Reflecting the rapid changes and subsequent uncertainties in the Western world, the body has once more become central (Mirzoeff 2005: 1). But one must not mistake the representation of the body for the body itself. This is the central thesis of Mirzoeff's *Bodyscape*:

In representation the body appears not as itself, but as a sign. It cannot but represent both itself and a range of metaphorical meanings, which the artist cannot fully control, but only seeks to limit by the use of context, framing and style. This complex of signs is what I shall call the bodyscape. (Mirzoeff 2005: 2)

In Mann's case, the metaphorical meanings attached to her representation of dead bodies are culturally targeted. Mann's *Body Farm* is used to support the culture/nature dichotomy in a reversed sense, with nature eventually overcoming culture in an undisputable way. Human vulnerability is laid bare in these photos, which document the utter lack of control, the inability, the disability. The black and white contrast is used to enhance the fine line between what is and what is not, between what is visible and what is not, with profound areas of grey shadows that mark the in-betweenness. The human body becomes flesh, carcass, empty shell, food for others, but also a powerful sign of becoming. Death is seen as natural, universal, overpowering, yet very much organic and dynamic. Mann's dead bodies are one with their background, they have been absorbed, almost swallowed by the landscape. There is an ambivalent aesthetic of vulnerability and strength, desperation and hope, decay and becoming.

## 5. Conclusion

Mann's photographs of dead bodies are meant to brutally call back the Western eye to what life is really all about, forcing an aesthetic of decay and decomposition. They are strong visual statements of the in-betweenness of the human body, constantly transgressing the boundaries of nature and culture, life and death, health and illness, beauty and horror. This would be consistent with what

Mirzoeff (2005: 2) observes, namely that “the modern period may be characterized [...] as having an awareness that the body is mutable, incomplete and altogether human”.

The shock effect is given by the cultural taboo of representing death as such. The body-as-flesh trope subverts the devouring gaze of the spectator who is consumed by the contemplation of implacable death. The staged visual representations of dead or disabled bodies violate the social and cultural norms of acceptability, while interrogating their authority. Trespassing boundaries and forcing limits represent necessary stages in the process of identity formation for Sally Mann. Her photos also discuss the problematic relationship between reality and representation, creating an imaginary of death and decay which forces the viewers to acknowledge their own finitude. Unable to master nature, the man is forced to fully admit his finitude in the shape of his own transient body. In visual arts this would translate as a rhetoric of bodily transgression and mutability, as Mirzoeff acknowledges:

The coherence of the represented body is, however, constantly undermined by the very incompleteness these images seek to overcome. The body is the object of whose materiality we are most certain, but the undefinable potential of that inevitably incomplete materiality remains a constant source of unease. (Mirzoeff 2005: 19)

Consistently, Sally Mann’s photography focuses on decomposing corpses, as if to challenge all unifying representations of the human body in Western culture. Just as her bodies melt away in nature, dissolving their contours, losing their attributes, becoming one with the landscape, the normative structures of traditional Western culture seem to fade away before the spectacle of unmediated death.

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**SPIRITUALS AND THE CHAIN OF MEMORY  
IN JAMES CONE'S *SPIRITUALS AND THE BLUES*<sup>1</sup>**

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***Abstract:** James H. Cone gives an account of a black cultural identity in his *Spirituals and the Blues* (1972) that can be seen as connecting to a body of tradition that reveals Cone's reinvigorating memory work. The present essay examines how the chain of memory is at work to reconstruct the African American self in a religio-cultural authentic way.*

***Keywords:** African American cultural memory, African American religio-cultural identity, chain of memory, spirituals*

## **1. Introduction**

The advent of Black theology fame marked by the early works of James H. Cone can be seen as African American memory work resurfacing to narrativise the longing and demand of contemporary African Americans to have access to their past also in religio-cultural terms. His study *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation* published in 1972 reifies this search in many ways. Especially the insistence on spirituals can be seen to establish a connection to a body of (religio-cultural) traditions that verifies for him the existence of an ontological black community to which he seeks to maintain ties through reinvigorating memory work. Lawrence W. Levine's evaluation of the significance of spirituals explains Cone's strategy:

The spirituals are a testament not only to the perpetuation of significant elements of an older world view among the slaves but also to the continuation of a strong sense of community. Just as the process by which the spirituals were created allowed for simultaneous individual and communal creativity, so their very structure provided simultaneous outlets for individual and communal expression. (2007: 33)

Spirituals keep an African genealogy intact - much as it was initially connected to an ethnic diversity rather than to a concept of Africa (Jones 2004: 255) -, while also proving the existence of a black community (in the sense of both being already there and in a dynamic state of becoming), as well as delineate the relation of the individual to the community past and present, allowing the individual to "re-member" the collective anew.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was supported by the "János Bolyai" Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

On the one hand, Cone's memory narrative works to "re-member" (see Dixon 1994: 21) as in resuturing African Americans in the narrative discourse through theologizing as well as in restoring as the opposite of dismembering, thus he also envisions a healing process. Especially, the endeavours of the early Cone may be seen by some critics as practicing "dangerous memories" for their apparent deconstructive strategies regarding white memory work. On the other hand, Black theology functions as, what Toni Morrison identifies as, "rememory," i.e., "rememory as in recollecting and remembering as in reassembling the members of the body, the family, the population of the past" (2019: 324) - a "concept of mental recollection, both anamnesis and construction" (Rushdy 1990: 304). In Cone's work, rememory does not simply serve to counter as to liberate African American history and memory, but to make sense of the void in the texture of memory to effect closure and, in this way, to effectively deal with silences, omissions, and erasures - ultimately to reinstate the "Black sacred cosmos" (see Lincoln and Mamiya 1990: 2) in cultural terms. The present paper examines how Cone's works prove that the dual function of memory work facilitates a strategy to carry the possibility of bringing healing to the torn texture of African American memory and reconstructing the African American self in a religio-culturally authentic way.

## **2. Cone, spirituals, and the chain of memory**

### **2.1. Spirituals as a body of tradition**

African American religious history richly documents that religion has come to signify along "God-talk" discourses that show the human capacity to appropriate narratives to express their perspective of the social, cultural, and political realities. As Albert J. Raboteau's (1978) apt description of the slaves' religion exemplifies, religion as memory work involves remembering to justify a community's origins, to justify identities in the present, and provide directionality to fathom whereto the community should be heading. To establish or maintain a chain of memory, however, must have been problematic initially for various reasons. The varied background of slaves projects multiple traditions, rendering it difficult to unifiedly represent a narrative of origins, and, for any tradition, the traumatic experience of the Middle Passage must have been disruptive, causing a break in the chain - much as it was the initial cornerstone that led to the "solidification of [. . .] cross-ethnic bonds" (Jones 2004: 255). Breaks do not mean erasure, though, and the influx of slaves from Africa well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century directly nurtured memories of Africa and African traditions in the African American community as Cujo Lewis's story exemplifies it in Hurston's *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo* (2018).

The idea of the chain of religious memory reflects on the very nature of religion as "Religion is in a word the system of symbols by means of which society becomes conscious of itself; it is the characteristic way of thinking of collective existence" (Durkheim 1951: 277). Revolving around the symbolic, reminiscing and memory do not lie in remembering historical events in their concrete actuality but rather in the way they are remembered. The memory process blurs the contours of the events, the emphasis being transferred on their interrelation and their possible sequentiality to express the scope of meaning defining for the community's self-interpretation. The chain in its formalized and normative form amounts to tradition, which, at the same time, narrows the scope of dissent as "religions can socialize us only in so far as they refuse us the right of free examination" (idem: 343). In this

way, meaning is derived from the collective, and individual chains strengthen the braiding of the collective. The chain is the mode and the structure, which when narrativised can yield individualized texture of the strung events. The individualized narrativisation of the cultural memory then is able to provide for the “lineage of belief” (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 125) throughout time in subsequent generations.

Cone’s anamnesis can be seen as an individualized narrativisation of African American religious thinking and, in this way, the actualization of the black religious tradition. As he (1972: 87) claims in *The Spirituals and the Blues*, “with contemporary Black Power advocates, who stress political liberation by any means necessary; that a ‘new’ black theological language is needed if black religion is going to articulate today the historical strivings of black people in America and the Third World”. In the post-civil rights era, Cone’s reworking of the black religious tradition does not deny or eliminate the different items in memory but gives them a different explanation as the new context requires: “what is needed is not a dismissal of the idea of heaven but a reinterpretation of it, so that oppressed blacks today can develop styles of resistance not unlike those of their grandparents” (ibid.). The new vitality of black consciousness in Cone’s time necessitates renewing the link between the past and present as “the demonstration of continuity is capable of incorporating even the innovations and reinterpretations demanded by the present” (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 87). Cone’s reinterpretation of the past leads back to slavery pointing to the old-time religion of grandfathers in the peculiar institution prior to the Kingsian non-violent creed and even beyond, to African roots. As Cone argues, regarding the African American tradition, in his *God of the Oppressed*,

it is no less true that American black people have a tradition of their own that stretches back to Africa and its traditional religions. We are an *African* people, at least to the degree that our grandparents came from Africa and not from Europe. They brought with them their stories and combined them with the Christian story, thereby creating a black religious tradition unique to North America. African culture informed black people’s perspective on Christianity and made it impossible for many slaves to accept an interpretation of the Jesus story that violated their will for freedom. The passive Christ of white Christianity when combined with African culture became the Liberator of the oppressed from sociopolitical oppression. (Cone 1997: 104-105)

Returning to the identifiable beginnings of the African American community is not just relying on African American traditions but reviving them and renewing them “to actualize the past in the present” (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 88). Importantly, Cone does not seek to establish a new religious paradigm but recycles the African American traditions as “the body of representations, images, theoretical and practical intelligence, behaviour, attitudes and so on that a group or society accepts in the name of the necessary continuity between the past and the present” (idem: 87). In this way, he insists on a tradition and confesses to being part of a tradition in the effort of validating and anchoring his chain of memory in African American cultural memory. By emplacing his theologizing analyses within a tradition, Cone claims and demonstrates the operation of African American religiosity, similarly to Durkheim (1995: 420) establishing that “the cult is not merely a system of signs by which the faith is outwardly expressed; it is the sum total of means by which that

faith is created and recreated periodically. Whether the cult consists of physical operations or mental ones, it is always the cult that is efficacious". From this point of view, Cone devises Durkheimian effervescence as his operation is wilfully blended in the collective and thus it is the latter that remains in focus signified through its "effervescent vitalism" (Shilling, Mallor 2016: 155). The vitalism of the African American community is taken as proof of continuity as well as the appropriating power of the community.

To establish the link between the past and present, Cone identifies the spirituals as the manifestation of the African American religious tradition and thereby religion as memory (on a secular level he does the same with the blues). Black theology is established as a direct continuation of antebellum black religion: "the spirituals are black freedom songs which emphasize black liberation as consistent with divine revelation. For this reason, it is most appropriate for black people to sing them in this 'new' age of Black" (Cone 1972: 38). The mnemonic manoeuvre Cone practices finds a theological background in his theological thinking in the 1970s, in which he argues, regarding the (Black) theological tradition, that:

Theology cannot ignore the tradition. While the tradition is not the gospel, it is the bearer of an interpretation of the gospel at a particular point in time. By studying the tradition, we not only gain insight into a particular past time but also into our own time as the past and the present meet dialectically. For only through this dialectical encounter with the tradition are we given the freedom to move beyond it. (1997: 75-76)

Spirituals as a body of tradition embalmed the actualization of the past for slaves, as it was through the spirituals that they were able to remember their African roots and transpose them into the American setting by "combin[ing] the memory of their fathers with the Christian gospel" (Cone 1972: 32). It was not a mere intercultural challenge to do so, but a struggle for memory and history as they were entombed in the timeless vaults of slavery: "When white people enslaved Africans, their intention was to dehistoricise black existence, to foreclose the possibility of a future defined by the African heritage" (idem: 24). In Cone's interpretation, dehistoricisation was to have been the result of deprivation of slaves' humanity which included the deprivation of memories as well. The attempt was coded as a failure in so far as the proselytization of blacks served the purposes of docilisation. Durkheim (1951: 351) reminds us that

If religion exhorts its followers to be satisfied with their lot, it is because of the thought that our condition on earth has nothing to do with our salvation. If religion teaches that our duty is to accept with docility our lot as circumstances order it, this is to attach us exclusively to other purposes, worthier of our efforts; and in general religion recommends moderation in desires for the same reason. But this passive resignation is incompatible with the place which earthly interests have now assumed in collective existence.

Cone indeed refuses any submissiveness in African American religiosity and claims that the appropriation of Christianity as a genuine black religion is a revolutionary act, a "needed revolutionary praxis" (Cone 1975: 39) to withstand docilisation. Viewed from another angle, his stance against dehistoricisation

implies “cultural production [. . .] as a means of collective psychotherapy” (Tarnóc 2004: 353).

In the struggle for being, religion becomes for Cone the site of rememory as well as re-historicisation (and counterhistory in Foucault’s footsteps [see Foucault 2003: 70]), “a historical possibility for human existence” (Cone 1972: 30). In the case of the former, religion is the means of recollection of a shared experience and the spirituals borrowing from the biblical narrative have the function to establish relationality between the individual and community, as rememory takes shape in “the pitched battle between remembering and forgetting” (Morrison 2019: 324). As for the latter, the biblical revelation possesses special significance, as it is the primary means of re-historicisation by historicizing African American presence in their timeless circumstances in two ways: first, by fixating their identity outside their present social reality to the transcendental Other, slaves can locate a binary of difference and thus position themselves in contrast to the objectification of the slave system. As Cone (1972: 40) states, “Revelation was distinctly historical and related to the event of the community encountering God in the struggle for freedom”. The spirituals that he quotes also refer to the conceptualization of the revelation as theophany for the individual African American believer: “One day when I was walkin’ alone, Oh yes, Lord, / De element opened, an’ de Love came down, Oh yes, Lord,” (qtd. in Cone 1972: 93), which strengthens the idea that the forced displacement in space and denial of historical time could be countered by the relationality to God through the appropriation of the revelation.

Secondly, the biblical revelation enabled blacks to evaluate their historical time critically, by seeing it as finite especially from the point of view of the relationality mentioned: “It was a question of faith, and the answer which came focused on revelation as the only clue to historical absurdities” (idem: 71). In Cone’s argument, the biblical revelation is seen as Christocentric directionality in Barth’s footsteps, which implies a directionality toward spiritual freedom and physical liberation. Jan Assmann’s concept of the religion of the Israelites echoes this understanding:

Founded on revelation, it asserts the liberating force of the truth against time-honored customs and traditions. It demands of believers a commitment that, no longer confined to ritual dealings with the sacred, extends across all aspects of life: justice, everyday routines and practices, holidays and workdays, state and family. Religion now becomes something distinct from “culture,” to which it stands opposed as a critical voice, while at the same time claiming sovereignty - at least potentially - over all other “spheres of value” (Max Weber) such as politics, law, the economy, science, and art. (Assmann 2018: 338)

African American religion provides a sphere of difference that substantiates for Cone sufficiently that the tradition crystallized in the spirituals purports the autonomous African American subject and the discourse of resistance. Assmann (2018: 332) rightly asserts that “Autonomy is realized as theonomy, and liberation from human servitude - from slavery - is realized by serving God”. History becomes lived experience, effervescent in Durkheim’s coinage, and the relationality between blacks and God performative. It is in this way that Assmann can assert with the Exodus: “The Exodus story does not write history; it makes history [since] it provides those telling it with an identity” (idem: 328). Historical consciousness and rememory evolve through what Heidegger (1996: 49) terms as

“being-in-the-world”, granting the African American subject both intentionality and directionality:

The “I” of black slave religion was born in the context of the brokenness of black existence. It was an affirmation of self in a situation where the decision to be was thrust upon the slave [ . . . ] The “I,” then, who cries out in the spirituals is a particular black self affirming both his being and his being-in-community, for the two are inseparable. Thus the struggle to be both a person and a member of community was the major focus of black religion. (Cone 1972: 67-68)

Cone’s argument does not necessarily represent a reaction to the other, which would postulate the construction of the black self in opposition to the racial other, but an always already black subjectivity, which a “prereflexive, nonintentional consciousness” (Levinas 1998: 129) signalling vertical transcendence instead of a horizontal one directed at the other (Stoker 2006: 98). In interpreting Levinas’s view of revelation, Ruud Welten (2020: 363) suggests that “Revelation does not refer to any imaginary order, but to the traumatic encounter with the other”. If for Cone the black self is an ontological category disclosed in the act of revelation, the traumatic experience with the racial other and the traumatic experience with the transcendental other evoke the nonintentional state for the black subject to relate to God and the pre-racial primordial black self. The revelation entails that God enters history for blacks, the divine being present there with them.

## 2.2. Cultural trauma, exodus, and authentication

The trauma of slavery evidently impacts Cone, too, as he recounts the testimonies of oppression and violence in the spirituals. Importantly, however, he reworks them - without being oblivious of them - by refocusing them and placing emphasis on the discourse of resistance, rebellion, and moral superiority: “The authentic community of saints is bound up with the encounter of God in the midst of a broken existence, struggling to be free” (Cone 1972: 66). Apart from the ritualization “to mark the passage of time” (Hervieu-Léger 2000: 125) through spirituals, the ritualization here refers to articulating cultural trauma, which ultimately serves to contribute to a rewarding identity and blends into cultural memory. As Cone (1972: 73) insists, “instead of testing God, they ritualized him in song and sermon. That was what the spirituals were all about - a ritualization of God in song. They are not documents for philosophy; they are material for worship and praise to him who had continued to be present with black humanity despite European insanity”. Cultural trauma does not conceal or cover up traumas but allows through transformations grappling with it - transformations that also enable connecting to it through time as Cone’s case proves. Cone’s view of spirituals shows that beyond witnessing black “somebodiness” narratively, they embody a performative genre (see Cone 1997: 21), which enables actualization and thereby also historicisation of the individual and the community: “The spiritual is the community in rhythm, swinging to the movement of life” (Cone 1972: 33). In effect, it is the agency of the community enacted that represents a Durkheimian notion as “a moral, religious force which stimulated in people an effervescent ‘propulsion’ towards actions productive of either social cohesion or dissolution” (Shilling and Mallor 2016: 146). Propulsion manifests itself in the performativity of collective identity, which, following Ron Eyerman’s paradigm of cultural

trauma, can be remembered in a reconstructive manner by Cone, for whom it then refers to as “formation of the group” (Eyerman 2004: 15).

The cultural trauma of slavery expressed in Cone’s study of spirituals marks thus a distinctly African American cultural memory “according to [his] needs and means” (ibid.), which signifies the advent and the continued presence of an authentic black religious community. For Cone, it signifies resistance and the enlivening of the black community in the before-stated manner, which can be verified by the very differentiation between the white man’s religion and, what has been considered, the old-time religion of black slaves. The latter to be authenticating has to enshrine a metanarrative of becoming, which can serve as an explanation of origins, justification in the present, and orientation in the future, expressing “a faith in the ultimate justice of things” (DuBois 2007: 175). In religious terms, it heavily relies on the biblical stories of captivity, i.e., the exodus of Israelites from Egypt and also from Babylon. As Cone (1972: 45) claims, liberation is seen as “an act of God in history analogous to Israel’s exodus from Egypt”. Beyond the analogy, however, reinterpreting the biblical stories is creating a difference from white Christianity: “they combined their African heritage with the Christian gospel and reinterpreted white distortions of the gospel in the light of oppressed people striving for a historical liberation” (idem: 42). In Cone’s case, identifying a distinct black religious tradition also means guarding it against whites not only in the times when the spirituals were born but in his own time, dismissing “white” theological inquiries as “inappropriate and very naive” (idem: 72) - a move that reveals his ideological stand, especially as he mentions Barth’s work in the same paragraph and his view echoes Tillich’s (1951: 60) contextual theology. In this way, however, he is also clear when actualizing the memory of the slaves’ struggles in the present, as he uses the present tense in engaging in a seemingly academic excursion.

The appropriation of the biblical exodus effects Eric Voegelin’s (2000: 236) coinage “revelatory consciousness [...] as the meaning of existence”. The exodus identifies the present state of bondedness and projects whereto, which rejects fixity in time and space and, in an eschatological manner, foresees the destination “toward the direction of total liberation” (Cone 1972: 5) and “toward unity and self-determination” (idem: 6). As he claims, “hope, in the black spirituals, is not a denial of history. Black hope accepts history but believes that the historical is in motion, moving toward a divine fulfilment. It is the belief that things can be radically otherwise than they are: that reality is not fixed, but is moving in the direction of human liberation” (idem: 95-96). It is this transformative application of the exodus that Cone transposes  $\#$  into his time, identifying the liberation of African Americans as unfinished. Through this move, “being-for-the-future” (100) describes the nonfixity of being of the black slaves and thus he restates his insistence on their political consciousness; but he also makes the corrective move to link it to the contemporary condition of black people: “The task, however, of black theologians is to move beyond the distortions of black religion to the authentic substance of black religious experience so that it can continue to serve as a positive force in liberating black people” (101). Religion for Cone serves as the narrative to grant homogeneity and directionality of Black cultural memory through times.

The other aspect of the exodus that comes to the foreground is the idea of chosenness, paradoxically “emerg[ing] from their suffering to live on psychological and spiritual ‘higher ground’” (Jones 1993: 23). It evolves through

an evolving Christian identity, the moral disambiguation through oppositionality as a result, and the realization that African American (religious) subjectivity has always already been present in the black community: “This cry is not a cry of passivity, but a faithful, free response to the movement of the Black Spirit. It is the black community accepting themselves as the people of the Black Spirit and knowing through his presence that no chains can hold the Spirit of black humanity in bondage” (Cone 1972: 5). The “Black Spirit” appears an apriori category, which does not hinge on historical verification and which yet can prove as historical for being there prior to dehistoricisation of blacks, possibly referring to African origins. The apriori nature of black subjectivity coincides with God’s original plan to choose blacks for a purpose and thereby for the people chosen to justify their chosenness apriori, i.e., not ultimately resulting from the contemporary binary. The “status differentiation translated into the plane of horizontal co-existence” (Weber 1978: 391) signifies for Cone a non-permissive oppositionality, which is corrective, as it dismisses white Christianity as flawed, and prophetic, as it holds a promise of “radical change” (Cone 1972: 94). As Max Weber (1978: 934) also observes, “The chosen people’s dignity is nurtured by a belief either that in the beyond ‘the last will be the first,’ or that in this life a Messiah will appear to bring forth into the light of the world which has cast them out the hidden honor of the pariah people”.

The figure of Jesus complements the biblical metaphors and allegories of the exodus of Israel, embalming bodily memories capable of encompassing individual black experiences and thematising Jesus as “God’s Black Slave” (Cone 1972: 54), thus as one of them: “Jesus was not the subject of theological questioning. He was perceived in the reality of the black experience, and black slaves affirmed both his divinity and humanity” (idem: 47), which is why “the meaning of Jesus’ birth, life, death, and resurrection is found in his identity with the poor, the blind, and the sick” (idem: 48). The personal becomes collective, as the personal/biblical symbolically subsumes individual experience through historical times.

Jesus becomes the ultimate signifier of the metanarrative of African American cultural memory in that of “an African American religious orientation” (Matthews 1998: 20), and Jesus as the signifying vortex blending and, at the same time, representing black experience. However, in the memory narrative of the spirituals, the nativity of Christ is often missing. In Cone’s explanation, the lack of treatment of Jesus’s birth is the result of plantation political considerations since teaching slaves about liberation was considered dangerous (Cone 1972: 50). However, it does not appear a feasible explanation, given the fact that slaves’ transformative power ably reinterpreted the whole of the white man’s religion (even through the transforming performativity of singing “involv[ing] the enslaved African’s physical being” [Jones 1993: 22]). It appears that Jesus entering the historical world, marking the beginning of restorative work, cannot be as easily dismissed in spirituals either, especially as, in Cone’s Christology in *A Black Theology of Liberation* (1970), it occupies a central position: “The appearance of Jesus as the Oppressed One whose existence is identified exclusively with the oppressed of the land is symbolically characterized in his birth” (Cone 2010: 120). Howard Thurman (1939: 520) points out that some spirituals do address the nativity of Christ connected to his royalty: “This may have been a form of compensation, an effort to give to the spirit a sense of worth and validation, that transcends the limitations of the environment”. Compensation for Thurman refers to combining imperality and intimacy in one image. In his theology, Cone (1997: 67) conceptualizes the birth event with a “special connection between divine



revelation and the poor,” establishing a “character [which] *must* have been present in his birth”.

The silence of spirituals - “the first body of black narration” (Matthews 1998: 146) - and Cone’s easy dismissal of the topic may reveal a deeper concern. Jesus’s birth marks the beginning of a new age, which is made sure in the Bible to be heralded before the actual event and also verified in history through tethering by activities connected to different groups of people. Furthermore, despite being born in poor circumstances, he is anointed king. For all the status differentiation this may hold for the slave community through identifying Jesus as one of them, from the point of view of memory it appears problematic to remember it as a point of origin, similar to the identificatory move regarding the exodus from Egypt and Babylon. For black slaves and Cone, the Middle Passage obscures the possibility of identifying a zero point for the disruption it represents in both obstructing connections to home and dehumanizing blacks. Cone identifies the Middle Passage as “a stinking ship” in which they were “snatched from [their] homeland and sailing to an unknown land” (Cone 1972: 21). The abrupt severance, alienation, and estrangement are palpable in his words. The ugly reality of the Middle Passage is traumatizing, rendering it deeply unnamable - spirituals such as “Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, / A long way from home” can be read as trauma resurfacing connected to loss and discontinuation (see Jones 1993: 21).

The image of the new/old black subject emerges in his evaluation of spirituals. Through recalling black slaves as agents in dehumanizing circumstances, Cone revives contemporary conceptualizations of the self in the making and establishes a direct genealogy between them. He singles out certain types of slaves, based on Kenneth Stampp’s evaluation, who represent “the strong-willed field-hand whom the overseer hesitated to punish, the habitual runaway who mastered the technique of escape and shrugged at the consequences, each [winning] personal triumphs for himself and vicarious triumphs for the others” (qtd. in Cone 1972: 29), in order to demonstrate the existence of “the respected slave [. . .] who successfully challenged the rules of white society (Cone 1972: 29). With this manoeuvre, he seems to embed his narrative in African American memory work, as the examples also shed light on the traditional communicative/ performative relation of the individual to the community, similar to the call-and-response pattern (individual difference to assert centripetal activity [see Anderson 2001: 201-202]) and similarly to how Jesus stands for the black community. Cone (1972: 100) projects a “new Black Humanity” that verifies the eschatological anthropology he envisions - a vision that he finds already verified in the resistance of slaves. Therefore, the personal/individual is culturally revived, while the personal becomes political, much as it is seen in Cone’s time. The vision of the new black self itself proves political, as it looks to be acknowledged in a wider sense, in social space. If Black Humanity is a given in the slaves’ time, Cone establishes its newness as social acceptance in America. This duality can be seen when he (idem: 95) asserts that “the image of heaven served functionally to liberate the black mind from the existing values of white society, enabling black slaves to think their own thoughts and do their own things”. Authenticating black action in the past endows black action in Cone’s time with the same vigour, sanctioning as blending into a tradition and continuing the work started in the time of slavery - work that is inherent in black humanity and blessed as it signifies the ultimate goal, which is liberation: “Heaven then did not mean passivity but revolution against the present order” (ibid.).

### 3. Conclusion

Cone's reminiscing of the slave religion as designating a community of Christian believers is reductive. It treats the community as homogenous, not allowing for differentiation regarding time, geography, or inner stratification within local black communities - to name but a few problematizing aspects. As Lawrence W. Levine (2007: 55) reveals, "The sacred world of the slaves was not confined to Christianity. There existed as well a network of beliefs and practices independent of yet strongly related to the slaves' formal religion". It would be nevertheless a mistake to dismiss Cone's study, as it reveals "re-membering" at work, i.e., the remembering subject, the way he remembers, and what it remembers. As Eyerman (2004: 16) evaluates, "In the trauma of rejection, slavery was remembered as its memory re-membered a group. Slavery defined, in other words, group membership and a membership group. It was in this context that the recollection of slavery was articulated as cultural trauma". Remembering the self is in relation to the subject remembered, and the memory of the subject enables, as Melville Dixon (1994: 21) claims, "repopulating broad continuities within the African diaspora". It is then Cone's reimagination of the collective and re-membered connection to it from a perspective that represents his embeddedness in a community in time and space. In his study of spirituals, Cone, as the remembering subject, demonstrates how he finds a way to remember as in "re-membering" or reconnecting to the memory material. His will to remember reveals his contextualizing thinking, as he embeds his memory work into a tradition centring on the "sorrow songs" - "the articulate message of the slave to the world" (DuBois 2007: 169) - that he recycles in his era as supportive of the contemporary black self. Reviving is no simple re-imagination of the past, but a performative action establishing that he remembers, therefore he is.

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***OUTSIDE THE MIRROR GALLERY***



## VERBS, VERBAL FORMS AND DEVERBAL FORMATIONS IN THE *ÉPINAL-ERFURT GLOSSARY*

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*Abstract:* The *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary (EpErf)*, which goes back to ca. AD 700, is the earliest document of the English language of any length. It shows many of the word-formation patterns that occurred in Old English (OE); some were common, whereas others were rare. Here I concentrate on the derivation of verbs (in particular weak verbs) and on deverbal formations. I look at compounds with a deverbal second element (synthetic compounds), at combinations with particles, at prefix- and suffix-formations, and at derivations without a suffix. Whereas prefixes are listed alphabetically, suffixes are subdivided according to the word-classes which they derive (nouns, adjectives, adverbs). Because the OE words in *EpErf* always gloss Latin words, I conclude by briefly discussing the question of loan-influence on the OE glosses.

*Keywords:* *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary, glosses, Old English, word-formation*

### 1. Introduction: the *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary (EpErf)*

The present paper is part of a larger project, namely, to describe the word-formation patterns in the *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary (EpErf)*. There have been studies of the phonology and morphology of *EpErf* (see, e.g., Pfeifer 1974), and these aspects are also integrated in the standard historical grammars of Old English (OE), especially Campbell (1959) and Sievers/Brunner (1965). However, to my knowledge there has never been a comprehensive study devoted to the word-formation patterns of *EpErf*. Here I shall deal with the formation of verbs and with deverbal formations.

*EpErf* is transmitted in two manuscripts, namely:

- (1) *Épinal*, Bibliothèque municipale 72 (2), fols. 94–197; ca 700; written in England.
- (2) *Erfurt*, Universitätsbibliothek, Codex Amplonianus F. 42, fols. 1a1–14va33; written in Cologne by a German scribe around 800.

*EpErf* is an alphabetical glossary; it contains ca. 3000 entries (each entry consisting of lemma and gloss), mostly in a-order, but, at the end of a number of letters, there are entries in ab-order. Roughly 2000 entries are Latin – Latin, that is, a Latin lemma (headword) is followed by a Latin gloss (explanation). Roughly 1100 entries are Latin – Old English, that is, a Latin lemma is followed by an Old English Gloss.

The archetype of *EpErf* was probably compiled from a variety of sources shortly before 700 in the school at Canterbury, which had been established by

archbishop Theodore and abbot Hadrian. The Épinal manuscript was probably copied not long after the archetype.

EpErf is the earliest attestation of the English language of any length, and it is therefore important for the study of early English spelling, phonology, morphology and word-formation. It is also striking that EpErf contains hardly any Christian terms, but many terms that are related to Classical Antiquity, especially to Roman customs and institutions, which did not exist in Anglo-Saxon England.

There is no comprehensive edition of EpErf; a new edition of all witnesses together with a reconstruction of the archetype is now in progress and available on the internet (on the website of the *Dictionary of Old English*); the chief editors are Michael Herren, David Porter and Hans Sauer. The entries with OE glosses were edited by Pheifer (1974). Because I am going to deal with OE word-formation (and only marginally with Latin word-formation), I have used Pheifer's edition for the following analysis. When I refer to Pheifer's introduction or commentary, I quote this as Pheifer (1974); when I refer to the edition, I quote this as Ph plus the number assigned to the entry by Pheifer.

There is actually a third witness to the material provided by EpErf, namely the Corpus Glossary, preserved in the manuscript CCC 144, that is Cambridge, Corpus Christi College 144 (see, e.g., Ker 1957: no. 36). The Corpus Glossary contains almost all the entries that are in EpErf, but also much additional material, and it is arranged in ab-order throughout; therefore, it is not always easy to find the corresponding entries in EpErf and in the Corpus Glossary. But the Corpus Glossary is important for the reconstruction the archetype of EpErf. In the present paper, however, I concentrate on EpErf and do not take the Corpus Glossary into account.

## 2. Some problems of analysis

The analysis of EpErf poses some problems; I single out three of them. Some of them are connected to the fact that EpErf provides the earliest attestation of English of any length, and also to the fact that the dialect of EpErf is Anglian and not West-Saxon.

(1) **Spelling:** EpErf uses some spelling conventions that are different from those of later OE, especially from Late West-Saxon. For example, for /w/ EpErf uses mostly <uu> or <u>, and not (or only rarely), <p>, as in later Old English, which in modern editions of OE texts is usually rendered as <w>. EpErf also often uses <d> for the dental fricative /θ, ð/ and not <þ> or <ð> as in later Old English; examples can be found throughout the present article. Anglo-Saxonists who are accustomed to Late West-Saxon spelling therefore have to do some re-adjusting when looking at EpErf.

Different (and earlier) spellings can also be seen in the use of some prefixes and particles: EpErf often or even usually has *gi-*, *fer-*, *ober-* and *te-*, where later OE usually has *ge-*, *for-*, *ofer*, *to-*; for details see below. Some of the early spellings used in EpErf are also used in the poem inscribed in the form of runes on the slightly later Ruthwell Cross (ca. 750; sometimes called *The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem*, which is related to the poem *The Dream of the Rood*).

(2) **Meaning:** The basic assumption is that the gloss renders its lemma, providing a synonym or an explanation in the case of Latin-Latin entries, or a translation equivalent in the case of Latin-Old English entries. This is actually



often the case, as in Ph 140, where L *battutum* ‘beaten’ is glossed as OE *gibeataen* ‘beaten’.

But there are also many instances where there is (or at least seems to be) a mismatch between lemma and gloss, for example Ph 934 L *suffragator* ‘supporter’ is glossed as OE *mundbora* ‘protector’ and in the following entry, Ph 935, L *suffragium* ‘vote, suffrage’ is glossed by OE *mundbyrd* ‘protection, patronage’. But ‘supporter’ and ‘protector’ are antonyms rather than synonyms; thus, probably there was a misunderstanding on the part of the OE glossator.

There seems to be a tendency among scholars (and Pfeifer 1974 is not free from this tendency) to ascribe the meaning of the lemma also to the gloss. But in many cases this would give the gloss a meaning which is not otherwise recorded, possibly this would be a loan-meaning. But of course we have to keep in mind that all other attestations of the words attested in EpErf are later attestations.

(3) **Assignment of the EpErf forms to later forms:** In spite of the spelling, which is often different, the forms, in our case the verbs and verbal forms of EpErf can usually be assigned to the forms that are attested later and to the forms which are given in the dictionaries (see the following sections). In a few cases, however, the forms in EpErf are difficult to assign to a specific form. One of those cases is *tedridtit* (Ph 344; Erf only); BT s.v. *to-tredan* takes it as a form of *to-tredan* ‘to tread to pieces’, which would also very roughly match its L lemma (*defecit*). Pfeifer (1974: 82), however, suggests a form (*\*to)ðri(u)tið* ‘it wearsies’), but his reconstruction would lead to an otherwise unattested verb – it seems simpler to take the attested form, as BT does, as a peculiar spelling of an attested verb.

### 3. Patterns of word-formation in EpErf

All common OE patterns of word-formation are attested in EpErf, in particular: compounds; combinations with particles; prefix-formations; derivations without an explicit suffix; suffix-formations. I make a distinction between particles and prefixes. Prefixes are bound morphemes which occur only as part of a word (more precisely at the beginning of a word), while particles occur also as independent words, which are used as prepositions or as adverbs. Not all handbooks on word-formation make this distinction, and, semantically, particles are perhaps closer to prefixes than to lexical words; but I regard the formal criterion as more decisive.

It is also noteworthy that participles (especially past participles) can be the basis of further word-formation. For example, *unofaercumenrae* ‘unsubdued, not overcome’ (Ph 536) is derived from *ofercumen*, the past participle of *ofercuman* ‘to overcome, subdue’, but not directly from the verb; there was no verb *\*unofercuman* and there is no need to postulate one.

Some words show two kinds of word-formation, e.g., they have a prefix and a suffix, as, e.g., *beswicend* – these are here listed twice.

#### 3.1. The derivation of verbs

Most classes of verbs commonly distinguished for OE are attested in EpErf, namely strong verbs I–VII, weak verbs 1–2, and irregular (*-mi*) verbs; the only group that is not represented are the preterite-presents, which developed into the group of modal auxiliaries. But, for one thing, this is a small group, and for

another, as far as these OE verbs foreshadow the development into modal auxiliaries, they are only used in combination with a lexical verb; therefore, their absence in EpErf is not surprising.

Strong verbs are usually primary, that is they are not derived, at least as far as OE is concerned. Weak verbs are usually derived (from nouns, or from adjectives, or from other verbs). But whereas weak verbs 2 usually have a suffix (see below for details), weak verbs 1 (i.e. weak verbs of the first class) usually do not have a derivational suffix in their OE form. It is therefore doubtful whether they should be included in a survey of OE word-formation, but, on the other hand, it would seem strange to deal with weak verbs 2, but not with weak verbs 1; therefore I have included weak verbs 1 in my survey.

### 3.1.1. The derivation of weak verbs 1

As just indicated, it is doubtful whether weak verbs 1 should be included in a survey of Old English word-formation. The suffix which derived them originally (Germanic *\*-ija-*) caused *i*-umlaut of the stem-vowel where this was possible, but then it disappeared (except after *r*: Gmc. *\*nazjan* > OE *nerian*). Altogether there are 44 weak verbs 1 in EpErf. I have subdivided them into two groups, according to whether there is a basis in OE from which they were (or could have been) derived, and whether there was no basis even in OE. I shall give just a few examples of each group.

(1) Weak verbs 1 with a basis attested in OE: *besmirwan* ‘to besmear’ (*bismiridae* Ph 534): the basis is probably *smirels* ‘ointment, salve’; Ph 228 *gebyrddid* ‘embroidered’ from *gebyrdan*; the basis is OE *borda* ‘embroidery’ or rather WGmc *\*burdon*.

(2) Weak verbs 1 with no attested basis in OE, e.g., Ph 752 *naetendnae* from *nætan* ‘annoy, afflict’ (glossing L *proterentem*), but there is no word in OE from which *naetan* could have been derived.

### 3.1.2. The derivation of weak verbs 2 (*-ian* verbs)

Weak verbs of the 2nd class (weak verbs 2) were derived with a suffix that goes back to Gmc. *\*-oja-*, and it does not cause *i*-umlaut. In OE, the form of the suffix changes. The class of weak verbs 2 is normally called the *-ian* class, after the infinitive, e.g., *lufian*. But the *-an* is the common ending of most verbs in the infinitive, thus the derivational suffix which remains is *-i-*. In the second person sing. it is, however, *þu lufast*, and in the past it is *ic lufode* (*lufade* in Anglian). Thus, it can be said that the derivative suffix is vocalic, but it changes its shape employing different vowels (*i, a, o*). 34 weak verbs 2 are attested in EpErf. Just as with the weak verbs 1, I have grouped them into verbs where their basis exists in OE, and verbs where there is no basis in OE; I shall give just a few examples:

(1) basis attested in OE, e.g., *fultumian* (*fultemendum; fultemendi*; Ph 95 & 74) ‘to help, support’, from *fultum* ‘help, support’ (glossing L *adstipulatus*); *sorgian* ‘to care, grieve’ (Ph 79). derived from *sorg* ‘sorrow’.

(2) no attested basis in OE: e.g., Ph 364 *ahlocian* (*achloadum*) ‘to dig out’; Ph 886 *siwian* (*gisiuuid*) ‘to sew, mend, patch’, glossing L *sarcinatum*; *swornian* ‘coagulate’, but no *\*sworn-* (*suornodun* Ph 198); *browian* ‘to suffer’ but no *\*brow-* (*throuadae* Ph 365; *browung* is derived from *browian*).

### 3.1.3. Minor suffixes for forming weak verbs

The following two suffixes (*-ettan*, *-sian*) are minor in the sense that they were used much more rarely for the derivation of weak verbs. They do not survive, apart from a few obscured forms (*grunt* from OE *grunettan*; *cleanse* from OE *clǣnsian*).

(1) *-ettan* can be traced back to a Gmc. verbal suffix *\*-atja-*, *\*-itja-*; it derives weak verbs 1, more specifically frequentative and iterative verbs (at least in their original sense). Four verbs with the suffix *-ettan* are attested in EpErf, namely *agnettan* ‘to own, appropriate, usurp’ (*agnaettae* Ph 1096; from *agnian*); *borettan* ‘to brandish’ (*borættit* Ph 1092; from *beran*); *brogdettan* ‘to shake, brandish, glitter’ (*brocdaettendi* Ph 735; from *bregdan*); *onettan* (e.g., *onettae* Ph 712), but *onettan* has a different origin and the ending was adapted to the suffix later.

(2) *-sian* derives weak verbs 2. It is assumed that *-sian* arose from re-analysis: *egesa* → *eges-ian*, which was then re-analysed as *ege-sian*. There is just one attestation in EpErf, namely *swinsung* ‘sound, melody’ (Ph 643), the deverbial noun derived from *swinsian* ‘to make melody’ (from *swinn* ‘melody’).

### 3.1.4. A doubtful verbal suffix (*-rcian*)

The suffix *-rcian* is attested just once in EpErf, in: *lithircadae* (Ph 722; from *liðercian* ‘to smooth down, flatter’). The basis is probably *liðe* ‘soft, calm’: but the <rc> is unexplained. Pfeifer (1974: 108) postulates a suffix *-rcia-?* after *gearcian* ‘prepare’ – *gearcian* is derived from *gearo*, *gearu* ‘ready, prepared’ – but *-rcian* would be a very rare suffix with just two formations; it is not mentioned in the literature on OE word-formation. Nevertheless, I mention it here, to show the gradient from very frequent verbal suffixes (especially *-ian* for the derivation of weak verbs 2) via relatively rare, but undoubted suffixes (*-ettan*, *-sian*), to rare and doubtful suffixes (? *-rcian*).

## 3.2. Compounds with a deverbial second element (synthetic compounds)

Here I deal only with compounds the second element of which is deverbial; such compounds are also called synthetic compounds. There are 14 synthetic compounds in EpErf. Their large majority are nouns with 12 formations; only two are adjectives. Most of the nouns are agent nouns. At least four things have to be kept in mind:

- (1) Not only persons, but also animals and plants can be regarded as agents;
- (2) Derivation from strong verbs was not only made from the present tense stem, but also from one of the past stems (or the past participle).
- (3) The second, deverbial element often occurs only rarely or not at all as an independent word. Nevertheless, these elements should not be regarded as suffixes, but rather as potential words.
- (4) Participles can be the basis of word-formation: there is a compound such as *halb-clungni* ‘half-congealed’, but there is no corresponding compound verb (see also above).

### 3.2.1. Agent nouns

(1) Persons:

- *Bora* is derived from *beran* (p.p. *boren*); it appears as a second element in *mund-bora* and *ræd-bora*; *byrd* (as in *mundbyrd*) is also derived from *beran*.

- *Hrōf-wyrhta* (Ph 996 *hrofiuyrcta*) ‘roofmaker’. It glosses L *tignarius*- but Pheifer (1974: 127) points out that it rather reflects L *sarcitector* – a *sarcitector* apparently made the wooden frame for the roof (see also 4.1. below).
- *Mund-bora* (Ph 934) ‘protector’, lit. ‘protection-bearer; see also *mund-byrd* below.
- *Ræd-bora* (*redboran* Ph 552) ‘counsellor, advisor’, lit. ‘advice-bearer’.

(2) Animals:

- *nihte-gale* (*necte-galae*; Ph 857) ‘nightingale’, lit. ‘night-singer’.
- *wande-wiorpe* (*uuandaeuuioorpae* Ph 1045) ‘mole’, lit. [sc. animal that] throws [sc. earth]; *wande* is also attested independently as the name of the mole.

(3) Plants (on the OE plant names, see Sauer and Kubaschewski 2018):

- *gundeswelgie* ‘groundsel’ (*gundaesuelgiae*, Ph 976) lit. ‘pus-swallow’, glossing L *senecen*. In later OE this was changed through popular etymology to *grundeswelgie*, lit. ‘groundswallow’.
- *hunig-suge* (*hunaegsugae* Ph 615) ‘honeysuckle’; lit. [sc. plant that] sucks honey’; but the meaning here is really passive, namely [sc. plant from which] honey can be sucked’].
- *widu-winde* (*uuiidowuindae* Ph 348, 1059, 1082) ‘woodbine’, lit. [sc plant which] winds around wood’. *Widuwinde* and *widubinde* were apparently easily confused or could be easily exchanged.

### 3.2.2. Action nouns

- *hand-gang* (*hondgong* Ph 337) ‘submission’, lit. ‘handgoing’, apparently a legal term, glossing L *deditio*; see also 4.1. below;
- *mund-byrd* (Ph 935) ‘protection, patronage’; cf. *mund-bora* above;
- *stæf-plega* (*staebplegan* Ph 577) apparently a literal translation of L *ludi litterali*, which it glosses; see further 4.1. below.

### 3.2.3. Adjectives formed as synthetic compounds

- *fela-spræci* (*felo-spraeci* Ph 1006) ‘talkative’, lit. ‘much-talking’, glossing L *trifulus*, *trufulus* (cf. the character Truffaldino in the Italian *Commedia dell Arte*);
- *healf-clungen* (*halbclungni* (Ph 931) ‘half-congealed’, glossing L *semigelato*.

### 3.3. Combinations with particles

As indicated above, I regard particles as elements that may also occur as independent words, usually as prepositions and (or) adverbs, whereas I regard as prefixes elements that do not occur independently. Four different particles are attested in EpErf that also occur as first elements of combinations, namely *ober-* (later *ofer-*), *ut-*, *uuidir-* (later *wiðer-*), and *ymb(e)-*. Of these, *over* (< *ofer*) and *out* (< *ut*) are still current in ModE, whereas *wiðer* ‘against’ and *ymb(e)* ‘around, etc.’ died out, as well as most of the combinations with them. *Fram* as a first element of

combinations is a problematic case (see below); I regard it as an independent adverb.

(1) **ober-** (*ofer-*) occurs in two formations: *ofer-wenian* ‘to be proud’ (*oberuuaenidae* Ph 538) and *ofer-stælan* ‘to convince’ (*obaerstaelendi* Ph 192; glossing L *conuincens*);

(2) **ut-** occurs in one formation, namely *ut-aþrunge* (Ph 176 *utathrunge*) ‘pressed out’, glossing L *celatum*; i.e. referring to the technique of creating a kind of relief from metal;

(3) **wider-** ‘against’ also occurs in one formation, namely *widerhlinian* ‘to lean against’ (Ph 537 *uudirhliniendae* ‘those leaning against’), glossing L *innitentes*;

(4) **ymb(e)-** ‘around, etc.’ is attested in two formations, namely *ymbþreoding* (Ph 331 *ymbdritung*) ‘deliberation’, and *ymbhringend* (*ymbhringendum* Ph 929) from *ymbhringan* ‘to surround’, glossing L *stipatoribus*;

(5) **fram**: This is a problematic case: *fram* occurs once, in *fram adrifan* ‘to drive away’, which I regard as a phrase consisting of *fram* + *adrifan*. CIH is not consistent: CIH does not list a prefix *frama-* (in my view, correctly), but writes several combinations with *fram* as one word, e.g., *framadrifan*, *framāstyrian* ‘to remove’ (in my view, incorrectly). The addition of *fram* shows the semantic weakness (semantic bleaching) of the prefix *a-*.

### 3.4. Prefix formations

Nine different prefixes attached to verbs are attested in EpErf, namely *a-*, *an-*, *bi-* (later *be-*), *ed-*, *fer-* (later *for-*), *gi-* (later *ge-*), *or-*, *te-* (later *to-*) and *un-*. Their frequency varies considerably: *gi-* is the most frequently attested prefix, with 30 occurrences; the second-most frequent prefix is *a-*, which is attested in 17 formations, while the others are attested more rarely; see below. There seems to be a correlation between frequency and meaning: the most frequent prefixes also often have a vague meaning (or no real meaning). *gi-* is also the most striking case of a prefix that was lost in the course of ME and vanished almost without a trace: apparently it had lost its function and the loss of function led to the loss of the form in ME (*ge-* > *i-* >  $\emptyset$ ).

(1) **ā-**: Its original meaning was apparently ‘out, out of’, which is preserved in a few formations such as *awegan* ‘carry away’ (*auægdæ* Ph 356 ‘carried away’), but more often it has a vague meaning or no meaning. It is attested in 23 different formations, e.g., *afulian* ‘to become foul, to rot’ (*afulodan* Ph 1044).

(2) **an-** (*on-*): Its original meaning was perhaps ‘away from’ (cf. Dietz 2005: 604), but in OE it had no unified meaning. There are seven attestations in EpErf; in many of them, the meaning of *an-* (*on-*) seems to be intensifying. An example is *ansuebidum* Ph 942 (from *answebban*) ‘those put to sleep’, glossing L *sopitis*.

(3) **bi-** (*be-*): The handbooks say that it had a stressed and an unstressed form; the latter was prefixed to verbs. EpErf always has the form *bi-*. There are eight formations with *bi-* in EpErf, and *bi-* does not have a unified meaning. In some formations *bi-* has a negative or privative meaning, as in *berædan* (*birednae* Ph 800) ‘to betray’ (i.e. the opposite of *rædan* ‘to advise’) and perhaps also in Ph 104 *binumini* ‘taken away’ (glossing L *adempta*), but because *niman* means ‘to take’, *bi-* has here perhaps intensifying function. In other formations, *bi-* has apparently a locative function, as in *besmirwan* (*bismiridae* Ph 534) ‘to besmear’.

(4) *ed-* ‘again’: There is just one attestation in EpErf, namely Ph 783 *edscaept* ‘new creation’, lit. ‘again-creation’ (glossing Gk *palingenesean*, which is apparently a rare Greek word, and not attested in Latin); *edscaept* is probably a loan-translation modelled on the Greek word; see also 4.1.

(5) *fer-* (*for-*): EpErf has the earlier form *fer-*, which was later replaced by *for-*. Its basic meaning is negative, but in some formations, the meaning seems to be intensifying. There are five formations attested in EpErf. The negative meaning is, for example, apparently attested in Ph 52 *faerscribaen* ‘condemned, proscribed’ (glossing L *addictus* ‘condemned, proscribed’; the later OE form is *forscrīfan*); the intensifying function appears to be present in, e.g., *ferhergend* ‘ravager’ (Ph 467); from *forhergian* ‘to ravage, plunder’: the underlying verb *hergian* has also the meaning ‘to ravage, plunder’.

(6) *gi-*, *ge-*: EpErf mostly has the earlier form *gi-*. This was a very frequent prefix in OE; in EpErf it is attested thirty times, but it disappeared in the course of ME (see above). Originally, *ge-* had apparently two functions: with nouns, it expressed collectivity and associativity; with past participles, it originally expressed perfectivity; and from the past participle it was then apparently extended to the present form. EpErf has examples of all three usages: there are 21 instances where *gi-* (*ge-*) is prefixed to the past participle, nine instances where it is prefixed to other verb forms, and six instances where it expresses collectivity or associativity. The formations belonging to the latter group are partly deverbal (e.g., *gifoegnissae*), and partly denominal (*gimodae*). The large group of past participles with *gi-* (*ge-*) and the group of formations with *gi-* (*ge-*) expressing collectivity probably reflect the original function and distribution; the group of other verb forms with *gi-* (*ge-*) probably shows the later extension. I shall give just one or two examples for each group:

- *gi-* expressing collectivity: *gifoegnissae* (Ph 889), glossing L *sartatecta*. The meaning is difficult to ascertain. *Gifoegnisse* literally means something like ‘things joined together’ (CIH s.v. *+fēgness* gives ‘association, companionship, conjunction’); the meaning ‘repairs’ is apparently adapted to one assumed meaning of L *sartatecta* lit. ‘mended roofs’, but Lewis and Short give ‘buildings in good repair’ as the meaning (s.v. *sarcio*); see further 4.1.
- *gi-* (*ge-*) as first element of past participles, e.g., *gibeataen* ‘beaten’ (Ph 140 from *beatan* ‘to beat’); see also 2 (2) above.
- *gi-* prefixed to other verb forms, e.g., *gifræmith* (Ph 725; glossing L *prouehit*). The meaning ‘advances’ for *gifræmith* is apparently adapted to the L lemma.

(7) *or-* had apparently two different meanings in OE, namely ‘very’ (as in *oreald*, very old (cf. G. *uralt*)), and ‘without’. There is one example in EpErf, where the meaning is apparently ‘without’, i.e. a negative meaning: *georuierdid* (Ph 990 ‘shamed, disgraced’; CIHall s.v. *+orwyrðan*, derived from *wierðan*, *wyrðan* ‘to value, appreciate’).

(8) *te-* (later *to-*) indicates separation. There are two examples in EpErf: *tecinid* and *tedridtid*: *tecinid* ‘splits, cuts into pieces’ (Ph 343, Erf only; CIH s.v. *tōcīnan*); glossing L *dehiscat*; *tedridtid* (Ph 344; Erf only). This form is difficult to assign to a normalized form; see section 2.(3) above. Like BT, I take it as a form of *totredan* ‘to tread to pieces’.

(9) **un-** is a negative prefix, which is still common in ModE. There are seven attestations in EpErf, namely *unamaelti*, *unasedd*, *ungesewen*, *unhyri*, *unlidouuac*, *unofercumen*, *unþyhtig*. Some of these are actually denominal, not deverbal (*unlidouuac*): I just discuss *unofercumen*: *unofercumen* ‘unsubdued, not overcome’ (Ph 536), glossing L *indigestae*: The prefix has been added to the past participle of the verb *ofercuman*; there was no verb *\*unofercuman* (cf. section 3 above and the following section).

### 3.4.1. Double prefixes

In four cases, a prefix has been added to another prefix or particle, namely *unamaelti* (Ph 769); *ungiseem* (Ph 333); *unofercumen* (Ph 536); *utathrungaen* (Ph 76). In three instances, it is the prefix *un-* that has been added to a past participle, and in one instance, the prefix *ut-* has been added to a past participle; this confirms the observation that past participles can be the basis of word-formation, cf. section 3 above. The examples also show that *a-*, and *ge-* were semantically weakened.

### 3.5. Derivation without an explicit suffix

Deverbal derivations without an explicit suffix appear as second elements of synthetic compounds; they are discussed in section 3.2. above.

### 3.6. Suffix formations

In the material discussed here, EpErf has nine suffixes. The three verbal suffixes *-ettan*, *-ian*, *-sian* are discussed above (3.1.1 & 3.1.3.); the remaining six suffixes are discussed in the following sections. The suffixes *-end* and *-ere* were used for the formation of agent nouns; the suffixes *-ness* and *-ung* were used for the formation of action nouns and collective nouns; the suffix *-i* (later *-e*) was used for the formation of adjectives, and *-lice* for the formation of adverbs.

#### 3.6.1. Suffixes forming agent nouns

Two suffixes are attested for the formation of agent nouns: *-end* and *-ere*. The suffix *-t* is marginal, at least in EpErf: it is rare and occurs once in an agent noun (*hrofwyrrhta*), but once also in an action noun (*edsceaft*).

(1) **-end**: This suffix derives masculine agent nouns from verbs. It is not always easy to distinguish nouns from present participles in *-ende*; I have classified formations in *-end* as agent nouns if they gloss a Latin lemma which is an agent noun. Applying this criterion, there are seven agent nouns in *-end* in EpErf:

- *bæðend* ‘inciter’ (*baedendrae* Ph 539), glossing L *impulsore* ‘inciter, instigator’;
- *beswicend* ‘deceiver’ (*biswicend* Ph 645), glossing L *impostorem* ‘deceiver, impostor’;
- *forhergend* ‘ravager’ (*ferhergænd* Ph 467), for L *grassator* ‘vagabond, street robber’;
- *fultemend* ‘helper’ (*fultemendum* Ph 95), glossing L *adsestores*; see also Ph 74;

- *scyhend* ‘seducer, pimp’ (Ph 654) glossing L (from Gk) *maulistic* ‘pander’;
- *wēdend* ‘madman’ (*uuoendendi*, prob. for *uuoedendi*, Ph 575), glossing L *lymphatico*;

(2) *-ere*: This is probably an early loan-suffix, borrowed from L-*arius*; in Latin it formed mainly denominal nouns; cf. from EpErf, e.g., *dromidarius* ‘camel-driver’ (Ph 320; cf. 319); *egderi* ‘harrower’ (Ph 396, glossing L *erpiciarius*; the preceding entry, Ph 395, has L *erpica*, glossed by OE *egdae* (on *erpica*, see Pfeifer 1974, 86). It was borrowed in Germanic as *\*-arjaz*, *\*-aerjaz*, which explains the *i*-umlaut in OE *-ere*. The usual form in OE was *-ere*, Ep once has the older form *-eri* (*egderi* Ph 396), where the *i* causing the *i*-umlaut is still visible. The earliest formations in the Germanic languages were probably also denominal; but later *-ere* formed also deverbal derivations. The bridge for the transition from denominal to deverbal derivation were apparently formations that were doubly connected, which could have been derived from a noun or from a corresponding verb; see the examples given below. EpErf has five formations. One can only be explained as a denominal derivation (*scinnere*), the others allow of a double explanation, that is they can be explained as denominal nouns or as deverbal nouns.

- *byrgeras* ‘buriers’ (Ph 760), a hapax legomenon, is doubly connected: it could have been derived from *byrgan* vb wk 1 ‘to bury’ or from the noun *byrgen* ‘burial, grave’;
- *egderi* ‘harrower’ (Ph 396; Erf only; CIH s.v. *egðere*) glossing L *erpiciarius* ‘harrower’. *Egderi* is probably derived from the noun *egdae* ‘harrow’ (Ph 395), which actually precedes it in Erf. Both are rare words, only recorded in a few glosses. But because they are connected to the work of the farmers, they may have been common words;
- *flitere* (*flitere in ebhatis* Ph 854) ‘disputer (in lawsuits)’, glossing L *rabulus* ‘cheap lawyer’ and apparently an attempt to render the Latin into OE. *Flitere* is also doubly connected: it could have been derived from the verb *flitan* ‘to quarrel, dispute’ or from the noun *flit* ‘dispute, strife’;
- *scinnere* ‘magician, illusionist’ (*scinneras* Ph 952) was probably derived from the noun *scinn* ‘spectre, illusion’; apparently there was no corresponding verb.
- *teblere* ‘gambler’ (*teblere* Ph 7) glosses L *aleator*. It is also doubly connected: it could have been derived from the noun *tæfl* (< L *tabula*), which immediately precedes it in EpErf (*teblae* Ep, *tefil* Erf; Ph 5). The word has also an interesting semantic development. *Tæfl* is a loan-word from L *tabula* ‘table’; because gambling was apparently done at a table, it changed its meaning to ‘game with dice, die’.

### 3.6.2. Suffixes forming action nouns and abstract nouns

The most frequent suffix for the formation of action nouns in EpErf is *-ing*, *-ung* with nine attestations. A rarer suffix is *-ness* with one attestation, where it refers to the result of the action. Rare suffixes were also *-d* (*mundbyrd* ‘protection, patronage’; Ph 935) and *-t* (*edsceaft* ‘new creation’, lit. ‘again-creation’; Ph 783).

(1) *-ung*, *-ing* forms deverbal action nouns which are feminines. In a few cases EpErf has *-in* instead of *-ing* (*scildinnae*, *tyctinnae*). The suffix is well attested in EpErf:



- *creopung* (*criopungae* Ph 696) ‘creeping’, from *crēopan* ‘to creep’;
- *grennung* (Ph 852; a hapax legomenon) ‘grinning’, from *grennian* vb wk 2;
- *leasung* (Ph 426) ‘lying’, from vb wk2 *lēasian* ‘to lie’, glossing L *famfaluca* (the entire entry is Ph 426 *famfaluca - leasung uel faam*);
- *monung* (in the phrase *gebles monung* ‘tax collecting’; Erf only; Ph 394) ‘admonition, claim, etc.’ from *manian*, *monian* vb wk 2; glossing L *exactio*;
- *scilding* (*scildinnae* Ph 1038) ‘protection’, lit. ‘shielding’, from vb wk 1 *scildan*, *scioldan* ‘to shield, protect’, glossing L *tutellam*;
- *swinsung* (Ep; Ph 643); ‘sound, melody’, from vb wk 2 *swinsian* ‘to make melody’, glossing L *melodium*;
- *tyhtung* (*tyctinnae* Ph 516) ‘incitement, etc.’ from *tyhtan* vb wk 1 ‘incite, instigate’, glossing L *incitamenta*;
- *pingung* (*pingungae*; Ph 532) ‘intercession’, glossing L *interuentu*;
- *wlatung* (*uulatung* Ep; *uulating* Erf; Ph 667) ‘nausea’, from *wlætan* vb wk 1 ‘to defile’, glossing L *nausea*;
- *ymbdritung* (Erf only; Ph 331) ‘deliberation’, from vb wk 2 *ymbðreodian* ‘to deliberate’, glossing L *deliberation*.

(2) **-ness**: *gefēgness* (*gifoegnissae* Ph 889) ‘association, conjunction’, glossing L *sartatecta*; ‘repairs’, according to Pheifer (1974:119); L *sartatecta* ‘mended roofs’; see also 4.1. below (on *hrof-wyrhta*).

### 3.6.3. Suffixes deriving adjectives

The suffix *-i* (later *-e*) occurs three times in EpErf, and it derives adjectives from verbs: one is a compound (*felospræci*), and two are prefix-formations with the prefix *un-*:

- *felospræci* (Ph 1009; CIH *felaspræce*) ‘talkative, loquacious’ lit. ‘much speaking’; glossing L *trifulus*, *truffulus*; (cf. *truffaldino* ‘buffoon’, a character in the Italian *Commedia dell Arte*). *Spræci* is doubly connected: the basis could be the noun *spræc* or a stem of the strong verb (class V) *sprecan*.
- *unamaelti* (*unamaelti sperwi* Ep; Ph 769) ‘unmelted’, a hapax legomenon; glossing L *pice seuo*. The gloss does not match the lemma.
- *unhyri* (Ph 983) lit. ‘unheard of’, ‘wild, ferocious’ – glossing L *trux* ‘wild, ferocious’ – the meaning ‘wild, ferocious’ of *unhyri* is probably taken from the L lemma.

### 3.6.4. Suffixes deriving adverbs

A frequent suffix for the derivation of adverbs from adjectives even in the earliest attestation of OE was *-lice* (> ModE *-ly*), which arose from re-analysis, e.g., *heofon-lic-e* > *heofon-lice*. There are two attestations in EpErf:

- *hierwendlice* (*heruendlicae* Ep; Ph 186) ‘with contempt’, glossing L *contemptum*; the OE adverb is derived from the present participle of *hierwan*, *herwan* ‘to abuse, despise’;
- *gemengidlice* (*gimengidlicae*, Ep Ph 750) ‘mixed, confusedly; glossing L *permixtum*. *Gimengidlicae* is derived from the past participle of the vb wk *mengan*.

### 3.6.5. Suffixes for the derivation of verbs

Normally I would deal with the derivation of verbs here; but because verbs are the main topic of this paper, the derivation of verbs is discussed in section 3.1. above.

## 4. Loan-influence

Many of the Latin lemmata in EpErf reflect the world of Roman customs and law, which did not exist in Anglo-Saxon England or, in any case, had no relevance for the Anglo-Saxons. Nevertheless, the glossators were apparently expected (or saw it as their duty) to come up with a translation equivalent. They used various strategies. In a few cases there was apparently a translation equivalent in Old English, in other cases, they translated the Latin term literally (see 4.1.). In a number of cases they used a vague translation, which does not really render the meaning of the Latin word or phrase. But whereas it is often easy in the sphere of the religious vocabulary to identify loan-formation (see Gneuss 1955), this is much more difficult in other areas of the vocabulary. In the following sections I shall discuss a few of the more striking entries, but without any claim to completeness.

### 4.1. Literal translations and more or less exact correspondences

- *edscaept* ‘again-creation’ (Ph 784; glossing L or rather Greek *palingenesean*), is probably a loan-translation; see 3.4. (4) above.
- *hondgong* (Erf only; Ph 337) ‘surrender’, glossing L *deditio*: Apparently *hondgong*; ‘surrender’, lit. ‘going to the hand (sc. of the superior man)’ is equivalent to L *deditio*. *Hondgong* refers to the action that expressed the surrender.
- *hrof-wyrhta* (Ph 996) ‘roofmaker’, glossing L *tignarius*. Pfeifer 1974, 127 points out that the correspondence is rather to L *sarcitector*. This was apparently the man who made the wooden frame of a roof. It is difficult to say whether *hrof-wyrhta* is a loan-rendering of *sarcitector* or whether it was a native compound that existed independently.
- *gimodae* lit. ‘those of one mind’ (Ph 201) glossing L *coniurati* ‘conspirators’, lit. ‘those sworn together’. I do not know whether there were conspiracies in early Anglo-Saxon England, but obviously conspirators have to be unanimous and have to act unanimously. As with *hrof-wyrhta* it is difficult to say whether *gimodae* is a loan-creation triggered off by L *coniurati*.
- *staeb-plegan* ‘literary games, letter-games’ (Ph 577; glossing L *ludi litterari* Ep). *Staeb-plegan* is apparently a literal translation (a loan-translation) of the L lemma, which disregards that *ludi litterari*, literally ‘literary games, or letter games’, is lexicalized, and referred to a ‘primary school’. But schools in Anglo-Saxon England were probably called *scōl* (a loan-word from L *schola*), and not *staeb-plega*.

### 4.2. More general or more vague rendering

- *bisiuuidi uuerci* ‘work sewn together’ (Ph 699), glossing L *opere plumari[o]* ‘work embroidered with feathers’
- *gigeruuid* ‘prepared’ (Ph 730) glossing L *praetextatus*, i.e. clothed with the *toga praetextata*; in classical Rome, boys belonging to the nobility were clothed with the *toga praetextata*. Perhaps the glossator had no clear idea of what a *toga praetextata* was and therefore he used a fairly general term to render it.

- *red-boran* ‘those bringing advice’ (Ph 551) – L *iurisperiti* ‘those learned in the law’. Probably there were no law-schools in early Anglo-Saxon England – laws were often transmitted orally; but the kings probably had their advisors, thus the use of *red-boran* instead of *iurisperiti* looks like a kind of cultural substitution. For the OE laws that were written down, see Liebermann 1903–1916.

## 5. Conclusion

I have dealt with the derivation of verbs, analysing the verbs attested in the *Épinal-Erfurt Glossary*. Strong verbs are primary, whereas weak verbs are derived. Weak verbs of the first class usually do not show the original suffix in Old English, whereas weak verbs of the second class usually show the suffix, which is *-i-* in some forms and shows, e.g., in the infinitive present ending *-ian*. But the vowel changes in some inflected forms (*ic lufige*, but *þu lufast*, *ic lufode*); therefore we can just say that weak verbs of the second class are synchronically derived with a vowel. A rarer suffix for the formation of weak verb of the first class was *-ettan* (as in *boretan* ‘to brandish’); a rarer suffix for the formation of weak verbs of the second class was *-sian* (as in *swinsian* ‘to make melody’); a doubtful suffix is *-rcian*, which is attested just in *gearcian* ‘to prepare’ and in *lithircian* ‘to smooth down, to flatter’. There are also some derivations from verbs, more precisely derivations with a deverbial noun as a second element; some survive in Modern English, as *nightingale* (< *nihtegale* ‘nightsinger’), whereas others were rare or even hapax legomena, e.g. *edscaept* ‘again-creation’ or *staebplegan* ‘letter-plays’. Both are apparently loan-translation of their lemmata, *edscaept* translating the rare word *palingenesean*; *staebplegan* translating *ludi litterali* – but whereas *ludi litterali* had the lexicalized meaning ‘primary school’, *staebplegan* is just a translation of the literal meaning – schools in Anglo-Saxon England were probably just called *scōl* (> *school*). Some deverbial nouns occur as second elements of compounds, but rarely or not at all as independent words, e.g. *-bora* occurs in *mund-bora* ‘protector’ (lit. ‘protection-bearer’) and *redbora* ‘advisor’ (lit. ‘advice-bearer’), but very rarely independently.

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## ON THE MEANING OF *STRĒLUM* IN THE RUNIC *CRUCIFIXION POEM ON THE RUTHWELL CROSS*

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**Abstract:** *The 14 verses of the Crucifixion Poem, inscribed with Old English runes (futhorc) on the eighth-century Ruthwell Cross, to some extent match with verses of the poem The Dream of the Rood in the Vercelli Book (second half of the tenth century). This paper discusses the relationship of the two texts with the example of the phrase miþ strĒlum ġiwundad ('wounded with arrows') and reconsiders the meaning of Old English strǣl ('arrow'). Three of the runic poem's formulae indicate that 'arrows' are the weapons with which the Cross, not Christ, is wounded at the crucifixion.*

**Keywords:** *formula, Northumbria, Old English, runes, Ruthwell Cross, strǣl/strĒlum*

### 1. Introduction: The Ruthwell Cross and the *Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem*

The Ruthwell Cross (RC), named after its location in Ruthwell Parish Church in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland, has been dated to *c.* AD 750. It is without doubt one of the most important Anglo-Saxon high crosses that have come down to us. After the English Reformation, the monument was declared idolatrous: in 1642, it was broken into several pieces by Presbyterian iconoclasts. In the 19th century, the RC was reconstructed and re-erected, moved into the church and lowered into a pit in the apse, where it still stands today.

The RC is 5.2 metres high. Its four sides are adorned with relief sculptures and inscriptions: The broader faces (north and south) show 14 biblical scenes of different size, which are framed by Latin inscriptions in Roman capitals (short runic inscriptions are found on the upper stone). A large, inhabited vine-scroll decorates the narrower faces (east and west); along the horizontal and the right and left borders of the vine-scrolls runs the main runic inscription: it is a poem in Old English alliterative verse, in which Christ's Cross speaks and gives its own account of the crucifixion.

The complex iconographic program of the RC has been studied by art historians and scholars from other disciplines. The sculptures and inscriptions form a thematic unity and follow a theological programme. For example, Ó Carragáin (2011:68) has shown that the RC "was designed by an experienced liturgist, for a community which evidently performed some variety of the Roman liturgy".

The *Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem* and the inhabited vine-scroll are masterfully integrated into the overall artistic programme. The runic inscription is the longest epigraphic text written in the Old English *futhorc* – the writing system that was brought to England by the Germanic peoples and was subsequently used by the

Anglo-Saxons. The poem is an original rendering of the crucifixion narrative. The only immediate textual parallel are lines 39–42, 44b–49, 56b–59, and 62b–64 of *The Dream of the Rood* (abbreviated *The Dream*; quotations are from Swanton’s 2000 edition, translations are my own).

In 1844, John Mitchell Kemble discovered that passages of *The Dream of the Rood* in the Vercelli Book - a manuscript from the mid-tenth century, preserved as Codex CXVII of the cathedral library at Vercelli, in northern Italy - matched closely, in wording and metre, the Ruthwell inscription. Ever since, scholars have relied on the relationship of the two poems. *The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem* - perhaps due to its fragmentary state - has often been considered the minor version of the two. However, a detailed comparison with *The Dream* makes it clear that the epigraphic text differs in many respects from the manuscript version (cf. Majewski forthc.).

A reading of *The Ruthwell Crucifixion Poem* and a Modern English translation are given below (translations are my own). One difficulty of dealing with the runic text is that, due to the damage of the stone, part of the runic inscription is lost (for a new reconstruction, see Majewski forthc.: Chapter 7). In the reading below, letters *in recte* indicate that the rune in question can no longer be read with certainty; reconstructions are given in square brackets [ ]; three dots [...] indicate that more than two runes are missing.

1	[#on]gēredæ hinæ god almehttig *	þā hē walde on galgu gisfīga
	‘[#] God Almighty stripped himself	when he chose to mount the gallows,’
2	mōdiġ f[...] men	
	‘courageous [...] men.’	
3	[...]	
4	[...] ic rīcnæ kyniŋc *	
	‘I [...] the Mighty King,’	
5	heafunæs hlāfard	hælda ic ni dorstæ
	‘the Lord of Heaven.	I did not dare to bend.’
6	[bi]smæræ[d]u uŋket men bā ætgad[re]	ic [...] miþ b[l]ōdæ bistēmi[d]
	‘They mocked the two of us both together. I [...]	made moist with blood,’
7	bi[...]	
	‘[...]	
8	[#]kris[t] wæs on rōdi	
	‘[#] Christ was on the Cross.’	
9	hweþræ þēr fūsæ	fearran kwōmu
	‘However, readily	from afar there came’
10	æþpilæ til ānum	ic þæt al bi[hēald]
	‘noble persons to the one.	I beheld it all.’
11	sā[ræ] ic w[æ]s mi[þ] so[r]gu[m] gidræ□[fi]d	h[n]āg [...]
	‘Sorely was I afflicted with sorrows.	I inclined [...]
12	[m]iþ s[t]rē[l]um giwundad	
	‘wounded with arrows.’	
13	ālēgdun hīæ hinæ limwæriġnæ	ġistōddu[n] him [æt his liċ]æs



The formula also features in *Christ III* (l. 1085b–1087a; *ASPR* 3). In contexts other than the crucifixion, it is attested in *Andreas* (l. 487 *hū ðū wægflotan wære bestēmdon* ‘how you keep the wave-floaters [i.e. ships] wet’; l. 1238 *swāte bestēmed* ‘bedewed with blood’; l. 1471 *þurh dolgsleġe drēore bestēmed* ‘through a wounding blow bedewed with blood’; *ASPR* 2), *Beowulf* (l. 486 *eal benċpelu blōde bestȳmed* ‘all the bench-planks bedewed with blood’; *ASPR* 4), and *Exodus* (l. 449 *wæron beorhhliðu blōde bestēmed* ‘mountain-heights were bedewed with blood’; *APSR* 1). Moreover, the inscription on the Brussels Cross (11th century; Cathedral of St Michael and St Gudula, Brussels) shares some verses with the runic text on the RC - among others, the phrase *blōde bestēmed* (Majewski forthc.:Ch. 2.3.2).

A variation of the Ruthwell formula in l. 6b is found in *The Dream* l. 22b *mid wætan bestēmed* (‘bedewed with moisture’): in l. 18–22 (my emphasis), the dreamer has a vision and sees the Cross bleed from its right side. The physical pain normally associated with Christ is transferred to the Cross.

*Hwæðre ic þurh þæt gold  
earmra ærgewin,  
swætan on þā swīðran healfe.  
Forht ic wæs for þære fæggran gesyhðe.  
wendan wædum ond blēom;*

‘However, through that gold  
the former struggle of wretched ones,  
**to bleed from its right side.**  
I was afraid of that beautiful vision.  
change its clothing and colours;

*ongytan meahte  
þæt hit ærest ongan  
Eall ic wæs mid s[ol]rgum gedrēfed.  
Geseah ic þæt fūse bēacen  
hwīlum hit wæs mid wætan bestēmed,*

I could perceive,  
when it [(the cross)] first began  
I was entirely **afflicted with sorrows.**  
I saw that shifting gallows  
now it was **bedewed with moisture**’.

In l. 20b it is the dreamer who is *mid s[ol]rgum gedrēfed* ‘afflicted with sorrows’, but in RC l. 11a and in *The Dream* l. 59a the same formulaic expression describes the Cross’s pain (see below). In a different context, the formula is also attested in *Judith* (l. 88a; *ASPR* 4); the combination *mid sorgum* + verb is found in *Genesis* (l. 481 *mid swāte and mid sorgum siððan libban* ‘to live thereafter with sweat and with sorrows’); *ASPR* 1) and *Solomon and Saturn* (l. 367 *mid sorgum gewīteð* ‘tormented with sorrows’); *ASPR* 6), cf. the *DOE Web Corpus*, s.v. *mid sorgum*.

The third formula, RC l. 12 *\*[m]iþ s[t]rē[ll]um ġiwundad*, is paralleled only by *The Dream* l. 62b. In l. 59–63, the narrative voice alternates between the first person (personal pronoun OE *ic* ‘I’), the Cross, and the third person description of what happens to Christ (third-person plural verb forms, ‘they’). In the quotation below, the passages that refer to the Cross are highlighted; the poetic formulae that also feature on the RC (l. 11a, 12) are underlined.

*Sāre ic wæs mid [sorgum] gedrēfed,  
ēaðmōð elne mycle.  
āhōfon hine of ðām heftan wīte.  
standan stēame bedrifenne;  
Ālēdon hīe ðær limwērigne,*

*hnāg ic hwæðre þām secgum tō handa,  
Genāmon hīe þær ælmihtigne God,  
Forlēton mē þā hilderincas  
eall ic wæs mid strælum forwundod.  
gestōdon him æt his lices hēafdum;*



<p>‘Sorely I was <u>afflicted with sorrows</u>,  <b>humble, with great eagerness.</b>  they lifted him from the heavy torment.  <b>standing, drenched with moist;</b>  There they laid the limb-weary one down,</p>	<p><b>nevertheless, I inclined to the hands  of the men,</b>  There they took the Almighty God,  <b>The warriors left me there</b>  <b>I was entirely <u>wounded with arrows.</u></b>  they placed themselves at His body’s  head;’</p>
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These three formulae of the Ruthwell poem are also attested in *The Dream*. In both poems they describe the Cross’s agony at the crucifixion: it is made moist by the blood that flows out of Christ’s wounds (RC l. 6b), it experiences mental distress (RC l. 11a) and physical pain (RC l. 12). The formulae highlight the Cross’s experience—it suffers the pain which we would usually attribute to Jesus.

### 3. A reconsideration of RC l. 12 ‘Wounded with Arrows’

Although RC l. 12 and *The Dream* l. 62b employ the same poetic formula, many scholars (e.g., Howlett 1976: 58; Ó Carragáin 1987: 26–27) have read RC l. 12 as a participial attribute to l. 13a:

<p>RC l. 12–13a <i>[m]iþ s[t]rē[l]um ġiwundad</i>  ‘wounded with arrows,  down’</p>	<p><i>ālēgdun hīæ hinæ limwæriġnæ</i>  they laid the limb-weary one  down’</p>
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In contrast to *The Dream*, it is Christ and not the Cross that is wounded by ‘arrows’, which are often interpreted as “a metaphor for the five wounds in Christ’s body” (Ó Carragáin 2010: 243). Christ is called *limwæriġnæ* (‘the limb-weary one’) (l. 13a) when he is taken down from the Cross. Ó Carragáin (1987: 27) holds that the composer of *The Dream* adapted RC l. 12 to make a “shift in devotional emphasis [...] towards the power of the Cross”.

Bammesberger (forthc.) doubts this reading for grammatical reasons: “**ġiwundad** would be expected to agree in case and number with **limwæriġnæ**, the form ought to be accusative singular” and end in *-næ*. He therefore re-considers the arrangement of the runic text and believes that RC l. 12 *\*[m]iþ s[t]rē[l]um ġiwundad* could originally have been in line with verse 8 and refer to Christ. The re-arranged lines account for the fact that “[i]n St John’s gospel [19:34], the piercing of Christ’s side takes place directly after Christ had given up his spirit” (Ó Carragáin 2005: 81).

<p>*RC l. 8+<i>krist wæs on rōdi (stemni)</i>  ‘+ Christ was on the Cross/stem,</p>	<p><i>miþ strēlum ġiwundad</i> (= RC l. 12)  wounded with a lance/spear’</p>
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Grammatically, the dative or “instrumental [plural] *strēlum* is likely to be a dual in form, meaning ‘by means of the spear’; a corresponding dual form in *-um* is available in *\*[hēa]f[du]m*” (RC l. 13b), which can be translated as a singular, ‘at the head (of Christ’s body)’ (Bammesberger forthc.). Bammesberger (2001: 289) explains that, in Old English, “one major source for the use of *-um* as a marker of the instrumental singular lies in the dual”. The *-um* ending in *strēlum* could indicate that its meaning derived from an ‘elliptical dual’: ‘with two things’, i.e.

‘with two arrows’ (Bammesberger 2001: 289). This would later have acquired a meaning in the singular, ‘by means of the arrow/spear/lance’.

I agree that the meaning of *strēlum* may be that of an instrumental singular, but I object to a re-arrangement of the verses. I believe that *strēlum* are the weapons that hurt the Cross, and not Christ, and question the scholarly consensus that RC l. 12 refers to Christ.

An objection to the common reading of verse 12 was brought forward earlier by Bundi (1979: 54) and MacKinnell (2004: 109). Yet, it seems as if most scholars had overlooked that grammatically, syntactically, and metrically, RC l. 12 refers to l. 11a. In other words, l. 12 is a poetic variation of l. 11a, in which the Cross describes its mental and physical pain (Majewski forthc.: Chapters 6.5.2.17 and 6.6.3.1).

RC l. 11	sā[ræ] ic w[æ]s mi[þ] so[r]gu[m] gidræ[fi]d	h[n]āg [...
RC l. 12	[m]iþ s[t]rē[l]um giwundad	
	‘Sorely was I afflicted with sorrows, ‘wounded with arrows.’	I inclined [...],’

This reading also avoids the discussion of the somewhat unusual employment of Anglian *strēlum* (RC l. 12) ‘arrows, shafts, darts’ (cf. Bosworth’s *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary Online*, s.v. *stræ̅l*) instead of Old English (OE) *spere* ‘spear’ or *næglum* ‘nails’ (cf. *DOE Web Corpus*, s.v. *nægl*, *spere*) to denote the weapon(s) with which Christ is wounded in the biblical crucifixion narrative. In John 19:34 (*The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 2018: 1950), a soldier pierces Christ’s side with a spear or lance to confirm that he is dead.

#### 4. Arrows and the Archer on the Ruthwell Cross

As can be inferred from Table 1, most scholars in the 19th century translate *strēlum* as ‘shafts’. Only Stephens (1867–1868: 431–432) argues that

Christ did not die of Crucifixion or by being pierced in His side with a spear. He was *shot to death*. All sorts of missiles were hurled at him, wounding, dinting and bruising and *jagging the wood of the Cross*, and at last one fatal STREAL - doubtless the Mistletoe - struck Him and He died!

While this interpretation arouses scepticism, Stephens is the first to doubt that OE *stræ̅l* refers to the spear that wounds Christ. *Shaft* and *streale* belong to the semantic field ‘arrow’ (cf. *OED Online*, s.v. *shaft*, n.2 and *streale*, n.).

Source	Translation
Kemble (1840: 356; 1844:37)	‘wounded with shafts’
Haigh (1857: 170 - 171)	‘with shafts wounded’
Stuart (1867: 549)	‘wounded with shafts’
Stephens (1867–1868: 431–432)	‘with streals all wounded’

Cook (1905: 33, n. 62)	‘wounded with nails’
Bütow (1935: 48)	‘mit Pfeilen verwundet’
Howlett (1976: 58; 2008: 256)	‘wounded with arrows’
Page (1973:151; 1999:147148)	‘wounded with arrows’
Ball (1991: 113)	‘wounded with arrows’
Swanton (2000: 125, n. 62)	‘wounded with arrows, darts’
Bammesberger (forthc.)	‘wounded with a lance/spear’

Table 4. Translations of *miþ strēlum giwundad* (RC l. 12)

In the note to *The Dream* l. 62, Cook (1905: 33) points out a parallel to *Christ and Satan* (ASPR 1): l. 508–509a *þā mē on bēame beornas sticedon / gārūm on galgum* ‘when men stuck me on the cross, / with spears on the gallows’. Here, the word for ‘spear’ is OE *gār* ‘weapon with a pointed head’ (DOE A–I online, s.v. *gar*). But he argues that on the RC and in *The Dream*, “the nails must be meant, and this is most likely”. The same is suggested by Bütow (1935: 75, n. 62). The nails hurt both the Cross and Christ. However, the piercing with the nails occurs much earlier: in l. 46–47a, it is again the Cross that describes its wounds caused by the nails. OE *strǣl* must therefore denote a different kind of weapon, as it refers to the Cross only.

Anglian *strēlum* (‘arrows’) as the weapons that wound the wood of the Cross do not appear as original, if we consider that there is a direct reference to shooting an arrow on the RC’s upper stone.

The figure of the *Archer* on the RC has been interpreted in different ways. Raw’s (1967: 393) suggestion that it stands for the preacher, shooting the words of scripture into the hearts of the congregation has generally been accepted in Ruthwell scholarship. Ó Carragáin (2009: 186) favours this interpretation, arguing that Christ is the ‘chosen arrow’ hidden in God’s quiver (cf. Isaiah 49: 1–7; *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* 2018: 1045–1046). The same metaphor of the ‘chosen arrow’ is used “in the *Introit* for Mass on the feast of the Nativity of St John the Baptist” (Ó Carragáin 2010: 246). Based on this and on other liturgical implications, Ó Carragáin demonstrates that the *Archer* connects with the entire upper stone, including the *Visitation*: “in Elizabeth’s womb one of God’s chosen arrows, John the Baptist, leaps to recognise the other, Christ, in Mary’s womb” (Ó Carragáin 2010: 246). On the opposite side of the RC, the ‘hidden arrows’ (in their mothers’ wombs) are ‘revealed’ in the sculptures of *St John the Baptist* and *Christ in Glory*.

The Ruthwell sculptor, by representing the Archer’s ‘chosen arrow’ with such vivid detail, encouraged the audience to see the Visitation panel not as a static icon, but as one of an important sequence of historical events leading to the midsummer Nativity of John the Baptist, God’s ‘chosen arrow’, and to Christ’s own midwinter Nativity. (Ó Carragáin 2009: 192)

On the RC, sculptures and texts are intricately connected, so we may assume that *strēlum* ('arrows') was employed deliberately in the runic poem. On a literal level, it could mean that the Cross dies the death of a martyr, shot at by *strēlum* ('arrows') like St. Sebastian, to be later resurrected like Christ. The religious community at Ruthwell was probably familiar with St Sebastian through Bede's *Martyrologium* (cf. Brown, Biggs 2018: 287). On a more symbolical level and in connection with the sculptures on the broader faces of the RC, the *Archer's* arrow could also stand for the "[t]he arrows from the bow [that] pierce the bodies of Christ and the cross, bringing about the death that leads to resurrection" (Karkov 2019: 119).

The Ruthwell archer may then be the origin of this particular representation of the crucifixion in Anglo-Saxon England. It is the archer's arrows that let flow the streams of blood and water that give voice to the cross and give birth to the community of believers depicted on the shaft of the cross, as well as the community of believers who had the cross made. (Karkov 2019: 116)

This symbolical reading is strengthened by the etymology of OE *strǣl*: the noun developed into Present-Day English (PDE) *streale* ('arrow'), now an obsolete form (*OED Online*: s.v. *streale*, n.; see also Stephens 1867–1868 in Table 1). OE *strǣl* is of Germanic origin and has a cognate in Modern German (G.): *Strahl*. Kluge, Seebold (2011: 889) write that the meaning of G. *Strahl* (MHG *stræl*, PDE *comb*) might go back to the same West Germanic root as *Strahl*, namely \**strǣlō* ('arrow') (fem; cf. Middle High German (MHG) *strāle*; OE *strǣl*): in the plural, *Strähl* meant the long teeth of a comb, which could be compared to the sharp point at the front of an arrow (the Indo-European root of *comb*, OE *camb*, *comb*, is \**gómbho-* ('tooth'); Kluge/Seebold 2011: 467, s.v. *Kamm*, m.). This semantic affinity of the Germanic nouns meaning 'arrow' and 'tooth' could indicate that *strēlum* on the RC does not necessarily mean 'arrows', but 'sharp-pointed weapons' in general, which harmed the Cross - be it nails, arrows, a spear or a lance. The symbolical meaning of Anglian *strēlum* could be a synthesis of all weapons that harm the cross; metaphorically, the 'arrows' would then wound Christ as well.

## 5. Conclusion

The RC's runic poem narrates the crucifixion from the perspective of the personified Cross, highlighting its role in this central Christian event. Three poetic formulae express the Cross's physical and mental distress. This paper has shown that RC l. 12, \*[m]iþ s[t]rē[l]um ġiwundad ('wounded with arrows') - usually attributed to the figure of Christ - is a poetic variation of the preceding verse and refers to the Cross's wounds. This reading is based on grammatical, syntactical, and metrical grounds. Symbolically, the Cross and Christ (due to their special unity) are wounded with the same *strēlum* ('arrow(s)'), which is a unique feature of the epigraphic poem, just like *prosopopoeia* (i.e. the speaking Cross). It has furthermore been shown that the runic poem connects with the symbolic meaning of the *Archer* and the overall sculptural programme of the RC.

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## **IDIOMS IN COGNITIVE LINGUISTICS: IS IT ALL ABOUT CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR THEORY?**

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***Abstract:** The present paper is a study of idioms in cognitive linguistics in an attempt to account for the prevailing trends and prospective directions of research in the field. First, I look at idiomatic expressions from the standpoint of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, with a special emphasis on socio-cognitive and pragmatic aspects of idiom use and comprehension. For this purpose, idioms used in an American legal drama series – Suits, are analysed. I then proceed with the discussion of the motivational aspect of idioms. In the final analysis, the perspectives for future research of idioms within cognitive linguistic framework are outlined.*

***Keywords:** cognitive linguistics, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, idiom comprehension, idiom motivation, idioms*

### **1. Introduction**

At present, cognitive linguistics is a bustling area of research serving as a nexus between a variety of approaches, such as Cognitive Grammar (Langacker 1987), Frame Semantics (Fillmore 1982), on the one hand, and Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980), Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier and Turner 2003), and Usage-Based Linguistics (Bybee 2010), on the other hand, to name a few. In this paper, it is argued that cognitive linguistics will benefit from a multifaceted approach to the study of idioms. This should, in my view, include the meaning-making, the interpretation, the motivation and the comprehension of idioms. As regards the meaning-making and the interpretation of idioms, Conceptual Metaphor Theory pioneered by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) shall serve as a principal methodological framework. The motivational aspect of idioms shall be considered in the light of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Kövecses 2006; Gibbs 2017; Kovalyuk 2019; Strack 2019), Conventional Figurative Language Theory (Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen 2005) and Dynamical Systems Theory (Gibbs and Colston 2012), among others. The discussion concludes by looking at Priming Theory (Hoey 2005), Dual-Coding Theory (Paivio 2014), and Applied Linguistics Theory (Cieślicka 2011; Mcpherron and Randolph 2014; Wood 2015) in an attempt to outline the perspectives for future research of idioms within cognitive linguistic framework.

### **2. Idioms and Conceptual Metaphor Theory: exploring further avenues**

As Boers (2014: 186) puts it, “it could be argued that much of the evidence for conceptual metaphors actually came from the study of idioms”. First presented

in 1980 by Lakoff and Johnson, Conceptual Metaphor Theory has since been regarded as one of the most overarching in Cognitive Linguistics. The idea proposed by Lakoff and Johnson appeared to challenge the traditional view of metaphor in that linguistic metaphor was in an actual fact secondary to metaphoric thought. That being said, “if metaphor exists at a conceptual level, this explains why semantically related words often have similar metaphoric uses”, as Sullivan (2017: 385) rightly observes. This assumption, apparently, holds for idioms as well. Consider the following boxing-derived English idioms: *beat (someone) to the punch*, *down for the count*, *hit below the belt*, *throw in the towel*, etc. Alluding to some run-of-the-mill scenarios of a boxing match where one boxer beats another to the punch, where one boxer is down for the count (of nine) as a result of a knock-out punch delivered by another boxer, where one boxer hits below the belt and the other gets hit below the belt (which is illegal according to the rules of boxing), and where one boxer throws in the towel because he or she is unable to continue the match, accordingly, they semantically pertain to arguments, conflicts, and competitive situations in real life. From a broader perspective, the uses of the above idioms fall under the umbrella of ARGUMENT IS WAR and SOCIAL EXCHANGES ARE BOXING MATCHES conceptual metaphors. Such line of thinking is very accurately summarized by Gibbs:

Consider Chris Matthews’s political commentary and his different boxing metaphors for the Obama vs. Romney debate. Did Matthews’s choice of many conventional expressions necessarily indicate that he was thinking of the Presidential debate in a specific metaphorical manner? CMT scholars would argue that Matthews’s speech, especially his systematic use of boxing metaphors, provides empirical evidence on the power of conceptual metaphors, such as POLITICAL DEBATES ARE BOXING MATCHES, in structuring people’s thinking about abstract topics. But skeptics would likely respond that Matthews merely spit out a series of clichéd phrases which have littered the English language for some time. Politics just happens to be talked about in certain conventional ways, some of which originated in metaphorical thinking. Still, the fact that a contemporary speaker, such as Matthews, used particular words or phrases does not imply that he was cognitively drawing cross-domain comparisons between political debates and boxing matches. (Gibbs 2017: 8)

It can be inferred from Gibb’s account that even though a political debate can be described in terms of boxing metaphors little evidence exists to attest to the fact that this very conceptual metaphor inheres in the mind of an average native English speaker. Gibbs, however, furnishes the reader with an important clue as to why this might be happening further in the monograph:

The attempt to locate the cognitive and embodied, including neural, bases for metaphorical language, in many people’s view, ignores the larger social and communicative goals that speakers and writers have when using metaphor, as well as the historical customs and ideological beliefs that may motivate some metaphoric discourses. Mathews’s commentary, for instance, did not simply sprout from his private conceptual system, but emerged within a complex network of cultural understandings about Presidential campaigns and political debates. Efforts to ground linguistic metaphors in cognitive and, perhaps neural, structures miss the vital social nature of metaphorical speech acts. (ibid.)

What Gibbs further suggests is that linking the origin of conceptual metaphors to embodied experience does not suffice when it comes to the actual use



of metaphors, where cultural, social and communicative factors, among others, must be taken into consideration. In what follows, idiom-instantiated metaphors will be analysed from cognitive linguistic, pragmatic and sociological standpoints. For this purpose, let us examine the following extract taken from the script of *Suits*, an American legal drama television series (season 08, episode 10):

IO: Two days ago, when you said this shady son of a bitch destroyed that painting intentionally.  
 C: Is that how you talk about your former clients?  
 SW: Alex, this thing is a loser for you. Get your client under control.  
 AW: Don't talk to me about this case being a loser. You're lucky we're even - in here.  
 AW: Bullshit. We go to court and I will clean your clock.  
 HS: Samantha and Alex are about to go to war.  
 RZ: I told her to settle.  
 HS: Well, she didn't.  
 RZ: And if Samantha did that, I'll deal with her.  
 HS: How? Because you've let her do whatever she wants ever since she got here.  
 DP: I don't suppose it would do any good to ask you to let Alex go up there first.  
 SW: I'm not backing down because I think I'm better than Alex Williams, and I'm not gonna say that I'm not.  
 RZ: If we keep doing nothing It's worse than letting them settle it themselves.  
 HS: One case, head-to-head, winner gets name partner.  
 RZ: As you both know, Harvey and I each made a promise to put your names on the door next.  
 HS: And obviously it's not possible for us both to keep that promise.  
 SW: This better not be you telling us we're going up at the same time, because as far as I'm concerned, that's as bullshit as telling me you're giving it to him.  
 AW: And for once, you and I agree.  
 HS: Good, because we have another idea.  
 SW: Are those what I think they are?  
 HS: Two conflict of interest waivers giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring.  
 RZ: You wanted a fight. You got it. The winner gets their name up next. Any questions?  
 AW: I got one. Is it gonna be "and Williams," or just "Zane Specter Litt Williams"?  
 SW: I can answer that. It's not gonna be either one.  
 AW: Then I guess we'll just have to find out.  
 SW: I guess we will.  
 LL: Well, before you start taking any swings, I wanna make one thing clear: This is a fair fight. No using inside information. No looking at the other person's shit. Are we clear?  
 AW: Yes.  
 SW: Clear.  
 RZ: And if no one else is gonna say it, I will. Let's get ready to rumble [dramatic music].

(Abbreviation explanations: IO – Insurance Officer; C – Client; SM – Samantha Wheeler, Partner; AW – Alex Williams, Partner; HS – Harvey Specter, Senior Partner; RZ – Robert Zane, Managing Partner; DP – Donna Poulson, COO; LL – Loius Litt, Senior Partner).

To summarise briefly, the plot unfolds around a series of events leading up to a situation where Samantha Wheeler and Alex Williams, partners in a fictional top tier New York law firm, will be competing for a name partner position. To be nominated name partner, they are expected to handle the same case to the best of

their ability and on equal terms. Competition, from the perspective of sociology, along with exchange, conflict, cooperation, and accommodation, is one of the major types of social interaction. Social interaction, simply put, is the way in which individuals act toward and mutually influence one another (Bardis 1979: 148). Competition, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (online), is “the action of endeavouring to gain what another endeavours to gain at the same time; the striving of two or more for the same object; rivalry”. Anecdotal evidence suggests that workplace competition most often involves recognition, bonuses, and promotion. When it comes to describing competition, people tend to employ certain phrases, clichés, and metaphors. As evidenced from the script extract above, both partners themselves and the senior partners refer to the competition in terms of boxing, such as in the “*We go to court and I will clean your clock*” sentence, for example. The complete list of metaphors and metaphoric idioms employed in the above extract is provided in the following table:

Metaphor/idiom in context	General meaning	Intended meaning
I will <i>clean your clock</i>	I will <i>deliver a decisive punch in your face</i> .	I will <i>defeat you in court</i> .
Samantha and Alex <i>are about to go to war</i> .	Samantha and Alex <i>are about to start fighting</i> .	Samantha and Alex <i>are about to take action against each other in court</i> .
One case, <i>head-to-head</i>	One case, <i>in direct opposition</i>	One case, <i>in direct opposition in court</i>
Two conflict of interest waivers <i>giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring</i> .	Two conflict of interest waivers <i>giving you the permission to start fighting hard in the ring</i> .	Two conflict of interest waivers <i>giving you the permission to start competing all out in the courtroom</i> .
You wanted <i>a fight</i> .	You wanted <i>a (boxing) fight</i> .	You wanted <i>a head-to-head case in court</i> .
Well, before you start <i>taking any swings</i>	Well, before you start <i>delivering any blows</i>	Well, before you start <i>presenting any arguments</i>
This is <i>a fair fight</i> .	This is <i>a fair boxing match</i> .	This is <i>a fair competition</i> .
Let’s get ready <i>to rumble</i> .	Let’s get ready <i>to fight</i> .	Let’s get ready <i>to the competition in court</i> .

**Table 1:** Metaphors and idioms in “Suits” script extract, Season 8, episode 10

The general meaning column in the above table functions as a proxy between metaphors and idioms in context and their intended meanings. Thus, the partners in the law firm are conceived in terms of boxers or fighters. A head-to-

head competition between the partners is referred to as a boxing match. The courtroom where the competition is set to take place is perceived as a boxing ring. The arguments to be presented by the competing partners in court are represented as swings taken by boxers. The all-out competition in court guaranteed by conflict-of-interest waivers is described in the context of a gloves-off boxing match. The rest of the firm, i.e., the managing partner, senior partners, name partners, partners, and the staff are implicitly construed as spectators in a boxing match. This brings us to the point where we can assert that the metaphorical mappings of the given idioms do provide proof for the existence of a WORKPLACE COMPETITION IS A BOXING MATCH conceptual metaphor. It might not inhere in the mind of a specific native speaker of English and it may not be manifest explicitly in a given language context, yet the establishment of a well-structured set of mappings instantiated in a language context gives plenty of evidence in its support.

One other important point of discussion is that of common ground, which, according to Stalnaker (2002), is “presumed background information shared by participants in a conversation”, in metaphor use and comprehension. As indicated in the script extract above, Samantha Wheeler, the aspiring name partner, is the first one to expressly describe the relationship between herself and Alex Williams, another aspiring name partner, in boxing terms: “*Bullshit. We go to court and I will clean your clock*”. Here her actions resemble those of a boxer bragging before the fight about defeating another boxer. This idea is later picked up by senior partner Harvey Specter in his conversation with managing partner Robert Zane, as in “*Samantha and Alex are about to go to war*” sentence. The common ground is established in the follow-up meeting between all firm partners, where the issue of competing for a name partner position is repeatedly characterized using boxing-derived figurative language, such as “*Two conflict of interest waivers giving you the green light to take off the gloves and get in the ring*”, “*Well, before you start taking any swings*”, “*This is a fair fight*”, etc. Michael Buffer’s trademarked catchphrase “*Let’s get ready to rumble!*” pronounced by the firm’s senior partner Robert Zane comes as the icing on the cake. It usually signals the start of a boxing match, and in this context, it means that the competition between the aspiring name partners is officially on.

Otherwise said, the deliberate use of boxing-derived idioms and metaphors in the legal context is a socio-cognitive representation of common ground of some kind. The show, which originated in the USA, relies, first and foremost, on the US-based audience. Presumably, it is common knowledge that boxing fights are fierce, “life-or-death” affairs, where winners take it all and losers tend to be hurt badly, both physically and emotionally, and seldom get a second opportunity to restore the status quo. Similarly, any aspiring name partner is well aware that chances for getting a sought-after name partner position are few and far between. Therefore, he or she will ruthlessly invest all the resources and skills to win it, just like any boxer in the ring. The script relies heavily on the premise that WORKPLACE COMPETITION IS A BOXING MATCH, and the audience, both national and international, are expected to be cognizant of this principle.

### 3. Idioms: searching for motivation

When it comes to definitions, idioms have been conventionally described as “multi-word phrases having two principal characteristics: non-compositionality and syntactic frozenness” (Cruse 2006: 82). In other words, as far as non-

compositionality is regarded, the meaning of idioms cannot be easily predicted from the meanings of its constituent elements. To exemplify the point, consider the following idiom: *to spill the beans*. Provided one comes across this expression for the first time, chances are that one will not be able to arrive at its meaning. This is the reason why idioms are often characterized as semantically opaque or non-transparent.

In cognitive linguistics, however, in an attempt to prove the above point wrong, some theorists (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Langlotz 2006; Gibbs 2017) have convincingly argued that non-transparency and opacity are not regular characteristics across the entire idiomatic stock of a language. Rather, idioms are often treated as “symbolic units” (Evans 2009: 87) and as “products of our conceptual system” (Lundmark 2006: 73). For instance, the idiom *cover all the/your bases* ‘to deal with every part of a situation or activity’ becomes fairly analyzable provided one is aware that *base* stands metaphorically for a situation or an activity. Language users’ competence, i.e., knowledge of the role a *base* plays in sports, namely in baseball, helps them understand the idiom as ‘being attentive to details’. If decomposed lexically, individual words do play a role in the overall meaning of idioms. Furthermore, inclusion of the given idiom in English language dictionaries and its specific meaning are pre-conditioned by a metaphorical concept PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITY IS COMPETITION, which is instantiated by a number of related idiomatic expressions, e.g., *to get to first base*. Similarly, the figurative idioms *get off on the right foot*, *get your feet under the table*, *have a foot in the door* and a dozen more alike expressions are motivated by our common knowledge that we typically use our feet to indicate progress. Simply put, the metonymical use of *foot* for “progress in an activity” derives, as mentioned, from our bodily experience.

Motivation of an idiom thus becomes what can be described as interplay between the literal meaning and the idiomatic (institutionalized) meaning (Boers 2014: 188, Burger 2007: 91). In the classical version of Conceptual Metaphor Theory, motivation of an idiom is a matter of the underlying (conventional) image and its link to a conceptual metaphor entrenched in our conceptual system (Lakoff 1987: 448). It follows that to belong in the realm of the Conceptual Metaphor an idiom must be “*imageable*” (in Lakoff’s terms), i.e., hold a conventional image. To illustrate, the meaning of the idiom *have a foot in the door* is motivated by the conventional image of a person selling things from door-to-door and blocking the door with a foot so it cannot be closed on him or her. The image above and the metaphor PROGRESS IS A FORWARD MOVEMENT IN SPACE that, according to Lakoff (1987), is intrinsic to our conceptual system, contribute to the activation of the idiom’s meaning. Thus, *having a foot in the door* is attempting to attract someone’s attention by violating someone else’s private space.

Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen (2005) address the issue of idiomatic imagery in line with the Humboldtian and, consequently, Neo-Humboldtian concept of “inner form” to take a cognitive semiotic stance as to the differentiation between a literal form and a figurative form of a linguistic unit. A figurative unit, thus, so Dobrovol’skij and Piirainen (2005: 17) claim, is a secondary sign given it “uses the content of another sign as a form filled with new content”. Furthermore, what the above researchers highlight is that from a cognitive perspective “motivation of an idiom influences its cognitive processing” (idem: 80). Motivation in their case may be *index-based*, whereby a motivating link cannot be traced neither by similarity nor by convention, but rather through a symptom; *iconic motivation*, which can be

interpreted through conceptual metaphor tools and through what the researchers refer to as the “rich image”; *symbol-based motivation* involves one single constituent that ensures coherence with akin cultural codes in a language. Special cases of motivation also include *stereotypes*, *kinegrams*, *punning clichés*, and *textual dependence* as well *blended types of motivation*.

For Langlotz, idiom motivation is a matter of how concrete relevant concept is. Hence, people are thought to recognize idioms as transparent by understanding the idiomatic meaning in relation to the literal meaning through the process of re-interpretation (Langlotz 2006: 51). Conceptual metaphors do hereby underlie the interpretation of idiom. Mappings between corresponding domains, however, can only be established in terms of encyclopaedic knowledge associated with the literal meaning.

Burger (2007), too, emphasizes the importance of what is literal and what is figurative when looking at idiom motivation. Based on what is posited as “semantic autonomy”, the researcher has arrived at the following semantically grounded classes of idioms: *idioms without semantically autonomous components*, *idioms with semantically autonomous components*, and *idioms with a single semantically autonomous component* (Burger 2007: 96). It follows that, as Burger himself acknowledges, the absence of semantically autonomous components leads to opacity or non-compositionality, like in *swallow the bitter pill*; several semantically autonomous components may render an idiom transparent, as in *carry coals to Newcastle*; one semantically autonomous component adds to the partial transparency of an idiom, as in *foot the bill*.

Naciscione’s research (2010) revolves around the question of the phraseological image feasibility in the visual representation of meaning. Again, so Naciscione maintains, it is metaphor that brings up an image in mind. As a result, “understanding the functional load of both visual image and language helps to bridge the cognitive gap between the textual and the visual, as they cannot be viewed separately” (idem: 29). One important concept, among other things, that was introduced by Naciscione in her research paper, is that of a “figurative network”. The figurative network can thus be loosely defined as an instantiation of metaphor combined with stylistic devices to facilitate phraseological image creativity in multimodal discourse.

Gibbs and Colston (2012) rest on an innovative “dynamical systems theory”, in an attempt to advance a “theoretical umbrella” to account for the plethora of approaches to figurative language research. Albeit focused on figurative language in the broadest possible sense, idioms are thereby described as “the only type of language that expresses meanings requiring additional pragmatic or extra-linguistic information” (idem: 50-51). Moreover, as Gibbs and Colston argue, idioms appear as analysable language units, whereby their individual parts make independent contributions to the meaning of the whole phrase, e.g., in *spill the beans*, the verb *spill* has the conventional meaning of ‘to suddenly reveal’, as encoded by English language dictionaries.

As an interim summary, we would like to agree with Burger (2007) as to who should recognize motivation: language users or researchers? It follows that in order to figure out motivation both experiment-based studies as well as corpus-based inquiries should be performed. It is at this point that we turn to its experimental and applied facets of idiom motivation.

From the point of view of language use, native speakers are seldom concerned with the literal background of idioms. They simply acquire them as pre-

fabricated chunks and produce accordingly. Again, the etymology of idioms, like *far cry from*, *cost an arm and a leg*, and *sit on the fence* is of a minor concern here. Psycholinguistics, however, does not see eye to eye on this.

Thus, L1 speakers and L2 (proficient) users of the language do not have to first retrieve the literal meaning and then activate the idiomatic meaning of a sequence (Conklin and Schmitt 2008; Siyanova-Chanturia 2015). Although formulaic language and idioms in particular may be gradable in terms of idiomaticity (Howarth 1998), context clues and analogy have been found the only expedient tools in native and near-native English language users when dealing with completely unknown idiomatic expressions ad hoc (Wray et al. 2016). Furthermore, when it comes to the semantic transparency of idioms, native (ESL/EFL teachers) and non-native speakers (EFL teachers) tend to assign different transparency ratings to the same idioms, as argued by Boers and Webb (2015). The results of this study stand in stark contrast to those presented in Skoufaki (2008), where L2 learners performed similarly to L1 learners on idiom transparency and analyzability tasks. Contextual clues, again, were found a prevalent source of assessing idioms' transparency. Moreover, context can help L2 learners suppress irrelevant meanings in idioms when they are embedded in figuratively biased sentences (Cieślicka 2011). These views, however, are not shared. Li (2012), for example, argues for the pedagogical implications of the conceptual metaphors and image schemas in learning idioms as opposed to the traditional context-based channel of learning idioms. As regards idiom comprehension and mental imagery production, adults tend to outperform school-age children in terms of processing the opaque idioms, such as *have a soft spot in one's heart*, contrary to the transparent ones, such as *go by the book*, yet children were found to produce a more consistent image of an idiom provided they understood its meaning correctly (Nippold et al. 2005).

On the other hand, what was briefly outlined as the euphonic instruments in phraseological units by Kunin (1978: 409-411), has now been upgraded to the concept of the phonological motivation of idioms and multi-word expressions. Hence, Boers and Lindstromberg (2009) claim that assonance (repetition of vowels), as in *white lie*, alliteration (first letter repetition), as in *cut the cackle, too good to be true*, and rhyming, as in *even Stephen, thrills and spills*, account for as much as around 20% of all 5,667 multi-words expressions listed in the *Macmillan English Dictionary*. Gries (2011), employing a usage-based approach, has found that alliteration in English idioms and multi-word units is a matter of a much more frequent occurrence than baseline expected frequencies. From the standpoint of the cognitive language pedagogy (Cieślicka 2010), phonological priming is relevant for the production of idioms by L2 speakers, as in *Jack kicked the bucket/budget* to validate the idea that literal analysis of an idiomatic string cannot be ignored in language production.

#### **4. Cognitive accounts of idioms: future perspectives**

There are several important strands that have emerged in this regard.

First and foremost, Priming Theory (Hoey 2005) has profoundly impinged upon the cognitive accounts of idioms. As proposed by Hoey (2005: 11), priming is a faculty of the mind to contain "a mental concordance of every word it has

encountered, a concordance that has been richly glossed for social, physical, discursal, generic and interpersonal context". On that account, according to a study done by Carrol and Conklin (2015), L1 English speakers tend to equally quickly read idioms in literal and figurative contexts, whereas L2 Chinese speakers will rather have an apparent difficulty to integrate figurative idioms into the general context. Priming Theory, in fact, is an important starting point to account for language construction and acquisition processes.

Dual-Coding Theory provides another crucial backdrop against cognitive studies of idiomatic expressions. Given the role mental imagery plays in the processing and production of idioms in L1 and L2 speakers, the dual coding theory of memory (Paivio 2014) postulates that items backed by dual representation are remembered with less effort, as opposed to those with a single representation in memory. In an effort to substantiate these underpinnings, Pritchett et al. (2016) have analysed the activation of two-word English and Russian idioms in bilingual individuals. Their findings are in agreement with the dual coding theory of memory and thus indicate that idioms with a dual mental representation are retrieved much faster than idioms with a single mental representation.

The applied linguistics dimension to teaching and remembering idioms is another area bedevilled by a growing number of approaches and models, yet lacking unified consistency. As shown in the previous subsection of the present paper, researchers are yet to find a common cognitive pedagogy venue to teaching idioms in accordance with the theoretical background, types of learners, L1 and L2 variables, the role of context, etc. Research has demonstrated that learners, especially adult learners, experience substantial difficulties in remembering and confident usage of English idioms (Wood 2015). Moreover, a lion's share of studies on idioms' acquisition have adopted a narrow, experimental, and outside-of-lesson approach, which tends to overlook actual classroom performance of students (Mcphehron and Randolph 2014).

Taking into account these caveats, it is worth projecting the coming research pathways in the area of idiomatic and, if viewed from a broader vantage point, multi-word expressions.

To begin with, professional communication and discourses is an area somewhat marginalized in the contemporary study of idioms and phraseology at large; however, studies by Fiedler (2010), Jaki (2014), etc. provide sufficient grounds to explore the cognitive underpinnings of courtroom interactions, doctor/nurse-patient communication, electronic media discourses, and financial reporting documents, to name a few.

Furthermore, as has been argued in the previous subsection, most studies on idiom acquisition focus on skills such as reading, speaking, and writing, leaving little space to the analysis of listening to language users.

Finally, conversation analysis and pragmatics allied with sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, cognitive linguistics, and linguistics proper, among other disciplines, can help phraseology provide evidence and answers on how we use the acquired idioms and multi-word expressions, to uncover the extent to which we succeed in using them in our social interactions across all levels of communication, and, last but not least, to contribute to the study of meaning in language by looking at how people say or do not say what they really mean evidenced from idioms in particular and formulaic language and phraseology in general.

## 5. Conclusion

To sum up, I would like to draw attention to the following points of discussion. In cognitive linguistics, idioms are still part of the far-reaching theories of Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Lakoff 1987) and figurative language (Gibbs and Colston 2012; Dancygier and Sweetser 2014; Colston 2015). Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 52), for example, refer to them as “speech formulas”, “fixed-form expressions”, “phrasal lexical items”, and it is only in his later monograph that Lakoff (1987: 448-453) himself makes reference to idioms proper, not providing a well-structured account of them. Nevertheless, when scrutinized against the Conceptual Metaphor theory, idioms, so Lakoff argues, can represent embodied experience, that is one can perceive a certain domain of experience through another domain.

Secondly, idiom’s motivation in cognitive linguistics has always been linked to its imageability, which can activate its meaning. Motivation of idioms has been frequently described as a relationship between its literal and figurative meanings, which sparked substantial interest as to the re-interpretation, analysability and transparency of idioms. It follows that motivation should be recognized by both language users and researchers. When language users come across an unknown idiom, so cognitive linguists maintain, they can turn to their conceptual knowledge in an attempt to interpret its actual meaning. On top of that, idiom transparency and analysability, paired with context clues, tend to be equally significant tools for language users in analysing and interpreting meanings of familiar and unfamiliar idiomatic expressions.

Thirdly and finally, phraseology and cognitive linguists have now obtained powerful allies in Priming Theory, Dual Coding Theory and Applied Linguistics, to push ahead with their quest for idioms’ meaning and interpretation, idioms’ acquisition and idioms usage by language speakers.

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**THE LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPE OF A SOUTHERN JORDANIAN  
CITY: EXPLORING SOCIOLINGUISTIC ASPECTS  
OF THE USE OF ENGLISH ON STOREFRONTS**

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***Abstract:** The article examines sociolinguistic aspects of the use of English on shopfronts in the linguistic landscape (LL) of Tafila, in Jordan. To attain this goal, a corpus of 143 signs on a wide range of shopfronts was gleaned from the LL, including food stores (e.g. supermarkets, butcher's shops, and grocery shops) and restaurants, mobile stores and bookshops, fashion stores, and others (commercial banks, pharmacies, and coffee shop corners). In addition, 25 interviews were conducted to identify the opinions and perceptions of Tafila Technical University English department students about the use of English in the LL of Tafila. The results indicate that English is not highly represented on shopfronts. This can be due to the economic, industrial, cultural, and educational marginalisation of the city. The same is true of the demographic structure of the population, which explains why English is minimally used on commercial signs.*

***Keywords:** Arabic, English, marginalisation, linguistic landscape, Tafila*

## **1. Introduction**

The article examines how and why visual English is not highly represented in the linguistic landscape (LL) of Tafila, using the LL as a methodological tool for understanding the dynamics that construct language use in such a city (Albury 2018: 2). In addition to reflecting the language policy of state-related agencies and commercial businesses, it also plays a vital role in providing information about the sociolinguistic context of a particular geographical area (see Gorter 2006). In this context, despite the fact that English is not as highly visible on signs as in other cities in the country, it is not only found “to create a cosmopolitan and modern association”, but it is also used to create connotations “with UK and US American influenced popular culture” (Kelly-Holmes 2005: 71, 73).

The current study examines English in the LL of Tafila city. Typically, LL is associated with “the language of public road signs, advertising billboards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings” (Landry, Bourhis 1997: 25). There are two main functions associated with LL studies: instrumental and symbolic (Hult 2009, 2014; Landry and Bourhis 1997; Yuan, 2019). The work of El-Yasin and Mahadin (1996) examines the pragmatics of shop signs in Jordan. Schlick (2003) studies English in commercial

life on storefronts in eight European city centres. Much more recently, Alomoush (2019) examines English in the LL of a northern Jordanian city, McKiernan (2019) studies how English is supported to thrive outside of the law in the LL of a Malaysian border town, Chen (2020) analyses English names of Taipei hotels, and Alomoush and Al-Naimat (2020: 102) investigate both Arabic and English in Jordanian shopping malls to assess the extent of sociolinguistic variation, and in order to identify “the social causes of the patterns of translingual and monolingual practices”.

Despite the fact that English is widely spread in many Jordanian LLs (Al-Naimat and Alomoush 2018; Alomoush and Al-Naimat, 2020), it has been noticed that English in the LL of Tafila is not highly visible as compared with other cities, such as Amman, Zarqa, and Aqaba. Hence, this article attempts to find answers to the low visibility of English on storefronts through LL quantitative data and non-traditional interviews and interactions with 24 Tafila Technical University English Department students.

## 2. Tafila in lines

Tafila is located in the southern part of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, about 180 kilometres away from the capital city. The governorate covers an area of 2,209 square kilometres. According to the last census in 2015, it has a population of about 100 thousand people, representing 1% of the total population of the kingdom; the population of Tafila governorate is distributed among 41 residential areas, the chief of which are the city of Tafila, Ein Al-Baydha, Al-Eis, Bsayra, and Al-Hisa. Some economic projects, particularly Dhana Nature Reserve and Tafila Technical University, were established to contribute to serving the local community.

Tafila is still regarded as one of the less privileged governorates in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Poverty, marginalisation and unemployment are problems facing the local community, so the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD) in the city are keen on meeting the needs of members of the local community through providing good education and helping them to learn and develop the skills essential to the proper functioning of their own lives.

Tafila is one of the smaller cities in Jordan that serves as a significant centre for ‘agricultural marketing’ (Shoup 2007: 4). The City’s economy is “dominated by agriculture and mining, with significant domestic, but not international, tourism”, where the flavour of rural life culture and activities are more dominant than the lifestyle of urbanised-industrial cosmopolitan cities (Alomoush and Al-Naimat, 2020). The city is not one of the main touristic destinations such as Jerash and Petra, so it rarely attracts tourists and business projects from outside Tafila; this is exemplified by the absence of luxurious hotels that attract many international and domestic tourists around the globe. As far as the economic activities in the governorate of Tafila are concerned, it does not have private commercial establishments with more than 250 workers (Jordanian Government 2013).

One of the problems facing the city is public transport, which may hinder the prosperity of domestic and international tourism, and consequently the development of the city. This is exemplified in the infrequency of public transport south of Qadsiyya (near Dhana) (see Bradley 2006). According to my fieldwork

observations and my own personal experience in the city, public transport, especially from Tafila to Amman and other cities near Amman, is one of the reasons that hinders the city from development.

### 3. Methodology

My research methodology is based on both quantitative and qualitative data: digital photographs, observational notes and interviews. In addition to street/site names and other state-related signs, the corpus of this study was gleaned from 143 signs on the fronts of food stores (e.g. supermarkets, butcher's shops, and grocery shops), restaurants, mobile stores and bookshops, fashion stores, and others (commercial banks, pharmacies, and coffee shop corners). Signs solely featuring international brand names, such as *Samsung* and *Huawei*, were excluded from the current study, but if they occurred within an English business name, they were considered as part of the English wording. Using a digital camera, we took cityscape photographs between December 2019 and January 2020. The two commercial main areas in Al-Eis and Tafila city centre were selected for examining the status of English in one of the least privileged cities and towns in Jordan. These two commercial areas are the most visited by Tafilians and people from outside the city, temporarily living in it for work or study, so a wide array of signs were found on the fronts of commercial businesses.

The second stage of data collection included 25 interviews with students from the Tafila Technical University English department. The interview data were collected from them in March 2020. The interviewees are male and female students of ages from 19 to 51, but most of them were in their early twenties. As far as their gender is concerned, they were 12 female and 12 male students, and one male tourist guide. I conducted different types of interviews, using non-traditional techniques, such as Google classroom platform, WhatsApp, and Gmail, as the outbreak of the coronavirus disease has made many governments around the globe, including the Jordanian government, close down universities, so face-to-face lecturing was replaced by online distance-learning.

The questionnaire designed was divided into three main sections. The first section was intended for collecting information about the students: occupation, age, and gender. The second section was mainly designed for the identification of the languages used by the students across a range of domains in and outside the city. Most importantly, the third section was aimed to elicit information about the LL of the city, with a view to understanding the reasons behind the low visibility of English in the visual marketplace of the city.

### 4. Quantitative data analysis

While reviewing state-related signs, the language policy is largely bilingual, in both Arabic and English, whereby the former represents the main medium communication of the country and the latter indexes the language of globalisation and communication with the world. The top-down LL of Tafila reveals, as Figure 1 shows, that Arabic and English are often used. The most commonly used linguistic pattern is Arabic-English-Romanised Arabic (3 signs, approximately 37% of all signs). Arabic-only signs constitute 24% of all signs (two out of eight signs).

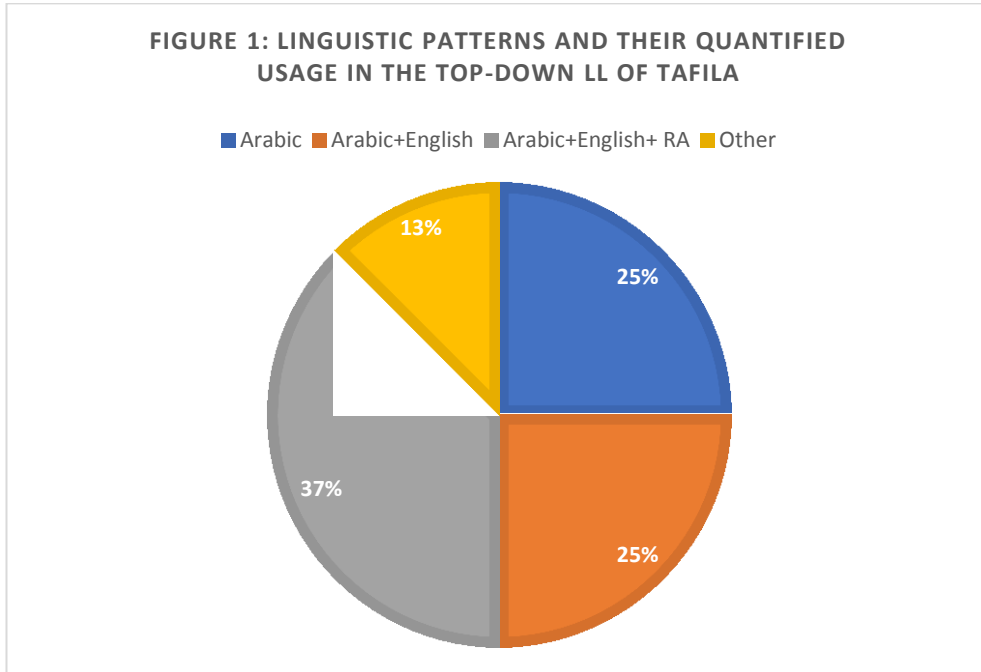


Figure 2. Tafila Technical University gate displaying both Arabic and English

In the bottom-down LL, as Table 1 shows, monolingual Arabic signs are largely the most visible ones, with an approximate percentage of 62.5 of all signs (85 out of 136), Arabic monolingual signs which include الراشد للاكسسوارات meaning ‘Alrashid For Accessories’ followed by elaborative information هدايا العاب meaning ‘ headscarfs, gifts, games, and Hijabs’, حلويات السفير meaning ‘Al-Safeer Sweets’, and شاورما ع كيفك meaning ‘As you like it Shawarma’ followed

by elaborative information شاورما دجاج برغر سندويشات عصائر meaning ‘shawarma, chicken, burger, sandwiches, and (soft) drinks’.

The visual visibility of English is only reserved to a limited number of signs.

Language	Food stores & restaurants	Mobile stores & Book shops	Fashion stores	Others	Total	%
Arabic	44	9	9	23	85	62.5
Arabic-RA	4	-	-	-	4	3
Arabic+English	5	4	7	9	25	18.4
Arabic+Arabicised English	2	-	-	-	2	1.5
Arabic+English-Romanised Arabic	3	2	-	2	7	5.1
Arabic+English+AE	1	-	2	-	3	2.2
Other	2	8	-	-	10	7.3
%						

As far as the bi-/multilingual practices enacted on shopfronts are concerned, the Arabic-English pattern is the most used combination on storefronts (25 out of 136 signs, approximately 18.4% ), as it appears on the storefronts of food stores and restaurants (5), mobile stores and book shops (4), fashion stores (7), and other stores (9) (see Figures 3 & 4).



Figure 3. A food store displaying English and Arabic



Figure 4. A fashion store featuring English in much larger font size

The Arabic+English- Romanised Arabic linguistic pattern is the second most used (7 out of 136, about 5.1 % of all signs), as shown in Figure 5. The remaining bi/multilingual patterns involve the use of mixed codes (Romanised Arabic and Arabicized English) alongside Arabic and/or English (See Figure 6).



Figure 5. A mobile store using The Arabic+English- Romanised Arabic linguistic pattern.





Figure 6. A newly established restaurant displaying AE in much larger font size

### 5. Attitudinal assessment of Tafila's commercial cityscape

In a response to the question whether English is widely used on shopfronts in the LL of Tafila, the vast majority of the interviewees gave a negative answer. Participant 25 elaborates on it, stating that:

I do not think so. I have been living at Tafila since I was born. I have only noticed the use of English on a few shop signs, especially on some fashion stores, where both English and Arabic are used for business naming, such as 'Jolly Chic' and 'Royal Home'. (Female student aged 20)

The explanations provided by many interviewees for the low visibility of English in the commercial cityscape include: (a) the low density of population in the city; the lack of high industrial and commercial activities as in other big cities; and a higher rate of English proficiency among the populations of other cities.

Participant 1 commented on why she thought that English was not so widely used as other big cities in Jordan:

I said no, because the area is not highly populated, so there are not many stores as in other cities such as Amman and Zarqa. In addition, many famous domestic brand names, such as Habibieh and Al-Najmeh are not available in the city. There is a store selling desserts called Al-Qaisar, but it is well-known that this store should sell pizza rather than sweets, as in other provincial cities in Jordan. It should be noted that English appears on 5 % of all signs in Tafila's commercial cityscape. (Female student aged 22)

According to Participant 6, the demographic structure and rural life of Tafilians may lead to the low visibility of English on shopfronts in the city:

In comparison with other cities, such as Amman and Zarqa, Tafila is relatively thinly populated, so we can notice that Tafilians do not belong to diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, which play a key role in the spread of any language or dialect other than the local ones. Most of the people living in the city are local residents who did not come from outside or from any other governorate in the country. One of the important reasons is that the demographic structure still maintains its rural life, which leads to resisting any change in its linguistic concepts that have been rooted in the lives of Tafilians for a long period of time (Male student aged 20).

According to many participants (e.g. participant 24 & 10), tourism is also one of the reasons that may determine commercial businesses to use English on shopfronts. Participant 10 commented on that:

I think that the use of English directly relates to the number of tourists. In other big cities, the number of tourists is much higher than in Tafila, so the high number of tourists in Amman, for example, significantly contributes to the higher visibility of English on shopfronts. (Male student aged 21)

Some participants (13 & 14) refer to other reasons: the distance from the capital city and lack of job opportunities in the city, as opposed to other cities in northern Jordan. Participant 17 thinks that the government do not offer proper educational services, as provided in other cities:

I think that we cannot compare the LLs of Amman and Zarqa with that of Tafila. The government takes much more care of Amman and Zarqa than of Tafila in the domain of education. Other things to blame are the local culture and the cultural diversity that exists in big cities, as opposed to Tafila. (Male student aged 22)

It can be assumed that the low visibility of English in the city is a direct result of the marginalisation of the city at economic, industrial, cultural, and educational levels. The demographic structure of the population may also explain why English is minimally used on commercial signs.

## 6. Conclusion

The quantitative results indicate that visual English is infrequently used on food stores, only sometimes on mobile store fronts, and to a small degree on fashion stores and other establishments. The use of English on shop signs is so significant that some sign initiators in the city have included the most dominant language in the world on their storefronts as a means of publicising their businesses and building up a considerable size of clientele; however, many businesses, as Table 1 shows, have used Arabic much oftener than English.

“The minimal display of English is linked to less modernity in the cities (Ma’an and Tafila) and the relative absence of non-Arabic speaking citizens”; this seems to be one of the reasons behind the low visibility of English inside shopping malls (Alomoush, Al-Naimat 2020: 113), but there are other reasons related to the non-mobile LL of the city, as displayed in the different types of interviews conducted.

It seems that the people living in the province of Tafila remain relatively disadvantaged in their access to public transport, employment opportunities, and

education, which explains why English is minimally displayed on its shopfronts. The improvement of facilities in the city (e.g. better intercity public transportation) would increase the chances of more cultural diversity; the same is true of tourism that functions as one of the major drivers of the local economy of urban environments, where it maximises the visibility of foreign languages, especially English (cf. Du Plessis 2010: 9).

Based on what has been established so far, the area of Tafila has a low degree of visual multilingualism, and consequently a low level of multilingual vitality. This sharply contrasts with the LL of visual touristic Jordan, where “tourism industry has turned the city into a multilingual and multicultural urban centre”. (Al-Naimat, Alomoush 2018: 3).

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## INSIGHTS INTO LANGUAGE DIVERSITY IN BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

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**Abstract:** *The paper focuses on language variety in cross-cultural business contexts. It analyzes different speech patterns which reveal disparities between linguistic styles and shape divergent profiles. The first part discusses language features of high- and low-context communication, as well as the biased attitudes arising in cross-cultural exchanges. The second part concentrates on language as a vehicle for expressing gender distinctions, providing a useful radiography of men's and women's modes of discourse.*

**Keywords:** *business exchanges, gender/register distinctions, high- and low-context communication, language variation, linguistic styles*

### 1. Introduction

Numerous research studies show that communicators with excellent verbal skills know how to give their words added impact and turn verbal communication into persuasive communication. Their talk consists of positive elements (affirmative and assertive language, the language of integrity, etc.) which make them credible and competent persuaders, capable of presenting their ideas through an infinite choice of word combinations. For them communication is not simply talking, but talking emphatically, decisively, and always focusing on the listener's perspective.

Linguistically, words like *profit, money, benefit, easy, new* display different meanings according to the interest that one takes in something. Semantically, the injection of such attention-grabbing words into one's speech, especially in a proposal or a presentation, is likely to suggest power and potency, confidence and comfort.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, words spark off emotional meanings and reactions, affecting our minds, and changing our moods and feelings. Research psychologists confirm that the conscious choice of certain emotionally suggestive words, whose meanings are left to the listeners' imagination, affects the moods and attitudes of the latter. The emotional (vivid) message they carry behind their dictionary definitions influences quicker behaviour change than logic can do:

As rational human beings, we like to think that logic drives most of our decisions. But the fact is, in most persuasive situations, people buy on emotion and justify with fact. People may be persuaded by reason, but they are moved by emotion. (Mills 2000: 106)

Specific social factors like class and gender play an essential role in language variation and social interaction. They trigger differences in vocabulary, pronunciation and the use of grammar. For the lower and working class, 'Liverpool English' is the most frequently used accent, people pronouncing *bewk* (for *book*), or *tuck* (for *took*) and *luck* (for *look*); similarly, the *Cockney* accent is easily recognized by the change of the interdental [ð], [θ] sounds into the labio-dentals [v] or [f], as in [brʌvə] for brother, [fi:f] for *thief*, or [fɪŋk] instead of *think*:

I'm *thinking* about how the *thief* was caught with his hands in the till.

becomes

I'm *finkin'* about how the *fief* was caught with his hands in the till.

For the upper-classes, words or phrases such as *reckon*, *afeared*, *booze*, (*I'm done*, *Hey*, *Can I get*, *Eatery*, *Lounge*, *Deliveroo*, *Uber*, (*Do you get (me)?*), *Uni* (Hanson 2017a, b) are considered incorrect (no-no words), colloquial slang and a reflection of low class status. Instead, in virtue of their etiquette standards, 'uppers' prefer the terms *suppose*, *afraid*, *alcohol*, (*I'm finished*, *Hello*, *May I have*, *Restaurant*, *Sitting Room*, *Takeaway*, *Taxi*, (*Do you understand (me)?*), *University*.

## 2. Language between high- and low-context communication

Language variety is easily noticed in speech patterns within the same speech community. Variations in vocabulary for men and women are best reflected in doublets (word pairs) with similar meanings, but different forms, one female word and one male word. Being articulated or tongue-tied, rambling or coherent, responsive or inhibited, eloquent or hesitant coupled with fluency in the language, an extensive vocabulary, grammar accuracy, listening abilities, or an awareness of body language - all highly depend on the level of formality/informality and direct/indirect forms of communication between speakers. This is reflected in Edward Hall's (1976) classification of cultural dimensions as *high-context* and *low-context*.

For high-context cultures like those in China, Japan, Arabia, Korea, Greece, Mexico or Vietnam, the communication channel, with all its variables, i.e. setting, body language, group harmony, ranks as a primary value, while words rank second. A person who enjoys a high official status and reputation may have the final say in a decision-making process, adding considerable weight to his/her arguments.

By way of contrast, North America and European countries, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Great Britain, reflect a different linguistic style, more direct and informal, characterizing a low-context culture, based on the power of spoken and written words to convey meaning, while aspects such as body language and official titles come second. Influenced by Edward Hall's work, Dulek et al. (1991) also agree on the existence of a bipolar cultural context, with high group consensus and conciliation rankings, based on trust, cooperative behaviour, and relationship-oriented styles (with China and Japan topping the list) on the one hand, and of cultures relying on direct information exchange and a highly individualistic style, based on adversarial, argumentative, task-oriented approach (with England, Germany, Switzerland ending the list), on the other.

This cross-cultural representation, whose in-depth knowledge crashes the barriers of communication, seems to be supported by Robbins (2005), who remarks that:

Oral agreements imply strong commitments in high-context cultures [...] But in low-context cultures, enforceable contracts will tend to be in writing, precisely worded, and highly legalistic. Similarly, low-context cultures value directness. Managers are expected to be explicit and precise in conveying intended meaning. It's quite different in high-context cultures, where managers tend to make suggestions rather than give orders. (Robbins 2005:151)

In the triarchic theory launched by O'Hara-Devereaux and Johansen (1994) and Harris and Moran (1991), cross-cultural differences fall into three groups: "high", "low", and an intermediate category, which they call "middle", encompassing cultures like the Spanish, Italian, French, French Canadian ones. However, the advantages of a bipolar cultural dimension (*high-to-low*) over a triarchic categorization (*high-middle-low*) result in a better evaluation of the masculine / feminine, individualist / collectivist, short-term / long-term constructs (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005; House et al. 2004). For example, the language of *masculine* business cultures (German, Dutch, Australian, British, Canadian, US American) abounds in self-assertive / self-reliant phrases with individualistic tendencies like:

The ball is in your court. You know what to do from now on.  
Do your own thing. Call a spade a spade. (speak plainly and directly)  
Look out for yourself; no one else will.  
Keep an eagle-eye on things.

The *masculinity / individualist index* includes expressions which refer to earnings, social and professional status, recognition, or career advancement.

Thus, individualism proponents value self-interest as their only goal and are familiarized with *calling the shots* (be in a position of authority, give orders and make decisions), *gaining ground* (get an advantage and become more successful), *being a leading light* (a very respected person who leads an organization, is an important member of a group, or is important in a particular area of knowledge or activity), or *making a killing* (making a lot of money in a short time, with little effort).

This index measures the extent to which language mirrors a culture's value ("individualism") reflected in the number of words compounded with "self-", including *self-centered*, *self-esteem*, *self-confident*, *self-appointed*, *self-supporting*, *self-maximization*.

However, it has been shown that high-context cultures (Japanese, mainly) do not see with good eyes the excessive care for one's happiness and independence in the cultures where the individual is more predominant than the group and the "I" always comes before the "we":

In the United States, individual happiness is the highest good; in such group-oriented cultures as Japan, people strive for the good of the larger group such as the family, the community, or the whole society. Rather than stressing individual happiness, the Japanese are more concerned with justice (for group members) and righteousness (by group members). (Ferraro 2006: 58-59)

The *femininity index* is typically concerned with the emphasis on group consciousness, conciliatory language, cooperation, conformity, and employment security. Collectivistic countries (China, Japan, Iran, Irak, African nations) place the welfare of the group as a top priority: people value ambition, modesty, and work *all and sundry* (every person without exception). The higher levels of

management are male dominated. Some key differences between the various cultural mindsets are clearly noticed in the contrasts of the cultural values priorities (Foster 1992; Elashmawi and Harris 1998; Harris et al. 2004; Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). The Japanese culture has always placed importance on indirectness and the 'go-between' style, whereas people in the United States "put their cards on the table", giving importance to directness and informality: "What's the bottom line?" or "What's in it for me?" As Chaney and Martin (2007: 52) remark, "They are less concerned than people in Asia with saving face". By opposing group and individual orientations, we can take under the lens comparative negotiation and protocol styles and characteristics whose elements point out opposing cultural traits and role behaviour (Ruch 1989; Leaptrott 1996; Elashmawi and Harris 1998; Simintiras and Thomas 1998).

To my mind, there should be clear-cut distinctions between the different types and styles of collective, tribal, and pluralist cultures:

1. Establish rapport → short period (US Americans) / long period (Japanese);
2. Persuasion tools → time pressure (US) / intergroup connections and go-between + hospitality (Japanese);
3. Use of language → open and direct (US) / indirect, appreciative and cooperative (Japanese);
4. Traits respected → personal achievement, status (United States, Great Britain, France) / strength with humility, cunning, cleverness (Japanese, Chinese, African, Indian, Greek, Spanish, Indonesian);
5. Business environment → layered hierarchy, best spaces for top managers (United States, Great Britain, France) / strong vertical hierarchy, open offices for lower levels, shared power (Japanese, Chinese, African, Indian, Greek, Spanish, Indonesian);
6. Conduct business → direct, formal relationships with strangers, multiple correspondence (United States, Great Britain, France) / must control, divided responsibilities, ritual is important, open, shared correspondence (Japanese, Chinese, African, Indian, Greek, Spanish, Indonesian).

It goes without saying that business affairs (negotiating strategies, signing/agreeing contracts) are looked on favourably in group-oriented cultures which believe in win-win negotiations and see contracts as flexible, whereas individualistic societies tend to view them as rigid, stringent legal documents.

### **3. Power, linguistic, gender and register differences**

Differences in linguistic styles (Black and Gregersen 1999) make communication plagued with misinterpretations. The different mindsets of business people magnify miscommunication, resulting in different grammatical, vocabulary and syntactic structures. It has often been argued that communication plagues, as well as the negative verbal messages, are rooted in the inability to accept and adapt to differences. Ferraro (2006) believes in the power of a 'cautious approach' to the different communication patterns, and recommends that a closer attention be paid to relations of power, depending on the social context and the linguistic background:

In the US effective verbal communication is expected to be explicit, direct, and unambiguous. A great emphasis is placed on using words powerfully and



accurately. Communication patterns in some other cultures are considerably more ambiguous, inexact, and implicit. In some Eastern cultures, such as Japan and China, where there is less emphasis on words, people tend to derive more meanings from nonverbal cues and the general social context. It is not that words are unimportant in Eastern cultures, but rather that the words are inseparably interrelated to social relationships, politics, and morality. (Ferraro 2006: 60)

Cultures which choose to have a tough image in business life sustain the explicit articulation of words (ideas) rather than give people 'the benefit of the doubt'. In the 'in your face' territory, they play outright hostility and use explicit communication styles which enhance the speaker's individuality; their words are associated with idiomatic phrases such as *play your cards right*, *put your cards on the table*, *play hardball*, *drive a hard bargain*, *get to the point*, *get down to brass tacks*, and avoid *taking you for a ride*, *beating around the bush*, or *getting bogged down in details*.

This precise and straightforward style, commonly considered aggressive, rude and insensitive, opposes the 'benefit of the doubt' language, which responds with modesty, courtesy and politeness.

Linguistically, the Japanese are reported to use more passive or indirect constructions ("It is said that...", "Some people think that...") with the intention of avoiding controversial issues and promoting harmony, unlike their American / European counterparts, for whom pitching high voice at the slightest provocation is a sign of asserting one's eloquence:

How language is used in Japan and the United States reflects and reinforces the value of group consciousness in Japan and individualism in the United States [...]. If Japanese must disagree, it is usually done gently and very indirectly by using passive expressions. This type of linguistic construction enables one to express an opinion without having to be responsible for it in the event that others in the group might disagree. (Ferraro 2006: 59)

Another linguistic difference is caused by gender, to the extent to which men and women use different modes of discourse. Women's discourse strives for 'rapport talk', one commonplace occurrence being verbal hedges (*I feel*, *I guess*, *I think*) smoothing over disagreements, intensifying adverbs (boosters) like *slightly*, *somewhat*, *pretty*, *rather* or content disjuncts (of possibility - *perhaps*, *possibly*, of certainty - *quite rightly*), with the role of softening and tempering the directness of statements:

These disjuncts comment on the truth value of what is said, firmly endorsing it, expressing doubt, or posing contingencies such as conditions or reasons. (Greenbaum, Quirk 1990: 183)

Following the Danish linguist Otto Jespersen's (1922) research on the vocabulary choices used by men and women, I am of the opinion that certain categories of words appear more frequently in women's speech. Women resort to modifiers (adjectives, adverbs) → *well*, *a bit*, *perhaps*, and intensifiers → *so*, *very*, *quite*, *extremely* to make their claims more polite, put out fires and respond to challenges in a more tentative way. For example,

- *Perhaps* we *could* try asking for the price of the product back and claim compensation.
- I've been *sort of wondering whether* / *I wondered whether perhaps* you should solve the matter amicably with your partner and abandon the project for now.
- *Well*, I guess it's *approximately* / *roughly* one quarter of the annual consumption.

Emotive emphasis in women's speech spawns a number of degree adverbs with great emotive force: *very* + *adj./+ adv.*; *terrific*, *tremendous*, *terribly*, *awfully*:

Many degree adverbs and other degree expressions intensify the meaning of the word they modify. In familiar speech, some adjectives and adverbs have little meaning apart from their emotive force. (Leech, Svartvik 2002: 161)

Women prefer using emphatic equivalents of *good* and *nice*:

That's a *great* idea. All those in favour raise your hands.  
It's a *fantastic* team. We *very much* enjoy working together.

Other sentence adverbials in the female register are part of the conveyance of meaning: *definitely*, *fortunately*, *luckily*, *naturally*, *preferably*, *really*, *truly* (with emphatic effect):

The key *really* lies in the achievements of their performance.  
It was *truly* a memorable teambuilding event.  
We *definitely* promise to restore the company to its former glory.  
*Fortunately*, it's good knowing what effect a favorable balance of trade will have on the strength of the economy.  
The shipping documents should be signed, *hopefully* by the end of the week.

Women's tendencies towards waffling fill their speech with non-assertiveness, timidity, uncertainty and a lack of confidence. Thus, instead of saying:

Well, it's only an opinion, of course, I could be wrong...; I would say...(non-assertive).

They should say:

I believe...; I consider...; I think... (assertive).

Instead of saying:

I guess the company will *probably* plan to establish a network of warehouses.  
*Hopefully*, this will extend its operations in new directions. (waffle)

They should say:

The company is going to establish the network of warehouses soon. I know this will extend its operations in new directions. (straight / decisive talk, confidence, credibility)

*Very* is used as a degree word with an intensifying effect when it precedes the superlative *best* (e.g. We recommend our *very best* salesperson for this promotion.), as a modifier with the adverbial *much* in mid-position (e.g. I *very much* believe that profits will double), or end-position (e.g. I admired his work in the campaign *very much*), as well as with scale / limit words (e.g., *very bad / annoyed / exhausted / infuriated / tired*). Fillers (*umm, mhm, well, yes, yhuh, I see*), tag questions (e.g., *don't you think?*), hedges and qualifiers (e.g., *sort of, kind of, bit of*), discourse markers (*I mean, you see, as you see, I suppose, I'm afraid, ...I believe, ..., To be frank, so to say, so to speak, what's more likely, to be honest, you know, you bet*), intensifiers (e.g., *so, extremely, absolutely, rather*), expressive ("empty") adjectives (e.g., *fantastic, wonderful, cute, nice, weird*), and politeness formulas (e.g., *please, thank you very much, that's very kind of you, excuse me, Can I...?, Shall I...?*) further complicate women's talk. Their excitement as they keep the conversation going is also characterized by expressions like *you know, erm you know, I mean*, which try to gain understanding and sympathy, and verbal feedback through *yes, yes I felt that..., yes* (laughs), *mm* which show interest, and support the interlocutor. Women don't necessarily plead for power talking, but rather for smooth conversation in which turn-talking means sharing, cooperation and harmony. (Leech and Svartvik 2002; Bonvillain 2003)

As we recall, it was Otto Jespersen (1922) who first analyzed women's tendency to exaggerate, followed by Bonvillain (2003), 80 years later, who shared Jespersen's opinion, commenting on the underlying cultural biases that interpret women's behaviour in negative terms:

Women are free to use intensifiers and modifiers because society allows them to display emotion. Men are expected to control their feelings and, therefore, to refrain from using words that have marked emotional expressiveness". (Bonvillain 2003: 194)

Be they hedges or intensifiers, expressive adjectives or modifiers, these constructions are considered devoid of meaning, a sign of linguistic superficiality, and function

to signal a speaker's uncertainty about the validity of her statement, an impression of indecisiveness and lack of clarity. Use of hedge words reflects social inhibitions. Because females are socialized to defer to others and avoid conflict, they choose to state opinions interspersed with hedges to minimize confrontation with an addressee who may hold a different view. (Bonvillain 2003: 194-195)

Men's discourse is centred more on "report talk", concentrated on the topics under discussion rather than on active listening (Tannen 2001).

I also consider that women use more polite stylistic devices in comparison with men, their conversations are question oriented and seek for positive responses, and their interaction strategies are conciliatory, allowing interruptions. The modes of men's speech are incongruent with the communication patterns of women linguistic behaviour. Men are more reluctant to encourage another's speaking turn, do not shrink from making criticism, make direct assertions and like to dominate. Men's behaviour reflects a powerful identity, whereas women's behaviour is trivialized as being emotional, and deferential (Maltz and Borker 1982; Tannen 1986, 1991; Uchida 1992; Kiesling 1997).

In terms of linguistic variation and class-based codes, the upper-class, middle-class and lower-class features reinforce class differences. Central to the focus of many class-based oriented studies are the linguistic codes provided by Bernstein (1971). As the researcher explains, middle-class speech is characterized by the use of an 'elaborated' code ('universalistic' meanings), the use of nouns, adjectives, and verbs having explicit referents, whereas working-class style develops a 'restricted' code ('particularistic' meanings) by use of context-related words (Bernstein 1971: 175 qtd. in Bonvillain 2003: 157).

#### 4. Conclusion

Even under the best of conditions, learning to communicate effectively in a second culture takes a purposeful effort. This is mostly evident in encounters between unequals like high-context culture members and low-context culture members, where a selection of various linguistic devices are made and different patterns of thought are developed.

The various business cultural orientations discussed in this article are neither good nor bad. Rather, they should be viewed as a way of better understanding the cultural-based and gender-based traits of others, as well as our own.

Firstly, we cannot afford to ignore the influence of cultural differences on the negotiation process, for instance. By combining the cultural and gender differences explored in the paper, one can easily develop negotiating strategies, and avoid biased attitudes that arise in cross-cultural exchanges. Interpreting low or high context nuances in speech provides a useful radiography of the communication patterns of different cultures. An awareness of the differences in thought patterns is also essential for face-to-face business encounters, otherwise one may risk paying an expensive "bill" for cross cultural business blunders.

Secondly, language is a vehicle for expressing gender distinctions. Differences between male and female registers show up in conversational style and linguistic structure. Studies have shown that men's tendency is to assert positions of dominance, to be in control of conversation, think and behave rationally, whereas women's linguistic style is characterized by unassertive, emotional, mitigated speech, in deference to the addressee. This linguistic "insecurity" stems from careful speech, the use of softening devices, such as hedges, boosters, or tag questions to temper the directness of statements.

To sum up, linguistic similarities are likely to reflect social solidarity, whereas linguistic divergence and the different mindsets of business people are often problematic, reinforcing segmentation and magnifying miscommunication. Viewed as such, these dichotomies should be seen in the dynamics of communicative interactions based on the speakers' goals and the relationships between interlocutors.

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## SORTING THROUGH “NEW AND IMPROVED” VERSIONS OF J. K. ROWLING’S *SORTING HAT*

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***Abstract:** Starting from Pym’s (2004) notion of translational progress in retranslation, the present paper will compare various versions of a well-known children’s poem from J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. One of the tools I employ in this kind of evaluative endeavour is Delabastita’s (1993) slightly revised model of pun translation.*

***Keywords:** ambiguity, idioms, puns, retranslation*

### 1. Introduction: retranslation

“Ye’re a wizard, Harry!” is what Hagrid tells Harry Potter in the first book of the famous *Harry Potter* heptalogy and, reading these words, the translator realizes that he has his work cut out for him. Register shifts and all kinds of wordplay seem to be the hard nuts to crack when translating these books and, as implied by Davies (2003), the translator must himself do a wizard’s work when attempting to tackle culture specific items in the books of J. K. Rowling. But can good translational wizardry be evaluated properly? The present paper takes a stab at answering this question by looking at three versions of the *Song of the Sorting Hat* in the first book of the heptalogy.

The existence of more than one version of a source text raises the question of retranslation. Dealing with retranslation – or to use Pym’s term, “multiple presentation” – might be done by considering the two approaches proposed by Pym (2004) himself: either the first version (let us call it TT1, i.e. the first target text) is seen as a genuine “pseudo-original”, a reference point for all versions to come, or TT1 is just an imperfect first attempt and all subsequent versions appear as further attempts to improve upon it:

- (1) Pym’s (2004) model applied to retranslation

TT1 = pseudo-original	TT1 = inferior version
TT1 > TT2, TT3... TT 100	TT1 < TT2 < TT3 ...< TT100

The “pseudo-original” approach treats the first version as an almost sacred text, a text that can never be surpassed by any other variant, whereas the second approach, i.e. the “translational progress” approach, looks upon the first version as a mere

first go at the source text, whose success can never be equal to that of the versions to come. This paper aims at checking the validity of the two approaches by establishing some criteria of evaluation that might shed light on this matter. My intuition is that the two approaches are not necessarily opposites especially when it comes down to children's literature, because a first version, no matter how imperfect, might always remain the favourite one, as it will always have emotional capital for the reader. On the other hand, translational progress seems to be a vague notion. What counts as criteria in measuring progress in a translation? How does one evaluate worth in a translation? These are all questions to ponder.

## 2. Transcreation and pun translation

I have chosen J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* as the source for the corpus of my paper not just because of its genre and style, but also because the book has already been translated into Romanian twice and because the history of its Romanian versions is intriguing: while the first version of the books was signed in 2001 by a teenager (Ioana Iepureanu), who grew up while the books were being written and who translated them as soon as they were published, the second version was produced much later (2018) and was signed by a coordinated group of established translators (Florin Bican translated the first book), who had the privilege of having read all the books in the heptalogy. By that moment, the *Harry Potter* series had already become a world-wide phenomenon, already a classic in children's/young adult literature. The second version appeared as a natural, necessary recalculation of the original.

Of the first book in the series, my interest was kindled by *The Sorting Hat Song*, as it seems to embody all the features that define the *Harry Potter* books: it is full of wit, it has musicality, it is funny, it alternates the informal register with the formal one, and, most importantly, the informal tone is associated with the use of idioms, so as to create puns that serve as reinforcement for the message conveyed by the song. All these features pose serious problems to a translator and I believe that they can be taken as starting points for establishing a set of criteria that might help one perform a (re)evaluation of the existing target texts.

Moreover, translating children's literature involves more than rendering a text from one language into another, since a lot of other factors need to be taken into consideration. The term *transcreation* has been lately used to refer to the translation of text, image, and sound of a children's book into a target language. If creative wordplay and assonance or alliteration are involved, straightforward translation is out of the question. One needs to "transcreate" the text, i.e. to translate, adapt and transform it for the young readers, especially when this text is a cultural phenomenon as is the case of the *Harry Potter* series:

When you are a global brand, translation isn't enough. You need to make sure you speak to your audience using the right cultural nuances too. We call this dual focus 'transcreation'. The idea of 'branded translation' or 'transcreation' involves changing both words and meaning of the original copy while keeping the attitude and the desired persuasive effect. (Pedersen 2014: 69)

*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* fully qualifies as a text that needs to be not just translated but "transcreated", since, as observed by Gustavsson Kralik (2014), this first book of the heptalogy is the one most likely to be read



aloud and was initially meant to be read by/to 10-year olds. When discussing evaluating criteria for several target texts, I believe that the technique of transcreation should definitely be considered.

Last, but not least, since *The Sorting Hat Song* contains a whole range of puns created by instances of idioms reinterpretable as literal phrases, Delabastita's (1993) model of pun translation should also be taken into consideration. Here is my own take of Delabastita's pun translation model: a) equivalence (pun - pun) b) paraphrase or omission (pun - non-pun) c) compensation in kind (pun - punoid) d) compensation in place (non-pun - pun) e) direct copy f) transference (calque) g) editorial techniques.

Below one can find a selection of fragments from the *Sorting Hat Song*, where I have underlined the idioms turned puns:

(2)

<p>“Oh, you may not think I’m pretty, But don’t judge on what you see, I’ll <u>eat myself</u> if you can find A <u>smarter</u> hat than me. You can keep your bowlers black, Your top hats sleek and tall, For I’m the Hogwarts Sorting Hat And I can <u>cap them all</u>. There’s nothing hidden in your head The Sorting Hat can’t see, So try me on and I will tell you Where you ought to be.[...] So put me on! Don’t be afraid! And <u>don’t get in a flap!</u> <u>You’re in safe hands</u> (though I have none) For I’m a <i>Thinking Cap!</i>”</p>	<p><b>eat (one’s) hat</b> A humorous action that one will allegedly take if something very unlikely happens.</p> <p><b>smart</b> stylish or elegant in dress or appearance</p> <p><b>cap something</b> (<i>British English</i>) [<i>informal</i>] to outdo; excel</p> <p>Someone who <b>is in a flap</b> is in a state of great excitement, worry, or panic. [<i>informal</i>]</p> <p><b>To put on one’s thinking cap</b> (<i>British English</i>) [<i>informal</i>] to ponder a matter or a problem</p>
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On the right column of the table under (2) a brief explanation of the idioms employed by the author in the poem is given. As repeatedly underlined in the literature, an idiom is a fixed expression with a non-compositional meaning (Moon 1998, Ashby 2006), i.e. a fixed expression whose overall meaning cannot be computed, or composed out of the individual meaning of its parts. Because idioms are semantically opaque, their meaning can be learned from a dictionary entry. There are, of course, degrees of opacity. One idiom might be more opaque than the other. Compare, for instance, “eat one’s hat” to “put on one’s thinking cap”. While the former is pretty opaque and only the use of dictionary or larger context might help retrieve its meaning, the latter is easier to decode, even in isolation. This particular feature of idioms makes them as a class of linguistic items that are difficult to acquire by language learners and difficult to render in translation (Baker 2011). The fact that Rowling employs so many such idioms in her books is one of the reasons why their translation might prove difficult. To complicate matters, the idioms underlined in the *Sorting Hat* poem under (2) are used with a double meaning. In this text, the underlined phrases are characterized by what Van Lancker and Canter (1981) have so aptly dubbed “ditropic ambiguity”: the phrases

preserve their non-compositional (opaque) meaning, but are re-invested with compositionality (i.e. they can also be read literally, thus becoming transparent). This superimposition of meanings (compositional and non-compositional) results in a special category of puns.

The translation of this particular poem can, thus, be seen as a real challenge, since an accurate rendition into a target language will have to attempt to capture both the register and the playfulness of the source language. In this text, the use of puns has a clearly defined role: the Sorting Hat is not so much a braggart as a persuader. It needs to convince the children to try it on, so as to perform its duty of distributing each child into the house that best fits his/her personality. Thus, the use of puns in this text has both a rhetorical and a pragmatic function. It is part of the linguistic strategy employed by the Sorting Hat in its desire to fulfill its magic duty. It goes without saying that a good translator will have to find solutions and, hopefully, accommodate the puns into the target text s/he will produce.

So far, I have established that there are at least three important features that the source text has: first and foremost, the poem is extremely musical and its short verse and rhyme need to be preserved. Secondly, there is a clash between the informality of the beginning and the end of the poem, which comes in opposition with the middle of the poem (omitted here). Last but not least, the jocular tone and the rhetoric of the text are reinforced by the use of puns. Let us peruse the versions provided in the tables below and assess the degree of success with respect to these three features:

(3)

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 1 (TT1)	BACK TRANSLATION FOR TT1
THE SORTING HAT	JOBENUL DE SORTARE	THE SORTING TOP HAT
<p>“Oh, you may not think I’m pretty, But don’t judge on what you see, I’ll <u>eat myself</u> if you can find A <u>smarter</u> hat than me. You can keep your bowlers black, Your top hats sleek and tall, For I’m the Hogwarts Sorting Hat And I can <u>cap them all</u>.</p> <p>There’s nothing hidden in your head The Sorting Hat can’t see,</p>	<p>S-ar putea să nu fiu deloc arătos, Dar nu vă încredeți în ce vedeți, Vă promit să dispar din lume, De-ntâlniți unul mai isteț ca mine! Eu sunt faimosul joben de sortare În case, la școala faimoasă, Și, vai, cum întrec în splendoare O pălărie, mult prea frumoasă! N-aveți nimic în cap, cum bine se vede, Istețul joben de sortare o știe prea bine,</p>	<p>I might not be good-looking at all, But do not trust what you see, I promise to disappear from this world, If you meet anyone more intelligent than me! I am the famous sorting top hat In houses, at the famous school, And, wow, how I surpass in splendor A hat, much too pretty! You’ve got nothing in your heads, it’s obvious, The intelligent sorting top hat knows it well,</p>

<p>So try me on and I will tell you Where you ought to be.[...]</p> <p>So put me on! Don't be afraid! And <u>don't get in a flap!</u> <u>You're in safe hands</u> (though I have none) For I'm a <i>Thinking Cap!</i>"</p>	<p>Hai, încercați-mă toți, cât mai repede, În ce case veți fi, să vă zic, în fine. [...] Încercați-mă, nu vă temeți, Și de mine nu vă feriți, Căci eu, oricine și orice ar zice, Gândesc și sortez bine, amice!</p> <p>(Translated by Ioana Iepureanu, 2001, Editura Egmont)</p>	<p>Come on, all of you, try me on as soon as possible I'll finally tell you in what houses you'll be. [...] Try me on, don't be afraid, And don't avoid me, For, no matter what anyone would say, I think and I sort well, my friend!</p>
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## (4)

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 2 (TT2)	BACK TRANSLATION FOR TT2
<p>THE SORTING HAT</p> <p>"Oh, you may not think I'm pretty, But don't judge on what you see, I'll <u>eat myself</u> if you can find A <u>smarter</u> hat than me. You can keep your bowlers black, Your top hats sleek and tall, For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat And I can <u>cap them all</u>. There's nothing hidden in your head The Sorting Hat can't see,</p> <p>So try me on and I will tell you Where you ought to be.[...]</p> <p>So put me on! Don't be afraid! And <u>don't get in a flap!</u> <u>You're in safe hands</u> (though I have none) For I'm a <i>Thinking Cap!</i>"</p>	<p>PĂLĂRIA DE SELECȚIE</p> <p>Poate nu par prea frumoasă Dacă mă judeci după față,</p> <p>Dar <u>mă înghit</u> dacă găsești O pălărie mai isteată. Nu-s un joben înalt, lucios, Nici o gambetă tuciurie, Da'n Hogwarts eu repartizez: Sunt cea mai <u>tare</u> pălărie! Nimic nu poți, oricât ai vrea, În capul tău s-ascunzi de mine.</p> <p>Probează-mă și am să-ți spun Cărui cămin vei aparține.</p> <p>[...] Curaj! Hai, nu te mai codi, Mă pune-acum pe scăfărlie <u>Ești pe mâini bune</u> (deși n-am), Căci sunt o super pălărie.</p> <p>(Translated by Florin Bican, 2018, Editura Arthur)</p>	<p>THE SORTING HAT</p> <p>I might not look too pretty If you judge me by my appearance, But I'll swallow myself if you find A more intelligent hat than me. I am not a glossy top hat, Nor am I a black bowler, But in Hogwarts I call the shots: I am the toughest hat of all! You can't, no matter how much you'd want to, Hide something in your head from me. So try me on and I'll tell you To what house you'll belong.</p> <p>[...] Courage! Come on, don't hesitate, Put me on your pate. You're in good hands (although I've got none), For I'm a super-hat.</p>

Ioana Iepureanu's version (TT1) attempts to render the musicality and the jocular tone of the original, but her translation suffers from expansion (it is much longer than the source text) and not half as musical. More than that, puns are completely omitted, which means that the pragmatic strategy of the source text is dismissed. There is also an instance of mistranslation: the lines "There's nothing hidden in your head/The Sorting Hat can't see" are translated as: "N-aveți nimic în cap, cum bine se vede./Istețul joben de sortare o știe prea bine." In this case, the translator mistook the second verse for a main clause, when in fact the second verse is a restrictive relative clause whose connector ("that") has been deleted. The informality of the tone is preserved, although, probably due to loss of puns, this target text sounds much blander and less marked than the source text.

Florin Bican's version (TT2) is flawlessly musical, flawlessly informal. It manages to be at least as jocular and funny as the source text. However, with respect to pun translation, it manages to translate three out of five instances, two of which are equivalents ("sunt cea mai tare pălărie" for "I can cap them all"; "eș ti pe mâini bune" for "you're on safe hands"). The most opaque idiom turned pun ("I'll eat myself") is transferred through what Delabastita has identified as 'direct copy': "mă înghit". The non-compositional reading of "eat one's hat" is lost in this version.

The version in the table under (4), which I will henceforth refer to as TT3, was produced in the aftermath of my classes on poetry and pun translation and is the result of much pondering over retranslation and translation strategies with respect to linguistic innovation:

(5)

SOURCE TEXT	TARGET TEXT 3 (TT3)	BACK TRANSLATION FOR TT3
THE SORTING HAT "Oh, you may not think I'm pretty, But don't judge on what you see, I'll <u>eat myself</u> if you can find A <u>smarter</u> hat than me.  You can keep your bowlers black, Your top hats sleek and tall, For I'm the Hogwarts Sorting Hat And I can <u>cap them all</u> . There's nothing hidden in your head The Sorting Hat can't see, So try me on and I will tell you Where you ought to be.[...]	PĂLĂRIA <u>CU-MINTE</u> Poate-ai să spui că nu-s frumoasă, Dar nu te lua după aspect!  <u>Mă-ntorc pe dos/mă-nghit cu fulgi</u> de vezi cumva Ca mine una mai mintoasă!  Joben, melon sau panama, <i>Le dau la toate clasă,</i> Căci asta e menirea mea Și Hogwarts e-a mea casă! Iar dacă-ncerci să <u>te ascunzi</u> <u>Pe sub vreo altă pălărie</u> Îți <u>furi căciula</u> singur, vai!  Căci te ghicesc și dintr-o mie Și-ți spun pe loc unde-ai să stai. [...]	THE MIND-FULL HAT You might say I'm not beautiful, But don't consider my looks! I'll turn myself inside out/ eat myself whole if you see A more mind-full hat than me! Top hat, bowler or panama, <i>I outclass 'em all,</i> For I was meant to do so And Hogwarts is my home! And if you try to hide Under a different hat You'll steal your own cap, alas! For I'll figure you out among a thousand And immediately tell you where you'll be. [...]

<p>So put me on! Don't be afraid!  <u>And don't get in a flap!</u>  <u>You're in safe hands</u>  (though I have none)  For I'm a <i>Thinking Cap!</i>"</p>	<p>Deci, <i>capul sus! Pe cap mă-ndeasă</i>  Și – chiar de n-am – <u>ești pe mâini bune.</u>  Fii sigur c-ai s-ajungi în Casa  <i>Ce-n minte drept are să-mi sune!</i>  (Unpublished translation by Nadina Vișan, 2019)</p>	<p>So, hold your head high! Put me on your head!  And – even I've got none – you're in safe hands.  Be sure you'll get in the House  That will sound right in my mind!</p>
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In the version under (4), I have underlined the instances of fixed expressions used both non-compositionally and compositionally. I have marked with italics those fixed expressions that are not necessarily puns, but are in the line of a similar semantic field and reinforce the message of the poem. Some of them are additions to the original, i.e. instances of compensation, to use Delabastita's typology. My intention was to use compensation as a strategy, in an attempt to recapture wit by means of a metaphorical connection between the idioms used, i.e. "maintaining an equivalent pattern at textual level" (in accordance to the technique discussed by Rizzato, 2019: 152). One such instance of compensation is translating the title of the poem ("the sorting hat") as "pălăria cu-minte" ("the mind-full/mindful hat"), which unwittingly echoes a solution found by Jean François Ménard, the French translator, ("le choixpeau magique"). We both used an additional pun as an instance of "compensation in place".

According to the typology proposed by Delabastita (1993), it appears that both TT1 and TT2 opt for "omission", although TT2 manages to preserve some of the instances of puns through "equivalence". While TT2 under-translates the puns of the source text, TT3 might be guilty of over-translation. With respect to musicality, both TT2 and TT3 appear to toe the line, while TT1 manages only partly to render the musicality of the source text. Interestingly enough, all three versions seem to deal with the register features successfully, as all of them preserve the informality of the first and last part of the poem, yet TT2 seems to be the most informal version.

### 3. Conclusion

In light of what studies on retranslation have revealed, starting with Berman (1990) and continuing with Pym (2004), I believe that neither the "translational progress" nor the "pseudo-original" approach should be dismissed, but nor should they be seen as opposites. As shown above, evaluative approaches are useful to a degree. However, a survey conducted among some fifty third-year students revealed that, although aware that TT1 did not observe the stylistic features of the source text, they still referred to this version as "their favourite one", simply because it was the version they were emotionally attached to.

It is clear that each of the versions presented above has its own merits: TT1 is the "pioneer" translation, beloved by many generations, in tune with their young minds. TT2 is the work of an expert, using equivalence in an inspired and eloquent fashion, playing with language in a creative manner that might be said to rival the original. TT3 is the work of the scholar who attempts to recover loss in translation

and experiment with translational strategies, while benefitting from previous versions. Each of these versions is rife with gain and loss, as is the case with any literary translation.

Does knowledge of the theory really help TT3 or does it merely prompt the translator to overcompensate? Will TT1 continue to be a pseudo-original for generations to come? Will TT2 top and topple TT1, rightfully usurping its place? Which of these three versions is an instance of proper transcreation? These are questions that might still be in need of answer. However, what seems clear is that delving into the world of alternative texts that mirror and challenge each other is progress in itself and might pave the road for future, new, and improved, retranlations.

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## ENGLISH AND ROMANIAN PANDEMIC-RELATED TERMS

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***Abstract:** With the advent of the current pandemic, it is not only our lives that have changed but also the language we use. New terms have sprouted overnight to cover the new reality. This is the reason behind the current article in an attempt to provide equivalents for the newly formed English terms which sometimes pose challenges to their Romanian translators.*

***Keywords:** blending, corona terminology, derivation, pandemic terms, specialized terminology*

### 1. Introduction

In tackling the issues related to the language that has arisen during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic, we need to start by trying to answer some underlying questions. A very general one has to do with the reason behind language change. Why is it that languages change? The answer seems to be just as straightforward as the question.

Languages behave in a very similar way to living entities. They evolve over time, adapting to new realities and circumstances. We are constantly adding new words and expressions to spoken language, i.e., neologisms. According to Singh (2005: 25) any change in a language goes through two phases: the innovation itself, and then dissemination. Usage and change are two sides of the same coin: speakers change the language as they use it, even though this is not always intentional.

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term idiolect as “the speech habits peculiar to a particular person.” A single user may employ a word or phrase in a new way (idiolect) and then disseminate it.

There are multiple ways by which these new terms or uses can be shared, such as in a news story, a blog post, a video or a social media post. This leads to other speakers using this same word (or neologism).

An essential question that needs an answer is: how does language change impact communication during extraordinary times such as a global pandemic? The answer might lie in the fact that words, or rather, vocabulary changes very quickly and it is often difficult to keep track of that. We often see new words in the media, and so, we become aware of a lexical change. English has constantly undergone (lexical) changes throughout its history, and it has both gained and lost nouns, verbs, adjectives over time. The inclusion of new words in dictionaries gets media attention.

## 2. Theoretical background and the data

Any discussion related to new terminology involves the emergence of newly coined words. During the period of the current pandemic, we have witnessed the coinage of numerous new terms related to COVID. In the table below, there are just a few such examples with their possible Romanian correspondents.

English	Romanian
COVID-19	COVID-19, but also, covrig, covit
Covidiot	Covidiot
Coronacoma	-
Coronials / Coronababies	-
Covidivorce	Covidivorț
Coronaspeck	Coronaseu

One of the many definitions of terms is that they are the linguistic representation of concepts, the result of the development of cognitive processes and communication among experts within a community of specialized languages (Sager 1997: 25). Terms are also a tool by means of which one communicates about concepts, they are also the reflection of the way in which knowledge is structured in the expert's mind.

In its classic formulation, as stated by Wüster (1979), the theory of terminology is in favour of certain objective concepts which are clear within the static conceptual structures and it is based on noticing the so-called "frozen" elements in dictionaries. In spite of that, the study of specialized language in the context of real communication (i.e. texts produced by experts in a various range of contexts) resulted in an even deeper and more adequate explanation regarding the way in which specialized knowledge is understood and structured (Cabré 2003; Faber et al. 2005; Protopopescu 2013a, 2013b; Sager 1990; Temmerman 2000).

Terms, which are basically the linguistic representations of concepts, are created by a certain linguistic community which feels the need to communicate the knowledge it produces. However, the terms also represent the final stage in the formation process of concepts and contribute to the development of cognitive processes. Fundamental work in the field of term formation point to the fact that more often than not terms reflect the most relevant features of the concept (Sager 1990).

Whenever we examine the way in which terms behave in contexts of real communication, we can notice that the same concept is expressed by means of several terms in the texts produced by experts. In certain cases, these terminological variations differ not only formally but also semantically since every term offers a certain vision on the concept (Freixa 2006: 64). This observation may lead to the idea of linguistic planning. This concept was first introduced by Haugen (1959) who defined it as "*the activity of preparing a normative orthography, grammar, and dictionary for the guidance of writers and speakers in a non-homogeneous speech community*" (qtd. in Cooper 1989: 103).



The absence of certain Romanian equivalents for the newly formed English terms is obvious to the naked eye. There are several reasons for this, the main one being that most of the information, be it in the form of articles, blogs or even social media comments is written in English.

We need to stipulate from the onset that no language was rich from the very beginning. Leibniz (qtd. in Coulmas 1989: 117) was well aware of the inexistence of certain words in the German lexicon of his time, so he suggested certain steps that could be applied cross-linguistically. According to him, the first step is enriching the lexicon of a language, that is to say transforming it, making it as rich and as diverse as possible. To this end, Leibniz suggested the following four steps:

- a) seeking adequate words that are already available in the language corpus, but which are not, however, easily retrievable due to their less frequent use;
- b) retrieving old obsolete words with a certain quality;
- c) domesticating or naturalizing foreign names that have a certain meaning;
- d) coming up with new words where the above procedure fails.

In fact, these remarks are commonsensical because if we are to look at what happens during the history of any language or rather if we are to follow the evolution of any lexicon, we are going to notice that language does not rush to come up with new words or coin new terms. It rather digs deep into its lexicon for words or terms that for one reason or another have gone into obsolescence or are used with a different meaning or in a different register. Alternatively, if the language cannot resort to outdated words, it resorts to modern terminologies obtained either by coining (neologisms), or borrowing words. Neologism refers to the coinage and introduction of new words, to which Katamba and Stonham (2006:83-84) refer as “productive word-creation using the internal resources of language”.

The current article sets upon investigating the phenomena going on in the language at present, the way in which the terminology used during the pandemic has evolved from a morphological as well as from a diachronic perspective. Discussing such developments may lead to rethinking linguistic planning in the sense of finding more efficient methods of dissemination and usage of loans both within educational systems as well as elsewhere. At present one can notice a tendency towards foreignization which comes from the loan translation of structures from the source language or as a consequence of lexical borrowing. Thus, certain terms may have come to the stage that Pym (2004:37) calls glocalized.

From a linguistic perspective, such a period of time is extremely fruitful because we can actually analyze the terms as they come, sometimes we can even pinpoint the exact origin of a certain term. The processes involved in lexical change applied to the language generated during the pandemic range from more to lesser productive ones: compounding, clipping, contronyms, conversion, derivation, blending, acronyms and abbreviations, borrowing, semantic shifts, and others.

### **3. Analysis of the data**

To better understand the language phenomena that led to the emergence of new terminology during the pandemic, we shall explore the various lexical processes involved in the creation of pandemic-related terms.

### 3.1. Compounding

As English borrowed from other languages, compounding involved the use of ‘foreign’ elements, creating formations that were completely ‘non-native’ and sometimes hybrid words (in that they combined words from different languages). Examples of both types have been particularly prevalent in the domains of science and technology (Singh 2005: 15).

- (1) *dinosaur* = Greek *dino* ‘terrible’ + Greek *saur* ‘lizard’
- (2) *submarine* = Latin *sub* ‘under’ + Latin *marin-* ‘sea’
- (3) *telephone* = Greek *tele* ‘far’ + Greek *phone* ‘voice’
- (4) *telescope* = Greek *tele* ‘far’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’
- (5) *stethoscope* = Greek *stetho* ‘breast/chest’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’
- (6) *bronchoscope* = Greek *broncho* ‘windpipe’ + Greek *scope* ‘watcher’

Both *tele* and *scope* have become part of hybrid compounds such as *television* and *flouroscope*, which include words borrowed from Old French (*vision* ultimately from Latin) and Latin (*flouro* from Latin *fluere* ‘to flow’).

Starting from the pattern observed above, we notice how certain terms have emerged during the current pandemic following a similar path. Most of them are compounds containing the noun *corona*. *Corona* itself is a common noun used informally in relation to the Coronavirus, so it can be classified as an instance of final clipping. In compounds, it appears in various combinations. Thus, *coronacoaster* developed on the pattern of *rollercoaster* and it refers to experiencing conflicting emotions during lockdown. More specifically, it refers to the repeated highs created by spare time and the lows created by the restrictive existence. Other such terms are *coronapocalypse* (*corona* + *apocalypse*) or *coronageddon* (*corona* + *armageddon*), the latter being more of a blend. Another example of a compound that contains the noun *corona* is *Corona-Cut* which is a DIY haircut needed as a consequence of the closure of hairdressers and barbers during the lockdown. Often self-inflicted or carried out by a non-professional hairdresser, a *corona-cut* typically leads to a series of BHDs (Bad Hair Days), until it can be professionally rectified. *Coronadodge* is an unnatural and overacted swerve, carried out in the belief that it will prevent contracting the coronavirus from the avoided individual. Romanian translators would be faced with challenges in translating *coronadodge*, but would encounter no difficulties in referring to *coronapocalypte* as *corona-apocalipsă*, *coronacoaster* would most likely translate as *coronarusse*, on the pattern of *montagne-russe*:

- a) I know most people understand, but the *coronadodge* where I walk out into the middle of the road when someone is coming the other way still feels a bit rude. I would smile at them but worry that might come off as sarcasm. (Twitter user, <https://twitter.com/arobertwebb/status/1242835404522471426?lang=f>; accessed 2020, May 25)
- b) The term ‘*coronacoaster*’ began life as a funny meme about fluctuating between the highs of mastering the “baking of banana bread” and the lows of “drinking gin for breakfast”. (<https://www.mddus.com/resources/publications-library/insight-primary/q4-2020/surviving-the-coronacoaster>; accessed 2020 December 17)
- c) *Coronapocalypse*: Americans start panic-buying and the scenes are wild (<https://www.deseret.com/entertainment/2020/3/13/21179018/coronapocalypse-coronavirus-covid19-panic-buying-photos-memes-videos>; accessed 2020, March 13)

- d) Scrisoare către copilul meu în timp de *coronapocalipsă*: fiecare zi e o Duminică! ([https://www.qbebe.ro/mama/mamici\\_care\\_ne\\_plac/scrisoare-catre-copilul-meu-in-timp-de-coronapocalipsa-fiecare-zi-e-o-duminica](https://www.qbebe.ro/mama/mamici_care_ne_plac/scrisoare-catre-copilul-meu-in-timp-de-coronapocalipsa-fiecare-zi-e-o-duminica); accessed 2020, March 30)  
 (“Letter to my child during the coronapocalypse: each day is a Sunday!”)

An interesting case of compounding is that of compounding-reduplicatives. In this category we have terms such as: *Fauci-Ouchie*, a term widely used as a humorous name for the COVID-19 vaccine:

- a) A 6-year old ballet student asked me today if I’m excited about getting my “*Fauci Ouchie*” soon, and I will now be referring to the covid-19 vaccine as only that, because it’s the cutest thing ever. (Twitter user, [https://twitter.com/EmmaScott/status/1352425395375759363?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1352425395375759363%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnancyfriedman.typepad.com%2Faway\\_with\\_words%2F2021%2F03%2Fwords-of-the-week-coronacoinages-2021.html](https://twitter.com/EmmaScott/status/1352425395375759363?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1352425395375759363%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fnancyfriedman.typepad.com%2Faway_with_words%2F2021%2F03%2Fwords-of-the-week-coronacoinages-2021.html); accessed 2021, January 22)
- b) Gov. Ron DeSantis returned to Fox News prime time for the second time this week, serving up a “*Fauci ouchie*” on The Ingraham Angle. (<https://floridapolitics.com/archives/433736-fauci-ouchie/>; accessed 2021, June 4)

The term is obviously a direct reference to Dr. Anthony Fauci, the chief medical advisor to President Joe Biden, who is a strong proponent of the vaccine. From a linguistic point of view, reduplicatives are compounds created by means of the repetition of a word or a part of that word. This particular compound is an instance of a rhyming reduplicative, made up of a proper name and an interjection.

As mentioned above, an ingenious type of compounding is hybrid compounding. Following this pattern, pandemic terminology has given prominence to a lesser used verb in English, *to telework*, which means to work remotely, as well as to the noun/adjective *teleworking*. Romanian also has such hybrid compounds as *telemuncă* or *telesalariat*. For example,

“Art. 2. În sensul prezentei legi, termenii și expresiile de mai jos au următoarele semnificații:

- a) *telemuncă* - forma de organizare a muncii prin care salariatul, în mod regulat și voluntar, își îndeplinește atribuțiile specifice funcției, ocupației sau meseriei pe care o deține, în alt loc decât locul de muncă organizat de angajator, cel puțin o zi pe lună, folosind tehnologia informației și comunicațiilor;
- b) *telesalariat* - orice salariat care desfășoară activitatea în condițiile prevăzute la lit. a).”

[from Legea nr. 81/2018 privind reglementarea activității de telemuncă, Text publicat în MO, Partea I nr. 296 din 2 aprilie 2018. În vigoare de la 5 aprilie 2018, <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/gi3tknrrgm2a/legea-nr-81-2018-privind-reglementarea-activitatii-de-telemunca>; accessed 2020, August 15]

(‘Art. 2. In the sense of the current law, the following terms and phrases below have the following meanings:

- a) telework – form of labour organization in which the employees regularly and voluntarily fulfill the attributes specific to their position, job or trade, in a different place from that organized by the employer, at least one day per month, by using ITC;
- b) tele-employee – any employee who carries out their activity in accordance with the conditions under letter a).’).

Romanian exhibits in this case an instance of borrowing or calque rather than hybrid compounding, by copying the English pattern, with terms such as: *telemuncă*, *telesalariat*. However, I have not come across the verb \*a telemunci, which indicates resistance to conversion, perhaps because of the verb phrase *A munci de acasă / de la distanță*. Alternatively, English also has the phrases *to work from a distance* or *distance work / remote work*. Another, more pertinent, reason is related to its etymology. If we are to acknowledge its status in Romanian as a borrowing or as a calque, it follows that it was not formed in Romanian by means of compounding, and therefore it would be resistant to forming a lexical family.

### 3.2. Clipping

Clipping is another rather productive lexical means for developing new terms during the current pandemic. Thus, we get such terms as: *Miss Rona* which is a new way to refer to *covid-19* online. It may be spelt as a proper name or as a common noun *rona*. It is both an instance of clipping (*Corona*) and an eponym (*the rona*). Interestingly, its origin is a reference to Covid-19 online that started among queer and black users on Twitter. “*Rona*”, “*the rona*” or “*Miss Rona*” as slang for coronavirus have been observed in both the U.S. and Australia. Dictionary editors have not yet documented wide enough usage to warrant their inclusion.

- a) Did you hear that Italy is shutdown because of *rona*?  
(cf. [UrbanDictionary.com](#) - by John Rona, 2020, March 11)
- b) “*Miss Rona* is really clapping the white supremacists”: Black Twitter’s political humor in Covid-19 times  
(<https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/spir/article/view/12136>; accessed 2021, November 27)

According to Vișan (2019: 196) “The inclusion of the label “dictionary” as part of the title of Urban Dictionary is certainly problematic, because the label automatically raises the expectations of its target readers, who immediately set Urban Dictionary against a prototypical dictionary that they take as their point of reference.” It is not a description of a standard language since many of the terms included in it are slang. It does not have a scholarly or a pedagogical purpose.

### 3.3. Conversion

Conversion is one of the minor lexical processes, so there are low expectations for terms formed in this way. One notable presence is the verb “to hamster”, which means *to hoard*. Its origin is Dutch *hamsteren* (v) meaning either *to stuff one’s cheeks*, or *to hoard*, a borrowing from the German *hamster* in 1916 or 1917. It has gained prominence during the current pandemic when a sign-language Dutch interpreter used it to refer to the idea of panic-buying and hoarding.

In the Netherlands, as elsewhere, people have “*hamstered*” in supermarkets as they worried about disruptions to supply chains and being isolated indoors.  
(<https://www.economist.com/1843/2020/04/08/do-you-speak-corona-a-guide-to-covid-19-slang>; accessed 2020, April 30)

Related to this, *Hamster Kaufing* of obvious German origin refers to stockpiling shopping (usually food) in the style of a hamster. Such stockpiling was carried out in fear of running out of supplies at home and being unable to buy them at the supermarket. The term was first coined in Germany but later adopted by English-speaking nations.

### 3.4. Derivation

This process appears to be more productive in Romanian, the most notorious example being that of *izoletă*, a common noun referring to a special type of stretcher, an isolation pod, used in the transportation of high-risk patients, for fear they might transmit pathogens. Its etymology is assumed to be unknown by dexonline, but the word is probably derived from the verb *a izola* and the suffix *-etă*. [dexonline.ro entry, added by raduborza, accessed 2020, November 2] It appears to work on the pattern of *bicicletă*, *motocicletă*, *trotinetă*. However, in these cases there are no verbs as is the case of *a izola – izoletă*, but Pană-Dindelegan (2020) argues in favour such an interpretation. The etymology in the dexonline entry is marked as unknown, so the editor of the entry does not fully commit to it.

Its English correspondent would be *isolation pod* (NP) a capsule which is used to provide medical isolation for a patient. Isolation devices were developed in the 1970s for the aerial evacuation of patients with Lassa fever. In 2015, Human Stretcher Transit Isolator (HSTI) pods were used for the aerial evacuation of health workers during the Ebola virus epidemic in Guinea. So, the origin of the NP in English goes at least as far back as 2015/2016.

Interestingly, this strange looking device had a short-lived lifespan, since it was extensively popularized and used at the beginning of the pandemic, but quickly went into obsolescence as the pandemic progressed. The various other such derived terms, prompted Pană-Dindelegan (2020) and Zafiu (2020) to argue in favour of the richness of the Romanian language relying upon these very processes of lexical dynamics. Dindelegan even went as far as questioning the poor status of Romanian, given its so-called quick reaction to the newly formed terms. However, as we can see from the examples discussed so far, Romanian is not as quick to react and translate, adopt or adapt certain terms.

### 3.5. Blending

Of all the lexical processes, blending seems to be by far the most productive means of forming new terms during this period. It would be interesting to see from a statistics point of view, what is the percentage of newly formed blends compared to other newly formed terms.

A lot of slang terms containing some form of *corona* or *covid* have been generated during this time. Below we provide a list of such terms with relevant contexts:

**Covidiot** is a common countable noun, referring to someone who ignores public health advice. It is a blend of *COVID* + *idiot*. The term “covidiot” describes any and every person behaving stupidly or irresponsibly as the epidemic spreads. Its origin can be traced back to early March 2020; it spread almost as fast as the virus (mostly due to the social media), and so did instances of **covidiotic** behaviour.

**Covedient** is someone who rigidly follows (to the extent of over-interpreting) all government warnings and regulations related to the coronavirus, a blend of *COVID* + *obedient*.

**Covidivorce**, which needs no further explanation, is a blend of *COVID* + *divorce*.

**Coronababy**, **coronacation**, **coronalusional**, **coronasplaining** all are blends of *corona* + *another noun*. Where once there were “blackout babies”, we can now expect a wave of “coronababies” and a new generation of “quarantens” in 2033. Couples whose marriages are fraying under the pressures of self-isolation could be heading for a “covidivorce.”

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/27/world/coronavirus-lockdown-relationships>; accessed 2020, June 2]

**Twindemic** formed on the pattern of *pandemic* to refer to the co-occurrence of the flu and corona pandemic at the same time:

“This was one of the few blessings in an otherwise abysmal winter, in which COVID cases and deaths surged to their highest levels ever in the U.S. At least we didn’t face the dreaded ‘twindemic’.” (“We Accidentally Solved the Flu. Now What?” by Jacob Stern, *The Atlantic* October 13, 2021;

<https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2021/10/flu-season-winter-america-choice>; accessed 2020, October 15)

Romanian has its own correspondents to the blends above, but they are fewer in number: **covidivorț**, **covidramă**, as well as **covidolog** (as pointed out by Hortensia Pârlog in a personal communication), which appears to be a creation of Romanian.

- a) O soție afectată de “**covidivorț**” – fenomen generat de nepotrivirile de cuplu relevate de prea lunga coabitare în carantină, o “boală” ce tinde, se pare, să devină în țările europene o adevărată ”epidemie după pandemie”  
(<https://www.monitorulsv.ro/Prin-padurea-de-cuvinte/2020-07-21/De-la-ciurma-la-corona-26-Pupat#ixzz6dztWOLKS>; accessed 2020, November 11)  
(‘A wife affected by covidivorce – a phenomenon generated by couple incompatibility highlighted by long cohabitation during quarantine, a “disease” that apparently tends to become in European countries a true epidemic after the pandemic’).
- b) „Tot românul știe mai bine cum stau lucrurile (...). „**Covidologii**” adevărați se numesc Bittman, Garcea, Cataramă, Olivia Steer, Șoșoacă (...)” (*Dilema Veche* nr. 918, 11-17 nov. 2021, p. 3)  
(‘A Romanian always knows only too well how things are (...) The true covid experts (‘covidologues’) are Bittman, Garcea, Cataramă, Olivia Steer, Șoșoacă (...)’)

A term used in the media as a result of the pandemic, to mock the actions of people was *sheeple* which is a *pluralia tantum* noun, referring to a person or persons acting as a group or behaving only by taking into account what is trending, living with the herd mentality, following other people blindly, as opposed to thinking on one’s own and being an individual. It is obviously a blend of *sheep* and *people*. Interestingly, *sheep* is marked as [-human], while *people* is [+human] so it is hybrid in nature (cf. Zamfirescu, Dumineciou 2017: 270)

- a) Power to the **sheeple**: why common sense prevails despite COVID-19 uncertainty.  
(<https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/general/power-sheeple-why-common-sense-prevails-despite-covid-19-uncertainty>; accessed 2021, October 4)

- b) Wake up *sheeple!* Shepherd uses her flock to make a point about vaccines. (<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.6304974/wake-up-sheeple-shepherd-uses-her-flock-to-make-a-point-about-vaccines-1.6304976>; accessed 2022, January 18)

The first attested use of *sheeple* goes back to 1945, a blend made up of “sheep” and “people” [“Sheeple.” Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sheeple>. Accessed 2020, October 20.]

In his column *Round About Radio*, published in London 1945, W. R. Anderson wrote: “The simple truth is that you can get away with anything, in government. That covers almost all the evils of the time. Once in, nobody, apparently, can turn you out. The People, as ever (I spell it “*Sheeple*”), will stand anything.” (cf. <https://findwords.info/term/sheeple>; accessed 2020, October 20.)

Another interesting case of blends are those that also yield contronyms. A contronym, often referred to as a Janus word or auto-antonym, is a word that evokes contradictory or reverse meanings depending on the context. Specifically, a contronym is a word with a homonym (another word with the same spelling but different meaning) that is also an antonym (a word with the opposite meaning).

Generally, contronyms appeared in one of two ways: (1) different words with different etymologies converged into one word, or (2) one word acquired different and opposite meanings over time. Examples of contronym blends are: *morona* (a blend of *moron* + *corona*) and *vaxhole* (a blend of *vaccine* + *asshole*).

- a) While it doesn’t matter which shot you end up getting (as long as you make the choice that’s right for you), a *vaxhole* might brag about getting the Pfizer shot and put down a friend who got Johnson & Johnson. (<https://www.purewow.com/wellness/vaxhole>; accessed 2021, October 20)
- b) Rudd proudly brags that he would never get the Covid vaccine. Now he has Delta, along with many of his family and friends. What a *vaxhole!* (<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=vaxhole>; accessed 2021 October 20)
- c) A: “Look at those two friends over there, sitting closely together”  
B: “Yeah, that’s *Morona* 1 and 2”  
(<https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Morona>; accessed 2022, February 15)

The Romanian counterparts are: *covidiot*, and *antivaxer*. However, while *covidiot* may have both meanings as the *morona* term in English, *antivaxer* is quite transparent for interpretation, formed by means of derivation and pointing to only one of the meanings of *vaxhole*. *Morona* refers to an individual showing moronic characteristics towards the coronavirus pandemic. There are two types of “*morona*”: (1) individuals who put themselves or others at risk through reckless acts, e.g., refusing to wear a mask, and (2) individuals who overreact to every twist and turn of the coronavirus story. *Vaxhole* denotes (1) a person who brags about being vaccinated (this is a common definition on Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) or (2) a person who refuses to be vaccinated (for which English also has *anti-vaxxer*).

(cf. [https://www.cyberdefinitions.com/corona\\_virus\\_terms.html](https://www.cyberdefinitions.com/corona_virus_terms.html); accessed 2020, August 22). As stated above, the Romanian equivalent is *antivaxer*, but this is a generic term for all those opposing vaccines.

- a) „*Covidiot*” este noul termen apărut în mediul online, folosit pentru a-i descrie pe oamenii care nu respectă măsurile impuse de autorități în vremea pandemiei, dar și pe cei care iau în răs coronavirusul. (<https://adevarul.ro/life-style/stil-de-viata/cine-covidiotii-noul-termen-apatut-online-panicati-vs-petrecareti-sfideaza-pandemia-daca-iau-corona-iau-gata-foto-video-15e9748475163ec4271c2e04f/index.html>; accessed 2020, October 20)  
(‘Covidiot is a new term that has appeared online, used to describe people that do not comply with the rules imposed by the authorities during the pandemic, as well as those who mock the coronavirus.’)
- b) Pe cine a chemat PSD să rescrie Legea carantinei: *antivaxxeri*, negaționiști ai Covid-ului și ONG-uri care susțin teoriile conspirației. (<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/politica/pe-cine-a-chemat-psd-sa-rescrie-legea-carantinei-antivaxxeri-negationisti-ai-covid-ului-si-ong-uri-care-sustin-teoriile-conspiratiei-1335087>; accessed 2020, October 20)  
(‘Who did the PSD call in order to re-write the Law of Quarantine> antivaxxers, Covid negationists and NGOs supporting conspiracy theories.’)

### 3.6. Acronyms and abbreviations

One would not expect for acronyms and abbreviations to be so productive in the case of new terminologies, but in this particular case, both English and Romanian exhibit a few such terms.

The most prominent term is Covid itself.

(1) COVID or Covid? According to the Oxford English Dictionary, it first appeared in a Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> World Health Organization situation report as shorthand for “coronavirus disease 2019.”

There is also a question related to the way in which it should be written: COVID-19 or Covid-19. The Oxford English Dictionary editors report regional differences for this term as well. Thus, “COVID” in capital letters is dominant in the U.S., Canada, and Australia, while “Covid” is more common in the U.K., Ireland, New Zealand, and South Africa. Since the Oxford English Dictionary is edited and published in England, British forms take precedence: in the online dictionary, the headword is *Covid-19*.

(2) BC (“Before Corona”, abbreviated as BC) refers to the time before the coronavirus struck. It is a play on the phrase “Before Christ” and implies a time long ago.

As far as Romanian is concerned, COVID was initially borrowed as an acronym, hence its capitalization in spelling (Pană-Dindelegan 2020, online). Romanian has adopted abbreviations such as: ATI (Anestezie și Terapie Intensivă), DSP / DSP-ist (Directia de Sănătate Publică), DSU (Departamentul de Situații de Urgență).

### 3.7. Borrowings

English is quite hospitable to borrowings so it does not come as a surprise that we do have new terms that are the result of borrowing.



*Coronaspeck* is a common noun used to refer to Coronavirus fat. Its origin is German, where it is an instance of blending corona + speck

Romanian faces some challenges in finding an equivalent for this. One possible equivalent would be *grăsimă intra-abdominală*, but this too formal and has medical connotations unlike the English term. Other possible equivalents in Romanian could be: *coronaseu*, *corocolăcei*, as discussed with colleagues who specialize in special terminologies and translation studies. For *Hamster Kaufing*, discussed in a previous section, a possible verbal equivalent in Romanian could be *a hârciogi*.

### 3.8. Semantic shift

Semantic shift (Viş an 2015) occurs due to the speaker's/writer's desire to avoid clichés. This happens due to a variety of reasons:

- a need for economy
- a change in the thing named
- sound changes and shift in meaning
- lexical obsolescence
- lexical gaps

Originally, *sheltering in place* referred to seeking safety during a circumscribed event, like a tornado or an active shooter attack. It is now being used to refer to a prolonged period of social isolation.

Similarly, *elbow bump* (or more recently *elbump*) has evolved from a gesture akin to a high-five, as documented in 1981, to its present form: a safe way of greeting another person without handshaking.

- a) Our current COVID-19 pandemic has many states issuing *shelter-in-place* orders to prevent the spread of this highly contagious variation of coronavirus. (<https://www.360training.com/blog/what-does-shelter-in-place-mean/>; accessed 2021, November 19)
- b) And then there's the "*elbump*", a greeting that involves touching elbows rather than shaking hands with the other person. (<https://eu.palmbeachpost.com/story/news/columns/2020/03/13/cerabino-learning-lexicon-of-coronavirus-spread-it-around/112272360/>; accessed 2021, November 19)

Some regional differences are also emerging in COVID-19 language. *Self-isolate* has been the preferred term in British English, whereas *self-quarantine* is more commonly employed in the U.S.

- a) *Self-isolate* straight away and get a PCR test (a test that is sent to the lab) on GOV.UK as soon as possible if you have any of these 3 symptoms of COVID-19, even if they are mild. (<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/self-isolation-and-treatment/when-to-self-isolate-and-what-to-do/>; accessed 2021, November 19)
- b) *Self-quarantine* is a practice used to keep someone who might have been exposed to COVID-19 away from others. (<https://uh.edu/covid-19/guidelines-protocols/completion-of-self-quarantine-isolation/>; accessed 2021, November 19)

### 3.9. Confusing terms

During lockdown, the terms *social distancing* and *physical distancing* came to be extensively used in the media. One of the most widely employed these days is **social distancing** – Ro. *distanț are socială*. This is the technical term used to indicate that people need to remain two meters apart from each other. However, a lot of people argue in favour of a difference between *social distancing* (*distanț are socială*) and *physical distancing* (*distanț are fizică*). As a matter of fact, they have very different meanings. *Social distancing* implies that a person is isolated from the society they live in. *Physical distancing* indicates that a person is physically away from other people. It could be argued that in our highly digital age the focus should have been more on physical rather than social distancing. As Stephen Frost (2020), of the Counselling Directory, puts it, “at a time of crisis and fear, we need the opposite of social distancing. [...] We need to physically separate, not socially separate.”

### 4. Conclusion

The new English terminology generated as a consequence of the pandemic poses challenges for the translators and the linguists, who need to come up with Romanian equivalents for many of the newly formed / newly coined terms. We are in the process of witnessing the failure of standard dictionaries to keep up with the new terminology. There is some hesitance in including new terms, because they are deemed as ‘slang’. On the other hand, older terms are revived by the media and social media (see the case of *sheeple*).

Romanian seems to be less flexible or hospitable towards borrowing or adapting the new terms.

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### Online resources

- [https://adevarul.ro/life-style/stil-de-viata/cine-covidiotii-noul-termen-aparut-online-panicati-vs-petrecareti-sfideaza-pandemia-daca-iau-corona-iau-gata-foto-video-1\\_5e9748475163ec4271c2e04f/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/life-style/stil-de-viata/cine-covidiotii-noul-termen-aparut-online-panicati-vs-petrecareti-sfideaza-pandemia-daca-iau-corona-iau-gata-foto-video-1_5e9748475163ec4271c2e04f/index.html) [Accessed 2020, October 20].
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- <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-wednesday-edition-1.6304974/wake-up-sheep-shepherd-uses-her-flock-to-make-a-point-about-vaccines-1.6304976> [Accessed 2022, January 18].
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## METAPHORS AND METONYMIES OF SURPRISE IN ENGLISH

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***Abstract:** The paper studies the language of surprise in English on a corpus built from the internet site <<https://sentence.yourdictionary.com/surprise>> and presents the metonymies and metaphors that may complete Kövecses's (2000, 2015) findings. The results prove that surprise is a prototypical emotion; however, it has certain non-prototypical peculiarities.*

***Keywords:** folk-model, metaphor, metonymy, non-prototypical/prototypical emotion, surprise*

### 1. Introduction

Cognitive linguistics claims that language reveals a lot about our conceptual system (Lakoff 1987, Langacker 1987), which means that the language of emotions is a good basis of study if we are interested in emotion concepts. Cognitive linguistic research has studied the language of a great number of specific emotions in a large variety of languages (see Lakoff 1987, Kövecses 1990, 2000, Apresjan 1997, Wierzbicka 1999, Ansah 2011, Esenova 2011, Ogarkova, Soriano 2014) and has found that it abounds in figurative expressions which can be classified as metaphors and metonymies. Metaphors and metonymies of specific emotions allow us to find linguistic evidence of how specific emotion concepts are built and we may draw conclusions regarding the generic concept of emotion. Kövecses (2015: 271) claims that “the conceptual structures that emerge from the metaphors and metonymies are taken to be *language-based folk models*”, which present the way everyday people understand (their) emotions.

This paper<sup>2</sup> studies the language of surprise in English and is inspired by two studies written by Kövecses. Kövecses (2000: 33) identifies three emotion metaphors, while Kövecses (2015) identifies several others and a small number of metonymies. The present study uses a corpus built from the internet site <<https://sentence.yourdictionary.com/surprise>> and aims at identifying metaphors and metonymies instantiated in the corpus, comparing its findings to Kövecses's and drawing conclusions whether or not these findings modify the language-based folk model of surprise described by Kövecses (2015).

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<sup>2</sup> This work was supported in part by a Debrecen Reformed Theological University research grant.

## 2. Surprise

Surprise is one of the six universal basic emotions (happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust and surprise, see Ekman et al. 1972). Surprise is a very short-lasting emotion, which is normally triggered by sudden or unexpected things and events. The function of surprise is to focus our attention to the triggering event so that we could decide whether the event is good or bad, dangerous or not to our well-being.

Universal basic emotions are commonly accompanied by facial expressions and bodily movements that are characteristic of people all around the world and easily recognized by them, independently of their cultural and social backgrounds. When people are surprised, their eyebrows are raised and curved, they have transverse wrinkles above their brows on their foreheads, their eyes open wide and the whites of the eyes become visible, their pupils dilate and their mouths open wide. Darwin (1999: 278) notices that “The degree to which the eyes and mouth are opened corresponds with the degree of surprise felt”. Typical bodily movements may be the hands or arms shooting up in the air, a surprised person may step back or jump, scream and/or gasp or even become speechless, especially when fear or fright is mixed with their surprise. Surprise, unlike other emotions, may be positive or negative, depending on how we appraise the triggering event. A state of surprise may be very short and cease to exist if we determine that there is no danger for us. However, surprise may develop into another emotion, like amazement or astonishment, fear or terror, depending on what has happened (Darwin 1999).

The term *surprise* is a polysemous lexeme, as Kövecses (2015: 276-278) points out. The term *surprise* can be used both as a noun and a verb. As a noun, it means a “feeling caused by sth. happening suddenly or unexpectedly” and an “event or thing that causes this feeling”, whereas as a verb it means “cause (sb.) to feel surprise” and “attack, discover, etc (sb.) suddenly and unexpectedly” (Hornby 1989). As can be seen, the noun can either refer to the emotion or the cause of the emotion, while the verb refers to the “process of causation” or “causing” (Kövecses 2015: 276). The three meanings of the term *surprise* constitute the causal structure of the coming about of the emotion, which is the same structure as other emotions have, that is, a triggering event causes the emotion.

## 3. Metonymies and metaphors of surprise

Investigating related literature in the field of cognitive linguistics, I have only found two studies on the emotion concept ‘surprise’ in English. One is a chapter on “Surprise Metaphors” in Kövecses’s *Metaphor and Emotion* (2000 33), where he lists the following three metaphors for surprise: SURPRISE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE: I was *staggered* by the report; A SURPRISED PERSON IS A BURST CONTAINER: I just *came apart at the seams* and SURPRISE IS A NATURAL FORCE: I was *overwhelmed* by surprise.

Kövecses makes two observations. One is that the BURST CONTAINER metaphor captures that “a surprised person temporarily loses control over himself or herself” and the other is that surprise is “the least metaphorically comprehended concept” in his list of emotions and explains it by claiming that “surprise is not a socially very complex phenomenon” (Kövecses 2000: 33). By the last remark, he

obviously refers to the fact that the list of surprise metaphors is the shortest one in his volume on emotion metaphors.

Kövecses (2015) covers both metonymies and metaphors of surprise. He claims that metonymies conceptualize physical effects, on the one hand, and, on the other, mental responses of surprise, both of which are in line with the kind of reactions that metonymies of emotions usually capture (see THE PHYSICAL EFFECT OF AN EMOTION FOR THE EMOTION Lakoff 1987 and Kövecses 1990 for specific level examples of PHYSIOLOGICAL and BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS OF AN EMOTION FOR THE EMOTION in relation to anger, fear, romantic love, etc.). Kövecses (2015: 278) mentions two PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF SURPRISE FOR SURPRISE metonymies: EYES OPENING WIDE FOR SURPRISE and THE MOUTH OPENING WIDE FOR SURPRISE, which are two of the most characteristic details of facial expressions of surprise. He (idem: 279) discusses INABILITY TO SPEAK FOR SURPRISE (e.g. *speechless*), AN UPSETTING FEELING FOR SURPRISE (e.g. *shock, stun*) and INABILITY TO THINK CLEARLY FOR SURPRISE (e.g. *stupefied, dumbstruck*) as specific versions of the metonymy MENTAL RESPONSES OF SURPRISE FOR SURPRISE.

Kövecses (2015: 280-283) claims that the surprise process is conceptualized by the following metaphors: SURPRISING SOMEONE IS UNEXPECTEDLY IMPACTING SOMEONE: *She was shocked at the state of his injuries* and SURPRISING SOMEONE IS AN UNEXPECTED SEIZURE/ATTACK: *The questions took David by surprise; Tom caught Ann off guard and frightened her*. Kövecses argues that the common element in both situations depicted by the two metaphors is that the surprised person loses control over himself/ herself and adds that loss of control is part of the scenario of several other (prototypical) emotions, like anger or fear. It must be noted that as far as loss of control is concerned, surprise is similar to other emotions, however, unlike other emotions, surprise does not contain an attempt at control stage in its scenario.

Kövecses mentions a further metaphor of surprise: SURPRISE IS AN OBJECT, instantiated by phrases like *express/show/feign/hide surprise*. The interesting thing about this metaphor is that “the responses or symptoms associated with the emotion are metonymically viewed as standing for the emotion” (Kövecses 2015: 283). It needs to be added that the term *surprise* is also metonymically used to stand for the actual responses produced by the surprised person. The use of the OBJECT metaphor also makes surprise similar to a number of other emotions. In contrast with other emotions, surprise is not conceptualized by the OPPONENT, CAPTIVE ANIMAL, SOCIAL SUPERIOR, or FLUID IN A CONTAINER metaphors (idem: 285), which are fairly common among (more) prototypical emotions. Kövecses views the lack of these metaphors as evidence to prove that surprise cannot be seen as a prototypical emotion.

#### 4. My corpus and research questions

As stated in the Introduction, I have built a corpus of examples based on the internet site <<https://sentence.yourdictionary.com/surprise>>. The corpus has 498 sentences containing the term *surprise*, which is used as a noun in 462 sentences (92.87%) and as a verb in 36 sentences (7.23 %). For the purposes of the present paper, I have only studied the sentences that contain *surprise* as a noun to denote the emotion. In the present investigation, I apply Kövecses's (1990: 33-49) lexical

approach, which is a method to collect and process data for uncovering the folk understanding of an emotion concept.

My starting point is Kövecses's (2015) argument that surprise has a mixture of prototypical and non-prototypical features of emotions and has only a small set of metonymies and metaphors that conceptualize it. Therefore, I have the following research questions:

- (a) What metonymies capturing physiological/bodily or behavioural reactions of surprise can be identified in my corpus?
- (b) What metaphors can be identified in my corpus?
- (c) How do my findings modify, if at all, the language-based folk model of surprise described by Kövecses (2015)?

In the remainder of the present paper, I will attempt to answer these questions and draw my conclusions.

## 5. Discussion

Emotions are accompanied by physiological reactions and a large part of the reactions are emotion specific: a change of heartbeat and an increase in body heat are characteristic of anger, turning white in the face area is typical of fear. As we have seen above, surprise is accompanied by the eyes opening wide, the eyebrows raised and the mouth opening or the jaws dropping. Linguistic expressions often describe these details and function as metonymies conceptualizing the physiological effects going together with surprise. In accordance with this, Kövecses (2015) identifies the metonymies EYES OPENING WIDE FOR SURPRISE and MOUTH OPENING FOR SURPRISE. My corpus contains sentences that depict details of opening the eyes, as in

- (1) His eyebrows jerked up in surprise.
- (2) His brows lifted in surprise.

as well as the ways surprised people look, as in

- (3) The officers gazed with surprise at Pierre's huge stout figure.
- (4) He blinked with surprise.

Examples (3) and (4) instantiate the metonymy WAYS OF LOOKING STAND FOR SURPRISE, which is a specific-level version of the metonymy THE BEHAVIOURAL REACTIONS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION (Kövecses 1990: 119).

Neither Darwin (1999) nor Ekman et al. (1972) give a description of how a surprised person breathes; however, my corpus contains examples like

- (5) She gasped in surprise/with surprise.

instantiating the metonymy WAYS OF BREATHING STAND FOR SURPRISE, which belongs to the more generic metonymy PHYSICAL EFFECTS OF SURPRISE STAND FOR SURPRISE (Kövecses 2015 – referred to above), or to the even more generic PHYSICAL EFFECTS/PHYSIOLOGICAL REACTIONS OF AN EMOTION STAND FOR THE EMOTION.



Kövecses (2015) claims that a surprise experience may be so intense, that the surprised person is not able to speak and think clearly. The two mental effects are depicted in one of the sentences in my corpus:

- (6) He was silent in surprise once more, unable to understand how she might consider his battle plans nothing more than a complex game.

The two clauses in example (6) instantiate the metonymies INABILITY TO SPEAK STANDS FOR SURPRISE and INABILITY TO THINK CLEARLY STANDS FOR SURPRISE. Inability to breathe/speak/think is characteristic of fear, a rather prototypical emotion (Kövecses 1990: 71). In less intense cases of surprise, we are usually able to speak, and can do it in various ways, as shown in the following examples:

- (7) 'I will', Lisa responded with surprise.  
 (8) Lana almost uttered a cry of surprise, astonished he'd survived the missiles  
 (9) Alex exclaimed in surprise.  
 (10) A similar moan of surprise and horror ran through the crowd.

Thus, the metonymy WAYS OF SPEAKING STAND FOR SURPRISE; this is a further specific version of the MENTAL RESPONSES metonymy.

Behavioural reactions do not only mean mental responses, but also various movements of certain body parts, as in

- (11) She nodded, trying hard to recover from the latest surprise.  
 (12) She dropped back on her heels, staring up at him in surprise.

Nodding is the movement of the head and neck, dropping back on one's heels is the movement of the legs and feet, while recovering is not relevant in relation to movement and is not specific in relation to body parts, either. However, these and similar reactions show some form of bodily agitation, therefore they may be identified as instantiations of the metonymy AGITATED BEHAVIOUR STANDS FOR SURPRISE (or to put it more generally BODILY AGITATION STANDS FOR EMOTION, see Kövecses 1990: 168). Again, agitation is characteristic of various emotions, anger in particular (idem: 52), however, responses like *trembling, shaking, quivering*, etc. (cf. *I stood there trembling with emotion, The experience made him shake, He quivered all over*) usually describe high levels of physiological arousal (idem: 168). Nodding one's head or dropping on one's heels seem less intense reactions than trembling, but they definitely show some degree of disturbance.

When we experience a very intense emotion, fear or surprise in particular, we may become unable to do certain things that are otherwise part of our normal physical and mental functioning, such as breathing, speaking and thinking clearly. Sometimes our linguistic expressions do not depict such details, but give a more general description as in

- (13) Three Others with glowing purple eyes stood several feet away, frozen in surprise.

In example (13), the phrase *frozen in surprise* may refer to a drop in body temperature, but it is more likely to refer to the surprised persons' being unable to do anything, thus instantiating the metonymy INABILITY TO FUNCTION

NORMALLY STANDS FOR SURPRISE, which is a further variety of the INABILITY metonymy and captures a characteristic behavioural reaction.

So far we have discussed examples that describe various aspects of physiological and behavioural reactions that a surprised person has. We have found that the movements of certain parts of the face (eyes, eyebrows, mouth, jaws) are rather typical in a state of surprise. Several sentences in my corpus give more general descriptions of the face, as in the following examples:

- (14) Billy Langstrom's body stared out from beneath the overturned Jeep, eyes open, a look of mixed surprise and horror on his young face as he lay in a pool of darkening blood.
- (15) Surprise was written on Dean's face.
- (16) The Watcher turned away from the window, surprise on its face.
- (17) Surprise crossed Brandon's face.
- (18) Kris looked up, surprise crossing his face.

In sentence (14) the term *surprise* denotes the emotion, while in sentences (15) to (17) *surprise* is metonymically used to refer to the expression of the emotion appearing on one's face. I find that this "overall reference" to the expression of surprise on the face serves as a summation of all the characteristic details, such as the eyes and eyebrows, the mouth and the jaws. It is a matter of course that the face serves as a location for surprise expressions to appear. Thus, the metonymy THE TERM *SURPRISE* STANDS FOR A SUM OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF SURPRISE combined with the metaphor THE FACE IS A LOCATION FOR SURPRISE EXPRESSIONS.

It is interesting to note in relation to sentence (14) that it describes the facial expression of the person involved in the accident (the casualty) and the phrase *a look of mixed surprise and horror* refers to a mixture of his emotions, surprise and horror. This example illustrates that surprise may develop into or may be combined with another (either positive or negative) emotion, depending on the events and their appraisal by the experiencer.

In sentences (14) to (16) we can see surprise as an inanimate object in a static situation, since it "is" on someone's face; however, in (17) and (18), surprise is more "dynamic", it is shown as an animated object. Sentences

- (19) The memory – fuzzy for fifteen years – grew crisp, and surprise and hope went through her as she recalled the night that'd changed everything.
- (20) Surprise trickled through him.

do not only show surprise as a dynamic entity, but also due to the choice of verbs, they allow for a different understanding of surprise, namely as a fluid rather than an object of any kind. Therefore, based on sentences (17, 18), I propose the metaphor SURPRISE IS AN ANIMATED OBJECT, whereas based on sentences (19) and (20), the metaphor SURPRISE IS A FLUID (IN A CONTAINER). By the latter metaphor, I challenge Kövecses's (2015: 285) view that surprise is not conceptualized as a fluid in a container; however, I admit that it may only be a sporadic example and not a conventionalized expression. At the same time, I do not argue with his idea that other source domains are more commonly used and more elaborated for surprise.

In the following two examples, surprise looks even more dynamic or active than in the previous three sentences, where it is seen as an animate object:

(21) For a moment surprise captured her tongue.

(22) Surprise visits and inspections.

In sentence (21), surprise may be understood as a warrior, in (22) as a detective, which may be subsumed under the term ‘animate object’. Therefore, I propose the metaphor SURPRISE IS AN ANIMATE OBJECT.

Kövecses’s (2015) analysis of examples like (21) and (22) is different from mine, because he claims implicitly that the key component in an act or process of surprising is the unexpected character of the event, due to which the experiencer loses control over himself/herself; thus the process is metaphorically conceptualized as SURPRISING (SOMEONE) IS AN UNEXPECTED SEIZURE/ATTACK. In my analysis, surprise (being the cause) is understood as an animate object (an agent), which takes an active part in the events (and, as a consequence, controls the situation). Contrary to this, when surprise is understood as an object (cf. SURPRISE IS AN OBJECT, *express, register, show, pretend, hide*, etc. *surprise*), it is viewed as a passive component of the situation which is detected, comes about or to which certain things happen as a result of some action, as exemplified in

(23) I sensed his surprise, and a hint of nervousness.

(24) The appointment caused much surprise at the time, as Billow was little known outside diplomatic circles.

(25) Perhaps our knowledge of Johnson's sentiments regarding the Scots in general [...] may lessen our surprise at this vehemence.

The last group of figurative expressions in my corpus are of the structure *do sth in surprise*. The examples mainly describe the ways people look at things and say or ask about things when they are surprised:

(26) He looked up in surprise.

(27) Carmen stared at her in surprise.

(28) Alex raised his brows in obvious surprise.

(29) Her eyes went to Kiera in surprise.

(30) Bianca cried out in surprise.

(31) ... Felipa asked in surprise.

The verbal expressions in (26) to (29) refer to certain movements of the eyes and eyebrows, while in (30) and (31) the verbs denote ways of communication. The prepositional phrase *in surprise* describes how the actions denoted by the verbal expressions are done, in other words they refer to the emotional states of the experiencers. *In* is a preposition denoting location. The metaphor conceptualizing examples (26-31) is (A) SURPRISE (STATE) IS A LOCATION, which is related to the generic level metaphors EMOTIONS ARE BOUNDED SPACES and STATES ARE LOCATIONS (cf. *She flew into anger, She was in an angry mood, He was in a state of anger*, Kövecses 1990: 66).

## 6. Conclusion

In the present paper, I have outlined *surprise*, one of the universal basic emotions, reviewed the metonymies and metaphors identified by Kövecses (2000, 2015), and challenged his claim that surprise is conceptualized by only a small set

of metonymies (two versions of PHYSICAL EFFECTS STAND FOR SURPRISE and three versions of MENTAL RESPONSES OF SURPRISE STAND FOR SURPRISE) and metaphors (SURPRISE IS A PHYSICAL FORCE, A SURPRISED PERSON IS A BURST CONTAINER, SURPRISE IS A NATURAL FORCE and SURPRISE IS AN OBJECT). My aim has been to investigate the language of surprise for further figurative expressions and find out whether they fit into the concept of surprise.

I have found the following metonymies: (a) WAYS OF LOOKING STAND FOR SURPRISE, (b) THE TERM *SURPRISE* STANDS FOR A SUM OF FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF SURPRISE, (c) WAYS OF BREATHING STAND FOR SURPRISE, (d) WAYS OF SPEAKING STAND FOR SURPRISE, (e) AGITATED BEHAVIOUR STANDS FOR SURPRISE and (f) INABILITY TO FUNCTION NORMALLY STANDS FOR SURPRISE. Metonymies (a), (b) and (c) describe physiological reactions and are versions of PHYSICAL EFFECTS STAND FOR SURPRISE, while (d), (e) and (f) refer to behavioural reactions and are versions of MENTAL RESPONSES OF SURPRISE STAND FOR SURPRISE. All these metonymies serve as proof that surprise is accompanied by reactions that are characteristic of a number of other prototypical emotions.

I have identified the following metaphors in my corpus: (g) SURPRISE IS AN INANIMATE OBJECT, (h) SURPRISE IS AN ANIMATED OBJECT, (i) SURPRISE IS AN ANIMATE OBJECT, (j) SURPRISE IS A FLUID IN A CONTAINER and (k) SURPRISE IS A LOCATION. The metaphor SURPRISE IS AN OBJECT is exemplified by *express/show/feign/hide surprise* in Kövecses (2015), however, instantiated by metaphorical expressions of its versions (g), (h) and (i), it proves to be a well-elaborated generic metaphor. Metaphors (j) and (k) are not identified by Kövecses (2000, 2015); however, (j) captures the most prototypical image of emotions, although it has a very small number of instantiations in my corpus, while (k) also depicts a prototypical detail of surprise and is a specific version of the generic metaphor EMOTIONS ARE LOCATIONS (cf. *look at sb. in anger/sadness/surprise/sorrow, be in love*).

To sum up, by presenting the results of my corpus-based research into the language of surprise, I hope to have contributed to a more complex picture of physical/physiological and behavioural reactions accompanying surprise. The data support my view that surprise has a lot in common with other prototypical emotions (cf. Kövecses 2015: 284), the metonymies and metaphors identified here fit into the concept of surprise and do not basically modify the language-based folk model of surprise.

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## METAPHORICAL CONSTRUCTS IN THE ROMANIAN YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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***Abstract:** The paper is focused on the metaphors used by Romanian young people when expressing their perceptions of the European identity and when discussing the manner in which Romania's status as a member of the European Union affects their everyday life. In line with the principles of cognitive linguistics, which argue that metaphorical language use is a reflection of the way people think, I consider that the metaphors thus identified are not only relevant for my subjects' attitudes towards the present social and political realities, but they can also guide various professionals with a role as shapers of the European identity.*

***Keywords:** cognitive linguistics, conceptual metaphor, European identity, European Union (EU)*

### 1. Introduction

In an article on collective identity written in the early '90s, Anthony Judge (1991) noted that the notion of Europe is more and more difficult to comprehend. If that was the perception more than thirty years ago, we can imagine how difficult it is to understand our continent today, when the European Union (EU), basically meant as "a cornerstone of European stability and prosperity" (cf. Archick 2021: 1), is characterized by a far more complicated situation. Lately, the European Union has been confronted with various types of internal crises, such as the crisis of multiculturalism, social and political crises (for instance, the Brexit), crises of a financial and economic nature (illustrated, for instance, by the eurozone crisis), the crisis created by the large influx of non-European refugees and migrants, as well as with a multitude of external challenges.

People tend to consider that problems like those mentioned above represent "the business" of the specialists in politics, economy, or sociology, but this is only partially true. The reality is that the European Union, with both its benefits and its problems, exerts a certain influence on the lives of the citizens in all the member states making it up. This idea represents the guiding principle of a course on European Institutions that I teach to the 1st year students enrolled in the Theory and Practice of Translation MA programme, organized by the West University of Timișoara. During this course, I try to raise the students' awareness about a series of issues specific to the European Union, issues which, even if apparently remote from our immediate sphere of interest, are actually factors that affect us to a larger or lesser extent. In an attempt to identify my students' preliminary knowledge and their expectations at the beginning of this course, I usually ask them to reflect a little bit and offer their personal views on the issue of the European identity and on Romania's status as a member of the EU. Doing this for several years, I have been

surprised to discover that my students' answers contained numerous metaphors, and, at a certain moment, I decided to study this phenomenon in a more systematic manner. Therefore, I initiated a research study that was focused on the metaphorical constructs used by the Romanian students when expressing their perceptions of the European Union, in general, and of the European identity in particular.

In discussing the metaphors identified as a result of my investigation, I rely on the insights offered by cognitive linguistics. For a thorough understanding of the principles underlying the present study, in the following section I will outline the theoretical framework that I have adopted, making reference, at the same time, to some practical evidence provided by other researchers interested in the phenomenon of metaphor.

## 2. On metaphor and its use

The use and the implications of metaphors have preoccupied scholars since ancient times, one of the earliest approaches in this respect coming from Aristotle. In the traditional theory, metaphor is a property of words: the name of a certain entity is used with reference to another entity, due to a point of similarity existing between the two. Such associations of words are often used for artistic and rhetorical purposes, and, consequently, are encountered more frequently in literary works than in non-literary contexts. In order to use metaphors, people need a special talent, so it is believed that only great poets and orators can really master them. Thus, metaphor is often regarded as a peripheral linguistic phenomenon that people can do without, as it is used only for the sake of achieving special effects, and it does not represent an inevitable part of everyday communication (cf. Kövecses 2002: vii-viii). This traditional view shaped the perception and the study of metaphor until the early '80s, when George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) published their book entitled *Metaphors We Live By*, a book which challenged the aspects mentioned above and offered a different perspective on this phenomenon.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 3) state from the very beginning that metaphor is not peripheral to language: on the contrary, it "is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action". In their opinion, metaphors are "not just a matter of language, that is, of mere words" (idem: 6), but should be understood as metaphorical concepts, because "human thought processes are largely metaphorical" (ibid.). In this way, Lakoff and Johnson established the view that metaphors are not only ornamental devices that make thoughts more vivid and communication more interesting, but also tools that play an important role in structuring peoples' perceptions and in processing their conceptual knowledge.

Lakoff and Johnson's book marked the beginning of the conceptual metaphor theory, being followed by a large amount of research "that has confirmed, added to and also modified" (Kövecses 2017a: 13) the initial ideas. One of the scholars with an essential contribution to the further development of the conceptual metaphor theory is Zoltan Kövecses. In line with Lakoff and Johnson's view, he (2002, 2017a) defines the conceptual metaphor as understanding one domain of experience in terms of another. The two domains involved in the conceptual metaphor are called the source domain and the target domain. The source domain, which is typically concrete, represents the conceptual domain that is used in order to enable the understanding of another conceptual domain. The



target domain, which is typically abstract, refers to the conceptual domain which we try to understand with the help of the source domain. The cognitive process underlying metaphor is possible due to a set of fixed correspondences (or mappings) between the source and the target domain (Kövecses 2002: 12). In the process of metaphorical conceptualization, an essential role is played by the context, but as Kövecses (2015, 2017b) argues, context should be understood in a broad sense, “one that covers our cognitive interaction with various elements and properties of the situation of discourse, the discourse itself, the conceptual-cognitive background, and the body of the speaker” (Kövecses 2017b: 322).

The contributions made by Lakoff and Johnson, on the one hand, and by Kövecses, on the other, have turned the study of metaphor into one of the central areas of research in the general field of cognitive linguistics. My own research study is based on the principles put forward by these contributions, as I will illustrate in the next section. However, the cognitive view on metaphor did not stimulate only the linguistics-oriented type of research. The claim that metaphors represent an expression of the humans’ thought inspired a great number of scientific articles, books, and conferences in a variety of other disciplines, like philosophy, pedagogy, psychology, cognitive anthropology and exact sciences. The result is that, under the influence of the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor, numerous researchers are now interested in investigating the working of metaphor in various languages and socio-cultural systems all over the world. A few examples of such investigations are offered below.

Due to their role as facilitators in the process of understanding the world around us, metaphors are studied even in domains characterized by rigour and accurate expression, and I will refer here to the case of mathematics. Numerous studies on the use of metaphor in mathematics start from the idea that metaphors represent tools for identifying and understanding people’s perceptions towards mathematics. Latterell and Wilson (2017), for instance, study the individuals’ “mathematical identity” by comparing metaphors for mathematics from elementary preservice teachers to metaphors created by secondary preservice teachers. They find that elementary preservice teachers describe mathematics as an ongoing struggle in which the mathematics is active and they are the victims, while the secondary preservice teachers describe mathematics as an ongoing struggle in which they are active. Another line of research on metaphor in mathematics is based on the assumption that metaphors can contribute to the better understanding of the mathematical concepts. An influential study in this respect is that of Lakoff and Núñez (2000), who, starting from the observation that most fundamental mathematical ideas are metaphorical in nature, set out to explore the metaphors used in the language of mathematics with a view to promoting a truly scientific understanding of mathematics, one which is based on processes common to any kind of human cognition. The two researchers find that people create arithmetic by means of four different metaphors that create an abstract conceptual space starting from various interactions with the real world: object collection, object construction, the measuring stick, and moving along a path. Adopting a similar perspective, Frățilă and Jumanca (2011) discuss a number of conceptual metaphors used by teachers as means of explaining difficult mathematical issues to secondary and high school pupils. Their study reveals, for instance, that, in metaphorical terms, a circle is a thread arranged in a circular shape, an equation is a pair of scales in equilibrium, a mathematical function is an engine which turns fuel into motion, and, in a fraction chain whose limit tends to zero, the numerator and the denominator are competing runners. It can be concluded that, regardless of the

assumption from which it starts, the analysis of the metaphors in this field is ultimately meant to improve the process of teaching and learning the difficult and abstract mathematical concepts and ideas.

Researchers have also been interested in the use of conceptual metaphors in a wide range of medical conditions. For instance, a study by Coll-Florit, Climent, Sanfilippo and Hernández-Encuentra (2021) analyses the conceptual metaphors of depression in a corpus made up of blogs written by people suffering major depressive disorder. The metaphorical constructs that were identified correspond to three broad domains related to mental health: metaphors of depression, metaphors of interpersonal communication and social context, and metaphors of medicine and professional treatment. Some findings indicate that life with depression is generally conceptualized by means of two main source domains, “war” and “journey”, with a predominance of war metaphors. Surprisingly enough, medicine is conceptualized as a repressive power, and the doctor as a prosecutor or as a captor that locks the individual with depression into a diagnosis. As the researchers themselves point out, the analysis of these metaphors can deepen one’s understanding of mental health and can enhance communication between patients and doctors.

Another scientific field that regards metaphors as valuable tools for interventions is that of psychology. An interesting contribution comes from Dooremalen and Borsboom (2010), who signal the abundance of metaphors that are used in psychological conceptualization and explanation (e.g., the metaphor of the brain as a computer, or the thermometer metaphor in psychological measurement), but stress that “metaphors are untrue” (idem: 121), and, consequently, they should be used only as heuristic devices in the process of generating testable hypotheses and developing psychological theories. Fetterman and Robinson (2014), among many others, demonstrate the usefulness of metaphors as heuristic devices. In an article which reviews a series of projects focused on the link between metaphor and personality, the two authors conclude that metaphors matter in what makes people different from one another. Among the numerous examples that they mention, there is a study which shows that people who prefer the red colour score higher in interpersonal hostility than the blue-preferring individuals, or one which correlates the place where people locate the self – in the heart or the head – with whether those people are logical or emotional, friendly or distant, smarter or less smart, etc.

The usefulness of the metaphor has been also acknowledged in the social sciences, especially in relation to organizations and their management. Mention must be made of Gareth Morgan’s (1986/2006) seminal book, *Images of Organization*, which “offers scholars and students a comprehensible overview of organization theory and a set of diverse perspectives to guide research” (Örtenblad, Putnam and Trehan 2016: 876). Starting from the idea that all organization and management theory is based on metaphor, Morgan proposed a set of eight different metaphorical views of organizations: machines, organisms, brains, cultures, political systems, psychic prisons, flux and transformation, instruments of domination. These metaphors provide a multidimensional view of the organizational life, and, consequently, suggest new ways of managing and designing organizations.

I cannot end the illustration of the possible investigations on metaphor without making reference to education, a field in which metaphors have been long acknowledged as useful tools by teachers and as interesting objects of study by researchers. For instance, in a study on the relationship between teaching and learning, Badley and Hollabaugh (2012) explore three clusters of metaphors:

transmission, facilitation, and catalyst metaphors. Some years later, Littlemore (2017) provides an overview of the research focused on the role played by metaphor in a range of educational contexts, and identifies two ‘hot topics’ in the field of metaphor and educational discourse: the extent to which the use of metaphor can actually shape and influence thinking, and the variation in metaphor use across different genres. More recently, conceptual metaphor is approached by the field of ecolinguistics and the ecology of language learning, where the class of students is seen as an ecological community embedded in an ecological environment (cf. Dragoescu Urlica and Stefanović 2018: 542-544).

I have mentioned just a few studies here, but I consider that they create a good image of the complexity that characterizes metaphor, and, implicitly, of the array of research opportunities that it presents. Moreover, the reference to various research studies focused on metaphor is meant to prepare the ground for the presentation of my own study in this respect. As pointed out earlier, the main purpose of the present paper is to study the metaphors used by Romanian young people when expressing their perceptions of the European identity and when explaining the manner in which Romania’s European membership affects them at both the social and the individual level. The analysis of the information offered by my subjects is made in the framework of the cognitive linguistic view of metaphor described and illustrated in this section. The main findings of my study, as well as some implications that these findings might have from social and pedagogical perspectives is described in detail in the following section.

### **3. Metaphors regarding the European Union: a research perspective**

The metaphorization of various aspects specific to the European Union is a very frequent practice, as demonstrated by the politicians’ speeches, by the media discourse or by the legal-administrative documents of the European Union. Expressions like “multi-speed Europe” or “variable geometry Europe” are already acknowledged as standard references to the differences between the various member states and to the necessity of dealing properly with these differences. The usefulness of metaphors in this context has been acknowledged for a long time. For instance, Judge (1991) suggested that a dynamic system of metaphors can provide a better understanding of the complexity and the subtleties characterizing the European identity. In his view, a good strategy for creating the image of the European Union would be to use a system of metaphors based on familiar concepts, such as an ecology of options, a physiology of interdependent organs, a nuclear fusion reactor, an organic molecule of variable geometry, a pattern of circulating traffic or a crop rotation cycle.

Metaphors referring to the European Union have also been approached in numerous research studies. Hülse (2006) starts from the role of metaphors as means of imagining and, at same time, constructing social reality, and discusses five conventional metaphors of the EU enlargement: as a family reunion, as homecoming, as growing together, as a path, and as entry into a house. As a reaction to a more recent situation, Isentyeva (2019) analyses the metaphors occurring in the British right-wing press as strategies for constructing the idea of Europe in the light of the changing social and political situation determined by the Brexit referendum. The author mentions “death of Europe”, “Europe as suicidal” and “relationship with Europe as a (broken) marriage” as the most creative, and, at the same time, the most negative metaphors.

However, metaphors regarding a united Europe occur not only in public documents, but also in the common people's language, as my study demonstrates. The study starts from the following hypothesis: by projecting the meanings of a familiar issue onto a less familiar or abstract one, the metaphor is an important means by which people understand and express their reactions to a wide range of realities of the surrounding world. In line with the view of cognitive linguistics, which presents metaphorical language use as a reflection of the way people think, I consider that the metaphors used by my students represent valuable information, because they do not only signal the students' way of thinking and their attitudes towards the European Union and the European identity, but can also be of use to the authorities that contribute to the shaping and the development of the young people's European identity.

### **3.1. Research methodology**

As a data collection instrument, I used a questionnaire, which was applied, between October 2018 and June 2021, to 108 students in the MA of Theory and Practice of Translation, organized by the West University of Timișoara. The respondents offered their answers in writing. The questionnaire included two open-ended questions:

1. How would you describe Romania's status as a member state of the European Union? Mention both positive and negative aspects, offering relevant details and examples;
2. What does the European identity mean to you personally? Mention both positive and negative aspects, offering relevant details and examples.

After collecting the answers from the 108 subjects, I started the process of data analysis. This process involved two stages. In the first stage, which had a preliminary character, I analysed my students' answers with a view to identifying instances of metaphorical use of language. More exactly, I was interested in finding out the percentage of subjects whose answers provided at least one metaphor in the natural course of communication, no matter if that metaphor referred to their European identity, or to Romania's status as an EU member state. At this preliminary stage, the analysis was made in quantitative terms and revealed that 41 of my students, namely 38% of the total number of subjects, resorted to metaphors when they completed the questionnaire.

For the second stage of my research study, I focused only on the answers offered by the 41 subjects identified earlier, and I performed an analysis of the metaphors used by them. Since my intention was not to make statistics, but just to reflect a certain reality, I used techniques specific to the qualitative type of research. The students did not provide their answers anonymously, but their names are not revealed in the discussion of the research findings. Therefore, I indicate the authors of the examples offered in this paper by means of codes consisting of numbers from 1 to 41.

The main findings resulted from the analysis of my subjects' answers are presented and discussed in what follows.

### **3.2. Findings**

The analysis of the metaphors expressing my students' perceptions of their own European identity, on the one hand, and of our country's European

membership, on the other, was made in the terms proposed by cognitive linguists. This analysis revealed that the target domain represented by “the Romanians as European citizens” is correlated with four source domains.

### 3.2.1. A still developing body

The analysis of the data collected by means of the questionnaire indicates that, in some students’ view, Romania has not reached its full potential as an EU member, but the situation is likely to change in time. However, there are relatively few respondents who hold an optimistic view of EU as a place which offers proper conditions for this frail body to get bigger and stronger. Thus, some students describe their European identity as a “new-born baby” (27), “a child that needs to grow” (19), or “a blooming bud” (31). On the same line of reasoning, Romania’s status is seen as a “younger sister in the EU family” (3) or as an “explorer in a heaven yet to be discovered” (11).

In spite of this idealistic image of EU, my students mention that it is other people that have to make the important decisions for this helpless creature. This idea is presented in a negative light by other subjects, as the next categories of metaphors indicate.

### 3.2.2. The obedient subordinate

A great number of students describe their European identity as being marked by lack of individuality. Thus, they confess that they feel like “a drop in the ocean” (17) or “a fish in the ocean” (23) in order to signal that they do not really consider themselves to count very much as European citizens. Similarly, Romania’s European membership is described as “a flock of sheep” (21, 38), which obediently follows its shepherd, as a “slave”, because “they are our master, we have nothing else to do but obey” (14), or as an “ox” (33), which needs to be led and told where to go.

In spite of all the aid and the guidance offered by the EU authorities, some subjects feel that, judged in the European context, our country is “a fish out of the water” (1) or a “lost people in the world” (7), expressing their worry that we are not familiar with the new obligations, and we are not fully prepared for the new standards imposed on us.

### 3.2.3. The nonentity

There are also respondents who take the idea of subordination to the extreme and consider that their European identity or Romania’s EU membership are of no importance in the context of the united Europe. They refer to themselves or to Romania with nouns and phrases like “doormat” (28, 37), “ghost” (5) or “shadow in the crowd” (20), expressing their opinion that we are invisible to the rest of Europe. One subject perceives Romania’s membership to this supranational structure as a threat to his/her own national identity and explains that “EU is the sword and mace that will destroy any individuality” (18).

Some subjects express similar views, but are not so harsh in their formulations, and refer to Romania as Europe’s “Cinderella” (9, 26) or the “third wheel” (of a cart) (13).

### 3.2.4. The beneficiary

In some of my students' view, the European Union represents "a pool of opportunities" (10, 32) that the inhabitants of the member states can take advantage of. In this context, they perceive their European identity in terms of the benefits they have as a result of our country's status as an EU member state. This idea is rendered by images of the European Union as "a dream come true" (41), "an open door" (25), or even "a finance company" (12). One respondent described his/ her European identity as a "backup system", explaining that, "in case things go wrong in Romania, there are other countries to move to" (8). Even in this case, there are metaphors that reflect a deprecatory attitude: Romania is "a poor relative" (16) among the other European countries, and the European identity allows us to "sit down at the same table with the rich" (35).

In very general terms, the results of my study indicate that Romanian young people tend to have rather negative perceptions of Romania's European integration and their status as EU citizens. However, an in-depth interpretation of these findings is provided next.

### 3.3. Interpretation

The interpretation of my research findings is made according to three main perspectives on metaphors, formulated under the influence of the various approaches of both theoretical and research nature, discussed in section 2.

The first perspective is determined by the cognitive linguists' claim that metaphor starts from a relatively abstract or unstructured idea and connects it to a more concrete, better-known entity. The mere fact that my subjects use metaphors when referring to their European identity or to Romania's status as an EU country indicates that they perceive such issues as being unfamiliar to them, and even somehow remote from their sphere of interests. Moreover, the negative connotations frequently carried by these metaphors may be interpreted as the symptom of a certain fear of the unknown, of emotion experienced by people in the absence of sufficient and relevant information on a particular topic. The metaphors used by my subjects are actually manifestations of their tacit knowledge or interpretations of EU-specific issues, which can be assessed and exploited by the initiators of such research studies as this.

The second perspective involves the claim that context, understood in a broad sense, plays an essential role in the process of metaphor production. The age of the subjects, their (lack of) formal training in EU issues, their personal experience with the effects of Romania's integration within the European Union, their (lack of) personal transnational experiences are all factors that influenced my students' manner of metaphorsing the EU issues. This is how we can explain that, in spite of the common cultural background, some of my students perceive the European identity as a threat for their national identity, while others see the opportunities created by this supranational identity. Of course, it can be claimed that such metaphors are influenced by some objective factors (for instance, Romania's image in Europe), but I consider that the personal factors (that is, the amount of information, the type of experiences so far) play a more important part.

The third perspective, which has been partly anticipated by the first two, is related to the view of metaphors as tools that help towards the improvement of a certain practice. In the case of this study, metaphors can be used in the process of

shaping the young people's European identity. According to Royuela and López-Bazo (2020), the development of a collective identity involves two main mechanisms: information and experience. Professionals from various institutions and organizations, such as educators, sociologists, or political scientists, can interpret such metaphors, and then decide on a course of action that effectively contributes to raising the young people's awareness with regard to EU issues, and, if possible, even to creating opportunities for experiences (for instance, opportunities of personal contact with Europeans from other countries). And it is my strong belief – a belief, which, in fact, lies at the very heart of my study – namely that, with effective educational practices, the people's attitudes can change.

#### 4. Conclusion

In spite of the fact that metaphors depend very much on the individual reality of the person who uses them, and, therefore, are characterized by a certain degree of subjectivity, they are useful in communication because they reveal what lies beyond words. More specifically, metaphors share meaning that is very closely related to the people's feelings, attitudes, and beliefs, as individuals and as participants in social life. And, as already mentioned in this paper, the information inherent in any metaphor is valuable, as it can be used both as a means of understanding reality, and as a means of creating it.

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***BOOK REVIEWS***



**PIA BRÎNZEU**

***FANTOMELE LUI SHAKESPEARE***

[‘Shakespeare’s Ghosts’]

Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2022

vol. I (429 p.) & vol. II (379 p.), ISBN: 978-973-125-865-2.

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“All stories are about wolves. All worth repeating that is” (Atwood 2001: 344) – was famously said by one of Margaret Atwood’s narrators in her Booker Prize winning novel, *The Blind Assassin*. In a similar vein, reading Pia Brînzeu’s work, we could say that ‘all stories are about ghosts’: fictional spectres, as they are used by Shakespeare in his plays, or ethereal presences influencing writers across the ages to give newer and fresher voices to originally minor, marginal – even absent – characters.

That “Shakespeare still haunts us mercilessly”<sup>3</sup> (vol. I, 9) is the premise Professor Pia Brînzeu starts from in her complex investigation of twelve of Shakespeare’s most famous plays, chosen – as she herself acknowledges in the Introduction (vol. I, 19) and Conclusions (vol. II, 357) – because they have provided inspiration for many writers, particularly in the latter half of the twentieth century and the first two decades of the twenty-first. Every one of the twelve chapters analyses a famous Shakespearean play and several rewritings in various genres, each targeted at a different readership, all of which are brought together by more or less conventional tropes: Richard III’s hunchback and deformity; Richard II’s garden imagery and the protagonist’s ambiguous portrayal as victim or traitor; the (not so) obvious shrews and their taming in *The Taming of the Shrew*; the ever-present moon in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; the several triangles of *The Merchant of Venice*; the misremembered balcony of *Romeo and Juliet*; the characters’ obsession with words in *Hamlet*; the mysteries and ‘true’ colour of *Othello*; the inverted triangles of *King Lear*, the mysterious androgynous witches of *Macbeth*; the web of stories in *The Winter’s Tale*; the haunting presence of witch Sycorax and the utopian island in *The Tempest*.

Well-documented and cogently written, dense and extremely informative, with numerous historical and intertextual references, the two volumes of *Fantomele lui Shakespeare* [‘Shakespeare’s Ghosts’] actively engage Romanian readers not only through their overlaps of the Shakespearean texts with older and newer rewritings and reinterpretations, but also through rhetorical questions that

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<sup>3</sup> All quotes from Pia Brînzeu’s books have been translated by this reviewer.

leave room for the reader's own take: Why is Catarina in *The Taming of the Shrew* so angry? Is Romeo a serial seducer? What does Queen Gertrude actually feel for her second husband? Is Othello a hero or a murderer? Why did later writers change the ending of *King Lear*? Are *Macbeth's* "weird sisters" witches or Fates? Is Sycorax a witch or a ghost? How much of each adaptation is Shakespeare? The two volumes can therefore be seen as an appropriate place for the intricate dialogue between and around Shakespeare's own texts and other plays or novels inspired by him, thus developing a compelling intertextual worldwide web.

Explaining the title of her 800-page long study, Brînzeu argues in the Introduction that Shakespeare's initial stories are rewritten, recontextualized, transmediated, loved, and challenged, bringing thus to life a variety of ghosts that "enrich the [Shakespearean] text by overthrowing the perspective of a story and, of course, affecting the work used as a starting point, as well as all the other works that have been or will be written" (vol. I, 16). In the context of this polyphony and plethora of stories, Derrida's concept of "hauntology" (cf. Brînzeu vol. I, 17) can be easily applied not only to Shakespeare's work, but to all literary creation, opposing a romanticized nostalgia about the historical past and moving towards a future seen from a different angle, while also allowing texts to speak to one another, thus creating a whole range of echoes, allusions, and 'ghosts' of previously written texts.

Dedicated to *Richard III*, the "Renaissance pseudo-gangster" (vol. I, 26), because he grows to be tormented by his conscience, the first chapter focuses on Richard's exaggerated deformity (his hump, in particular) as described by Shakespeare, but contradicted by reality. The argument goes on to show how the protagonist's ugliness overlaps with his heroism and charisma, turning him into a symbol of masculinity and military bravery, which makes Henry VII pale by comparison. The two rewritings discussed here – namely Bertold Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui* (1941) and Josephine Tey's *The Daughter of Time* (1951) – are used to connect, in turn, the Renaissance text with the wider political implications leading to World War II and to redeem the Yorkist king, so harshly misjudged by history. Whereas Brecht's play is meant to show how history has a tendency to repeat itself, with the world's great dictators being only variations of the monstrous tyrant (vol. I, 25, 55), Tey's detective novel proves beyond doubt how an idea, once rooted in people's minds, will be difficult to change, despite any evidence to the contrary (vol. I, 66).

Chapter Two explains how, just as in the case of Richard III, Shakespeare's *Richard II* influenced the posthumous reputation of the king. The chapter centres on various forms of treason, the epitome of which is Richard's betrayal of himself through his own weaknesses (vol. I, 73). The garden scene (III.4), which draws Brînzeu's attention, is a parallel for the island where Richard reigns, offering a moment of respite to the queen and the opportunity for ordinary people to comment metaphorically on the situation in their country. It is this garden scene, added by the playwright to the story borrowed from other sources, that clearly connects Shakespeare's text to at least two novels: Margaret Campbell Barnes' *Within the Hollow Crown* (1947) and Ann O'Brien's *The King's Sister* (2014). While Barnes' novel mixes Richard's public and private lives, using the garden as a setting in three key scenes, and meaning to absolve him of all sins and to establish him as a monarch worthy of admiration and patriotic pride, O'Brien's novel takes on a feminine perspective to comment on Richard's unpopularity and frailty in connection to his responsibilities. At the same time, Brînzeu excitingly highlights

O'Brien's many strong women, who stand out through political force and warrior-like attitudes, but who are also victims of an unforgiving patriarchal world. The third rewriting – a detective short story by Margaret Frazer (“*Richard II: The Death of Kings*”) – resumes the trope of the traitor, this time depicted as an unnamed orchestrator of mind games, who betrays for the sake of power and manages to get away unpunished.

The following chapter discusses one of the most popular plays – *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here Brînzeu draws attention, on the one hand, to the absence of a happy end for Christopher Sly, the frame story protagonist, and on the other, to the various interpretations given by the scholarship to the play's shrews (Catarina, Petruchio, even Bianca), as well as to Kate's final monologue. Ann Tyler's novel *Vinegar Girl* (2016) – part of the larger Hogarth project – is the only rewriting discussed here with a special focus on the imagological aspect of the couple who meet at the crossroads of two very different cultures (American and Russian) and languages, and must learn to “tame their images of each other” (vol. I, 149).

Chapter Four concentrates on *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, where the analysis zooms in on various metamorphoses (of the moon's, the lovers', their attitudes to the moon and to love). The moon imposes transitions and, quite paradoxically, becomes a symbol of constancy and of the torch guiding lovers on the path of true love. The two transmediations discussed here are very different in genre. Chris Adrian's *The Great Night* (2011) is a post-text to Shakespeare's play, in which three troubled, unhappy human characters, together with Titania, fight their dramatic past and naughty subconscious. In contrast, *Manga Shakespeare. A Midsummer Night's Dream* (2008) relies on reversed ekphrasis in order to explain how the play's linguistic references to the moon are extended beyond the level of words, becoming an actual graphic element of the drawings, engaging the manga reader through its colour, shape, and purpose, as it watches over all the important scenes and connects the three worlds (of the ruling classes, of the fairies, and of the tradesmen).

The fifth chapter focuses on *The Merchant of Venice*, where the captivating analysis deals with the prevalence of threes and triangles: of love, of money, of opened chests, of family, of wives and their rings, of the Italian cities, as well as, of the three times increased sum of money borrowed from Shylock. Some of the noteworthy aspects which Pia Brînzeu convincingly details here are the male characters' merchant status, with Antonio actually turning out to be Shylock's double, the importance of the ring in the Bassanio-Portia couple, or the economic and religious causes behind the Christian-Jew tense relationship. The two rewritings examined here are Howard Jacobson's novel *My Name is Shylock* (2016) and David Henry Wilson's play *Shylock's Revenge* (1989). While the former raises questions about Jewishness and the trajectory of Judaism, showing the Christian-Jewish relationship as always contradictory and unsolvable (vol. I, 229), the latter is a post-text to Shakespeare's, which blends in other Shakespearean characters and references, and is meant to offer a morally correct ending, where everything is resolved in Shylock's favour.

Starting from the somewhat shocking statement that the balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet* is a fake, the sixth chapter artfully explains how this architectural element, which has become iconic for the star-crossed lovers' story, is in fact a later addition, under the influence of similar plays staged in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The chapter also highlights, in a captivating manner, the key issue of masculinity in the play, discussing in particular Romeo's evolution (or Juliet's

taming of him) from a foolish, melancholic, and talkative lover to a mature, wise, and self-controlled husband. This section brings together no less than four novels – David Gray’s *Escape from Verona* (1996), Lisa Fiedler’s *Romeo’s Ex: Rosaline’s Story* (2006), Anne Fortier’s *Juliet* (2010), and Suzanne Selfors’ *Saving Juliet* (2008) – all of which include the balcony as a key trope, representing, in turn, unexpected chances of escape for the running protagonists, places of clandestine meetings and stolen kisses, or a bridge between the medieval and the contemporary worlds, thus persuading readers of its existence.

Unsurprisingly perhaps, the longest chapter is dedicated to *Hamlet*, Shakespeare’s longest play and the most productive in terms of adaptations and spin-offs. Starting from Hamlet, who is looked at in his roles as actor, director, writer, and audience (vol. I, 309), all of which centre on his brilliant play with words, philosophical ideas, and figures of speech, Brinzeu analyses, among other aspects, the play’s single men (Fortinbras, Laertes, and Horatio) who, despite their ambiguity, serve as foils to the protagonist. From the very vast plethora of texts inspired by *Hamlet*, no fewer than seven rewritings were selected for discussion: Tom Stoppard’s *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1967), Marin Sorescu’s *Vărul Shakespeare* [‘Cousin Shakespeare’] (1987/88), Salman Rushdie’s *Yorick* (1994), John Updike’s *Gertrude and Claudius* (2000), Lisa Klein’s *Ophelia* (2006), Alan Gratz’s *Something Rotten* (2007), and Ian McEwan’s *A Nutshell: A Novel* (2016). As their titles suggest, these texts retell the story or create counter-stories from the perspective of various characters (including that of the marginalized women) always enriching the dialogue with Shakespeare’s work and creating heterotopias that allow (post-)postmodern writers to become famous by associating themselves with the core of the Western literary canon. Addressing various readerships, all texts emphasize the importance of words and the characters’/narrators’ talent at storytelling, used in order to make convincing cases for themselves and to provide answers to the questions left hanging by Shakespeare’s text.

Chapter Eight, “The Mysteries of the Moor”, begins the second volume and highlights Othello’s skin colour as a marker of exoticism and of racial ambiguity. However, while Othello’s blackness can be a suggestion of his slave-like inferiority, Iago too can be read as a white slave, victim of his own machinations. A curious aspect brought to the reader’s attention deals with the rare reading of this play as a comedy, with critics noting the parodic, burlesque, and caricatural elements related to the protagonist’s racial identity and the characters’ obscene language (vol. II, 30-32). The four adaptations analysed here come from very diverse cultures: Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis’ *Dom Casmurro* (1899), Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North* (1966), Caryl Phillips’ *The Nature of Blood* (1997), and Tracy Chevalier’s *New Boy* (2017). Not only are all these novels connected to Shakespeare’s text through the male protagonist’s extreme jealousy and criminal/punitive impulses, but they also bring into contact the English Renaissance culture and other cultures around the world (Brazilian, Sudanese, Kittitian-British, and American-British), touching on imagology-related issues, gender power roles, racism and discrimination, as well as the relationships between colonizers and the colonised.

The following chapter deals with *King Lear* and traces (again) the trope of the triangles in the play (of nature, of society, of the human body, of the family), which are all inverted by Lear’s initial gesture of dividing his kingdom, becoming a diamond, along whose axes the characters move between heaven/spirituality and

hell/(their) destructive nature. “Movement is everything in this play” – argues Brînzeu cleverly – “and perhaps that is why nothing is clear” (vol. II, 126). This movement also seems somewhat triangular: first, characters raise their eyes upwards, to the sky, to gods and the stars that decide on human destinies; then, the movement is downwards, towards an aggressive and destructive nature, which, “disrupted by the king’s madness, tries to do justice through the noisy apocalypse of all collapses” (vol. II, 132); finally, the lesson in humility and compassion allows Lear to move back upwards. Three adaptations were chosen for discussion in this section: Edward Bond’s *Lear* (1978), Jane Smiley’s *A Thousand Acres* (1991), and Christopher Moore’s *Fool* (2010). Emphasising the ugliness of the political world, the men’s greed for land, or the role of the jester/narrator and his play-on-words, the texts overlap Shakespeare’s characters and bring to the forefront more contemporary issues, such as the present-day society’s pervasive violence, gender and family power relations, social power interactions, and personal stories.

The tenth chapter does an enthralling examination of *Macbeth*, particularly the ambiguity and androgyny of the witches, often called “weird sisters”, as well as on some interpolations (such as the dancing and singing scene). The witches’ androgyny then extends to the Macbeths, whose couple dynamics changes throughout the play, but makes them fit in the androgynous witches’ world and thus “reach absolute demonism” (vol. II, 201). “The Macbeth discourse” – as Tom Blackburn labelled the network of rewritings and interpretations (vol. II, 203) – includes skilful analyses of Samuel Beckett’s dramaticule *Come and Go* (1967), Eugen Ionesco’s tragic farce *Macbett* (1972), and Barbara Garson’s parody *Mac Bird!* (1966). What connects them all is the striking adaptation of the witches that are seen, in turn, as three middle-aged female friends who are afraid of the future and protect themselves with a gesture from a shared past, as repeated transformations between witches and kings’ wives or their ladies in waiting, or as marginalized representatives (a young woman, an African-American, and a beatnik) of the students militating against the Vietnam War.

Chapter Eleven centres on *The Winter’s Tale*, a fairy-tale told by the fire, where Brînzeu regards Shakespeare’s inconsistencies as less important than the use of doubles (two kingdoms, two triangles, two jealous men/patriarchs) and the happy-ending. Commenting on the play’s title, the author underlines the idea that the text is full of embedded stories told by all the characters, no matter how minor they may be. Related to this is the notion of the ‘theatre within the theatre’, which allows time to expand and contract differently for various characters, some of whom need to disguise themselves in order to save their lives; it is a world of performance, where music plays an essential role. Jeanette Winterson’s novel, *The Gap of Time* (2015), invites readers not only to return to Shakespeare’s play, but also to look inside themselves to investigate their personal wounds, creating a palimpsest of stories within stories.

Dealing with *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s last play as a single author, the last chapter of Brînzeu’s study redirects our attention to the problematic figure of another famous witch, Sycorax, Prospero’s dark(er) double. Brînzeu argues compellingly that Sycorax comes from the Arabic world of culture and science, which is equal or even older than Prospero’s, thus challenging the male magician’s racial and gender superiority. Although she corresponds to the Renaissance model of evil, she is necessary in the play’s economy not only as a contrast to Prospero’s white, beneficial magic, but also as a starting point in his creating a new identity

for himself. It is therefore not surprising that Prospero first integrates Sycorax into himself and only then does he give up his magic. The analysis also skilfully revisits the scholarship's readings of the utopian island's location, as well as some of the character-related psychological complexes: the Prospero complex (of the colonial patriarch), the Caliban complex (the dependence of the colonized on the colonizer to win his freedom), the Miranda complex (the overprotected white femininity), ending with the author's own attempt to define the Sycorax complex (the highly sexualised coloured woman, who is also knowledgeable in spells and miraculous cures). The three adaptations – Gloria Naylor's *Mama Day* (1988), Marina Warner's *Indigo or, Mapping the Waters* (1992), and John Brian Aspinall's *Sycorax* (2006) – all centre on the reinterpretation of this infamous witch at the crossroads of postcolonial and feminist studies, highlighting the multiple facets of history as *herstory*. In all three novels, the female protagonists embody an overlap between Shakespeare's Sycorax and Prospero (sometimes even Miranda), showcasing their complementarity even if, unlike Shakespeare's Prospero, they never give up on the symbols of their occult power.

Similarly to the way in which Pia Brînzeu ends her Introduction, stating that Shakespeare's ghosts "still haunt us relentlessly", readers are urged to embrace them in a "successful gesture of intertextual re-bewitching of the world" (vol. I, 21). Simultaneously engrossing and entertaining, Brînzeu's ample, in-depth analysis of the selected Shakespearean plays and their rewritings will also stay with the readers, encouraging them to always return to the Bard's texts as well as to their adaptations, in search of constantly new meanings. Thus, in the end lies the (new) beginning.

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DOI: 10.35923/BAS.28.37

**DANA PERCEC** (Editor)

***TOWARDS A THEORY OF WHODUNITS. MURDER REWRITTEN***

Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021, 236 pp.  
ISBN (10): 1-5275-7225-0

**CARMEN BORBELY**

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The fourth book in a Cambridge Scholars Publishing series, devoted to rescuing so-called “minor” literary genres from their marginalisation in descriptive taxonomies, *Towards a Theory of Whodunits. Murder Rewritten* (2021) is an excellently titled attempt to conceptually remap detective fiction’s labyrinthine genealogies, from its birth in the nineteenth century to its globally disseminated scions in the twenty-first. Reframing the peripheral as centrally concerned with the redrawing and replenishing of generic lineages, this series – edited by prominent critic and theorist Dana Percec, who is Professor of English at the West University of Timișoara – includes rigorous reconsiderations of romance (2012), fantasy (2014), and children’s literature (2016), beyond narrowly prescriptive understandings of genre and canon. By tracing the ways in which such dynamic, porous, and malleable generic frames have shaped the specific discursive worlds of crime narratives, with their widespread, trans-historical and transnational appeal to readers, Percec’s latest collection of studies significantly expands scholarship in the field.

To start with, it dismantles the idea of the crime genre replicating, since its inception, a set of formulaic features and immutable structures, and addresses, instead, the interlaced ancestries and legacies of the detective novel and other strands of popular literature. In addition to this, it examines the multifaceted history of the genre by supplementing the core corpus of Anglo-American texts with samples of equally thriving crime fiction traditions, which stretch geographically from Germany to Transylvania and South Africa. Moreover, as indicated by the juxtaposed high (“theory”) and low (“whodunit”) registers in the title, the book also effectively shows how such texts may productively disrupt canonical hierarchies and become emblematic of the collapsing divide between highbrow and lowbrow cultural forms. Not least, it embraces a pluri-disciplinary perspective on both literary and film narratives, shuttling across the fields of genre theory, reader-response theory, narratology, and affect theory, and providing complex, incisive (re)readings of a broad range of texts that simultaneously respect and resist the pull of generic normativity.

With a quadripartite structure, the collection dialogically balances a Borgesian fascination for the genre’s praxis *and* theory against a critical reflection on the passé relevance of the post-theoretical turn. Conceived as logical steps

towards rescripting detective fiction as a genre that warrants theorisation, the book's chapters are preceded by the editor's foreword, which explicitly articulates a corrective vision on a genre long and unjustly relegated to the margins of literary respectability. Consisting of four complementary approaches to the roots of detective fiction, the book's first section, dedicated to "Archetypes and Avatars," opens up fresh ways of exploring the commingled beginnings of Gothic and crime narratives.

In the opening chapter, entitled "The Gothic Genre as the Father of the Suspense in Detective Fiction", Francisco Javier Sánchez-Verdejo Pérez makes a case for what he defines as the twinned rebelliousness of Gothic and crime fiction against a "disproportionate cult of reason" (2021: 5), coupled with a penchant for the irrational, the outré and the bizarre. This concurrent transgression of psycho-emotional and social dictates leads Pérez to conclude that mid-nineteenth century Gothic served as a matrix for the emergent genre of police or detective fiction, with which it paradoxically continued to share an aesthetic of unreason and overwrought emotions. In the next chapter, "Extraordinary Occurrences and Strange Cases", Dana Percec refines this story of origins, convincingly arguing that "detective fiction is the result of a double permutation" (24) in the post-Enlightenment period, being legitimised both as an offshoot of the Gothic and as a genre that reflected a romantic yearning for escaping the straitjacketing effects of reason. Percec's excellent demonstration becomes most engaging when she discusses three case studies epitomising the unruly vitality of the Gothic, which later innervated the transgressive plots of crime narratives: Newgate criminal biographies, vampire narratives and witch trial accounts. Inviting readers to envisage the detectives of late Victorian fiction – who hovered on the threshold between the natural and the supernatural and wielded the antithetical weapons of oneiric fabulation and scientific ratiocination – as the descendants of the restorers of law and order in those nonfictional accounts of crime, the chapter sheds light on the multiple, interconnected branches of the genre's pedigree. The third chapter, authored by Ana Cristina Băniceru, sacrifices neither precision, nor depth in outlining the "uncanny" resemblances and interferences between the detective and the Gothic, which started off as forms of sensational literature and which, through various permutations, generated a string of avatars, from the hard-boiled detective to the neo-noir and cyberpunk. While Băniceru claims that detective fiction and its revenants are Gothic's tamed, secularised counterparts, the final contribution to this section, "Vampires and Detectives over Three Centuries: Haunters and Hunters", traces the contaminated bloodlines of the protagonists of post-millennial crime fiction. As the authors of this chapter, Marius-Mircea Crișan and Carol Senf, show, the captivating yet also repulsive figures of contemporary vampire detectives continue to be haunted by the spectre of the hunter vs. hunted dyad that structured Bram Stoker's fin-de-siècle narrative.

Comprised of three chapters, the following section takes a step further into discussing detective fiction's popularity among canonical writers, who have consolidated its prestige by wresting it out of the unchanging generic mould with which it generally tends to be associated. Titled "Negotiating with Highbrow Genres", the section flags its concern over whether sophisticated narrative strategies and the genre's orbiting outside an effete set of norms are enough to ensure crime fiction's inclusion in the official literary canon. Adriana Răducanu's convincing claims in "The Unspeakable Mother? Re-Writing the Canon in Christa Wolf's 'Medea'" bring into relief the ways in which recourse to myth may breathe

life into the rigid, outworn conventions of detective stories, and the latter may, in turn, call renewed attention to the inexhaustible resources of myth. Premised on the idea that Shakespeare's darkest plots may be conveyed in new generic garb to contemporary readers, Codruț a Goș a's chapter, "There's Beauty in Decay. Responding to Jo Nesbø's Response – *Macbeth*", offers a fascinating reception-theory approach to the impact that the transposition of a Jacobean play into the highly successful Nordic noir genre can have upon the younger generation. Thoughtfully organised around the notion that the epistemological quest in Paul Auster's novel *Ghosts* veers into an ontological one, Daniela Rogobete's chapter takes its cue from, on the one hand, Derrida's thoughts on hauntology and the notion that spectral traces of otherness can find their way into self-identity and, on the other hand, from Borges's idea that metaphysical detective story encapsulates the potential of all fiction to generate endless interpretation.

The juxtaposition of high and low continues in the third section. Its four different chapters, which revolve around the notion that "The Mainstream and the Marginal" operate together as a system of communicating vessels, offer detailed readings of the fine-meshed complexities of a truly global(ised) genre that has been redefined within constantly evolving literary networks. In "From the Anti-Detective to the Black Detective in *Blind Man with a Pistol* (1960) and *Mumbo Jumbo* (1972)", Loredana Bercuci expertly captures the genre's dynamics in African-American literature, foregrounding black detective fiction similarities and dissimilarities with two other narrative forms, the hard-boiled police procedural and the postmodern anti-detective. Carefully dissecting the capillaries connecting the two novels' fluid, open-ended narrative form to the "intricacies of knowledge production" (137) at the level of their content, the chapter amounts to a refreshingly current engagement with the ways in which postmodernism's semantic indeterminacy can send, in fact, a clear message about pressing political and social concerns. In "'This Story Isn't Us': Pseudo-Detectives and Speculative Story-Telling in Philip Roth's *The Ghost Writer*", Cristina Chevereș an's theoretically nuanced arguments are pivoted on the notion that by erecting his self-reflexive narrative upon the spectral scaffolding of the hard-boiled detective, the Jewish American author can simultaneously interrogate – through a plethora of ghostly substitutes – the intimate workings of cultural memory, the ethics and politics of representation, the inevitability of failure in any quest for authenticity, and the fluid aesthetics of a genre freed from the trappings of hackneyed conventions. Making a compelling case for viewing Roth's speculative-philosophical novel as "an archaeology of self and of the (imaginary) others" (140), the insightful conclusions of Chevereș an's study tie in with the clues left for the reader to decipher in the following chapter, written by Gabriela Glăvan. Bearing the title "Mystery as Tragedy: Philip Roth's *Nemesis*", the chapter highlights not just the detective scenario employed in a narrative that shapes an ethics of vulnerability and answerability in the face of crisis, calamity, and collective death, but also the inescapable relevance of this ethics throughout time, whether we speak of real, alternative, or fictional history. The collection's "worlding" ambit (Moraru 2021: 101) becomes visible again in the concluding chapter of this section, in which Luiza-Maria Caraivan's analysis of Wessel Ebersohn's and Margie Orford's novels fleshes out the potential of Apartheid and post-Apartheid detective fiction to map the political upheavals that have swept across South African society over the past few decades.

The fourth part, “A Genre on the Move”, which brings this invaluable collection of studies to an end, displays, like the previous sections, a deep-seated interdisciplinarity, but also a genuine commitment to pursuing cross-fertilising lines of inquiry into the unwieldy diversity of trans- or multimedia adaptations of crime stories. Stephen Tapscott’s chapter, “Rosebud, *Citizen Kane*, Detective Stories, and the Open Secret”, explores the possibility of viewing Orson Welles’s highly experimental, heteroglossic text as an adaptation to the screen of the narrative apparatus of the “popular detective story” (181). Tapscott’s insistence on the fact that, despite its claim to dramatising the knowability of mystery, the film actually stages an epistemological crisis, is echoed in the next chapter’s assumption that in the police procedural subgenre, even scientifically endorsed truth-claims lend themselves to validation outside the domain of rationality that the genre has aspired to remain attuned to for nearly two centuries. Focusing on procedural series such as *Lie to Me* (2009-2011) and *The Mentalist* (2008-2015) in a study that is suggestively titled “Annoying the Truth out of People: Trickster Consultants and Power Dynamics in Police Procedurals”, Andreea Şerban deftly steers her own investigation into the disruptive, yet efficient role that emotionally intelligent police consultants, such as Patrick Jane and Cal Lightman, play in scenarios where sterile scientific knowledge largely fails to bring inquiries to a swift and just resolution. Tapping into contemporary concerns with issues of corporeal power and vulnerability, Eliza Claudia Filimon’s astute analysis in the last chapter of this collection, called “The Anatomy of Emotion in *The Invisible Man* (2020)”, confirms the importance of the affective turn in screened adaptations, translations and transpositions of detective masterpieces, such as H. G. Wells’s 1897 homonymous novel.

To close, this is not only an essential survey of the afterlives of detective fiction, a genre that is notable for its unabated hold on the popular imagination, but also a much-needed reassessment of its potential to develop its own generic ramifications, mobilising a revitalisation of the conventional limits of the literary canon. This, coupled with the geo-cultural breadth of the texts analysed in this volume, as well as with the worlded, transnational lens through which a broad range of “whodunits” are theorised, is ample evidence that the book edited by Dana Percec should be welcomed by both literary scholars and the general public, for whom the narrative labyrinths of detective fiction offer a pleasurable respite.

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DOI: 10.35923/BAS.28.38

**EMIL SÎRBULESCU**

***CARTEA CARE VORBEȘTE:***

***INTRODUCERE ÎN ROMANUL AFRO-AMERICAN***

[‘The Talking Book: An Introduction to the African American Novel’].  
Craiova: Editura Universitaria, 2020, 280 pp. ISBN 978-606-14-1591-5

***LITERATURA AMERICANĂ***

***ȘI PROVOCAREA ETNICITĂȚII – ROMANUL AFRO-AMERICAN***

[‘American Literature and the Challenge of Ethnicity – The Afro-American Novel’].  
Craiova: Editura Universitaria, 2020, 344 pp. ISBN 978-606-14-1676-9

**LELAND C. BARROWS**

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A revealing insight about the situation of African Americans in the mid-twentieth century United States and a second insight regarding an incident resulting indirectly from the Atlantic slave trade seem to have been the epiphanic moments that induced Professor Emil Sîrbulescu to adopt African American literature as one of his intellectual and academic pursuits, if not his principal one. He describes the first of these incidents in his *Literatura Americană și Provocarea Etnicității – Romanul Afro-American*, his second study of African American literature.

As a young man, circa 1970, he had received a package of American books including Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* (1952) from an American foundation. The idea of being invisible because one is or represents what others do not want or refuse to see, as developed by Ellison, and the similarity of the theme of invisibility appearing in Dostoevsky’s *Notes from the Underground* (1864) was upsetting for the budding Romanian scholar. Even more so was the refusal by the editor of a Romanian literary journal to publish a Romanian translation of the Prologue to *Invisible Man* “especially because its author was black.” Thus was kindled Professor Sîrbulescu’s interest in African American literature, particularly the African American novel. Eventually a first draft of *Cartea care Vorbește* with a different title, “Romanul afro-american: specific și universalitate” [The Afro-America Novel: the Specific and the Universal] would be his doctoral dissertation. Revised, it would be the first version, published in 1999, of *Cartea care Vorbește*.

A second epiphanic event inspired Professor Sîrbulescu to title this first study *Cartea care Vorbește*. It was triggered by his reading of a specific passage in James Albert Ukawsaw Gronnisaw’s *A Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars in the Life of James Albert Ukawsaw Gronnisaw, an African Prince, as Related by Himself*, the first slave narrative to be published in English in England in 1772. Here Gronnisaw expresses disappointment that the book, the Bible, from

which his master had been reading out loud, did not speak to him when he pressed it to his ear. He assumes that the reason for the book's silence is that it 'disrespected' him because he is black.

This passage caused Professor Sîrbulescu to confront the reality that writings on European civilization had traditionally failed to reflect the point of view of the enslaved African, both as the captive participant in the Middle Passage and as a forced inhabitant of the United States. Consequently, he has endeavored to project and amplify the African American voice through a presentation and analysis of the African American novel, starting with what is considered to be the first one, William Wells Brown's *Clotel: or, the President's Daughter: A Narrative of Slave Life in the United States* (1853), carrying his analysis up to and beyond the award in 1993 of the Nobel Prize for Literature to Toni Morrison, a culminating point that clearly demonstrates for him that not only is the African American novel (indeed, African American literature in general) recognized as being well within the mainstream of American culture, but has achieved universal recognition.

The revised and updated 2020 version of *Cartea care vorbește* is what Professor Sîrbulescu describes as "horizontal research, in diachrony" (personal communication from E. Sîrbulescu, 10 December 2021), meaning that it is a study not only of how African American writing changed over time, but of how the situation of the writers, the environments in which they conceived their work, their views of their place in American society, the objectives that they hoped to achieve in writing, and many other facets of the place of the African American writer in American culture and society and in the world at large changed over time. Regarding the second book, *Literatura americană și provocarea etnicității*, Professor Sîrbulescu describes it as "an attempt to [dig] vertically" (ibid.) into the subject of African American literature, further elaborating and explaining ideas and concepts that he evoked in the first volume.

Although the title of this second book cites American literature in general, it too is mostly concerned with African American novels and their authors but with an emphasis on the challenges of ethnicity. Obviously the ethnic challenges faced by African-Americans, given the horrors of slavery and its aftermath, have been far more all-encompassing and, until relatively recently, almost impossible to overcome than in the case of other ethnicities. The difference is race, more or less arbitrarily and inflexibly defined over time, which has placed so-called white ethnicities on one side of a barrier almost impossible to cross, and non-whites, especially Blacks, on the other. The definition of Blackness (as imposed by whites) is so arbitrary, if not Manichaean, as to exclude any recognition of "multiracial whiteness" (expression borrowed from A. D. Powell (2005). ), even though many so-called Blacks have far more European (white) ancestry than (sub-Saharan) African ancestry and could, as in the case of the poet and novelist Nathan Eugene [Jean] Toomer, be considered 'voluntary blacks'. For Professor Sîrbulescu, the one-drop rule, the basis for American racial arbitrariness, is a striking contradiction to the ideal of the American melting pot, a contradiction that most Americans still do not recognize as such.

While we will not challenge Professor Sîrbulescu's claim that his first foray into the world of the African American novel, *Cartea care vorbește*, is a horizontal study, and that his second one, *Literatura americană și provocarea etnicității*, a vertical study, both volumes appear to be vertical in the sense that the themes and subjects that they develop are presented chronologically, from the origins of African American writing to the contemporary period, embodying the sorts of

background descriptions, digressions, flash-backs, and thematic explanations that one would expect to find in a multi-disciplinary approach to African American culture and its very painful relationship with American culture as a whole, of which it has, nevertheless, been increasingly recognized as a major component.

Bearing in mind the history of slavery and racism in the United States, Professor Sîrbulescu recognizes the initial separateness of African American writing, given the unique position of an unfree people in a land that, after 1776, proclaimed itself a bastion of freedom. At the same time, he shows how the stages of African American writing reflect the stages of American writing in general: romanticism, realism, naturalism, modernism, post-modernism, reflecting 19<sup>th</sup> century romantic appeals to decency, then, social protest, reformism, women's emancipation and the other styles and themes of American literature. But, he argues that, from its start, and well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, African-American literature was viewed as outsiders' writing, the expression, at best, of marginalized people and, at worst, as writing that should not be viewed as American at all, that is, from a white Anglo-Saxon (WASP) point of view.

Yet, as early as 1845, when American intellectuals were striving to create a national, peculiarly American and not English culture, one essayist, James Kennard Jr., asked rhetorically where in America could one find the most original poetry. His answer, "Our negro slaves to be sure. *That* is the class in which we must expect to find our original poets, and *we* do find them" (Kennard 1849: 107). For Kennard, it was the marginalization of Blacks that conferred originality to this early, oral cultural manifestation.

What Kennard identified as original no doubt reflected the orality of the West African discourse brought to America that in turn carried over into the African American church, particularly the call and response tradition that came to permeate some African American writing. And as the African American population, first enslaved and then free, grew conscious of its Americanness, it developed what the eminent African American scholar, W. E. B. DuBois (2007: 8) described as double consciousness.

In his 1903 study of African American realities, *The Souls of Black Folks*, DuBois wrote that the "American Negro 'ever feels his Twoness—an American, a Negro... two warring souls in one dark body whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.'" (ibid.) For Professor Sîrbulescu, double consciousness is an African American leitmotif that he pursues in both volumes, identifying it to a greater or lesser degree in each of the writings that he analyzes.

Per force, most of the novels that Professor Sîrbulescu examines were written well after the Civil War, particularly in the period following the 1876-1877 ending of Reconstruction, when the situation of the now free African Americans declined, reaching its lowest point in the early 1920's, accompanied by an increased number of lynchings, and other forms of violence directed at them, not only in the South but also in the Mid-west.

The first generation of African-American novelists, as Professor Sîrbulescu points out, was influenced by the principal slave narratives that had appeared before and immediately after the Civil War and by the strong influence of Black, Protestant Christianity, it embodying certain West African characteristics. Their books have a strong moral tone to them.

Like William Wells Brown, who published *Clotel* in 1853 and was himself an escaped former slave, the authors of these books denounce the hypocrisy of American racism and slavery. Wells based *Clotel* on the well-known reality that

Thomas Jefferson, the third president of the United States and the principal author of the United States Declaration of Independence, kept a mixed-race mistress, Sally Hemmings, his late wife's half-sister, with whom he had a number of children whose paternity he did not recognize. The hypocrisy of relationships of this sort and, in general, the sexual exploitation of female slaves by white masters, as particularly exemplified in the narrative by Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), became recurring themes in African American novels. Linked to the theme of the sexually exploited African American woman is that of the "tragic mulatto" that both Black and white authors developed.

Professor Sîrbulescu examines novels by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, and Charles Waddell Chesnutt, among others, that reflect strong opposition to racial discrimination, calling out the absurdity of racism. Chesnutt, in particular, who while identifying as Black, once complained that he was too white to be accepted by Blacks and too black to be accepted by Whites. He explored the ambiguities of being of mixed race in *The House Behind the Cedars* (1900) and *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901), the latter novel set in Wilmington, North Carolina, and having as its background the violent 1898 coup d'état, instigated by white supremacists, who overturned the Fusionist (bi-racial) city government.

Professor Sîrbulescu cites and analyzes the writings of other late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> century African American writers, including Sutton E. Griggs, an early Black separatist and nationalist. He evokes the educational activities and leadership roles of Booker T. Washington, the first principal/president (not the founder) of the Tuskegee Institute/University.

The Harlem Renaissance marked the coming to full maturity of the African American cultural and intellectual achievement. It featured novelists, poets, dramatists, musicians, and actors, who discovered one another but, at the same time, responded to a sudden increase in white interest in their activities. It marked a major turning point in the recognition that Black achievements in all branches of culture were part and parcel of American culture and should be taken very seriously by white critics.

In examining the novels of both male and female participants, Professor Sîrbulescu singles out those by Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, and Jean Toomer, male voices, and those by Jessie Fausset, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston, female voices. He underlines the importance of Professor Alain Locke's *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925), a one-volume sampling of African American writing, commentary, fiction, non-fiction, and poetry as well as a few examples of art, most of the selections having been produced by contributors to the Harlem Renaissance. The underlying message is that African Americans are making great progress in all intellectual and cultural domains.

The fact that New York City was the musical and publication capital of the United States during and after the 1920's was crucial for the success of African American writers, musicians, and dramatists. Here, white sponsors could be found who could link these persons to publishers and producers. Some authors, however, were troubled by their dependence on white publishers. And white sensibilities regarding sex and inter-racial relationships had to be taken into account, which probably explains the subdued treatment of these subjects in the novels by Nella Larsen and Jessie Faussett.

Professor Sîrbulescu carries his analyses of the African American novel forward, showing how Black separatist movements, the Great Depression, World



War II, the Communist challenge, decolonization, particularly in Africa, and the Civil Rights movement in the United States, and much more influenced given writers. He analyses selected works by Richard Wright, James Baldwin, and Chester Himes. He attaches great importance to the feminism of Alice Walker, analyzing *The Color Purple* (1982) and demonstrating that her writings stress the reality that African American women have been injured not only by the racism of whites, but also by the patriarchy and male chauvinism of black men. White's feminism stimulated her to promote the rediscovery and promotion of the oeuvre of Zora Neal Hurston, who had died in obscurity and poverty in 1960. Today, Neale's novels, particularly *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), are widely read.

If *Cartea care vorbește* is principally about the authors and their books, the second book, *Literatura americană și provocarea etnicității*, emphasizes the origins and the evolution of the ideas and concepts which underlie the African American novels that Professor Sîrbulescu has singled out. He begins with an analysis of what cultural diversity actually means in the United States, given the notions of ethnicity which have postulated that some ethnicities (whites) are legitimate and others (black and/or non-white) are less so or not at all. He looks closely at what it means to be a hyphenated American and why the hyphen has not existed for African Americans classed as Negroes, regardless of their genetic and geographic origins, and thus, until recently, viewed apart. He blames slavery and its heritage for this situation, referring to it as the "grotesque image in the mirror" [*Sclavia - imaginea grotescă din oglindă*], the title of the second chapter of the volume.

With this image in mind, Professor Sîrbulescu moves on to analyze concepts of American racism, particularly how the one-drop rule transformed race into caste, thereby pinning a Black identity on people who genetically are not Black. He examines how the heritage of slavery was replicated by the white imposition of Jim Crow - legally in the South, more informally in the North.

In succeeding chapters, the author amplifies his discussion of writers that he has analyzed in *Cartea care vorbește*. Again he analyzes the invisibility posited by Ralph Ellison, but this time with regard to H. G. Wells' *The Invisible Man: A Grotesque Romance* (1897). He analyzes Black feminism, distinguishing it from white feminism, with reference to writings by Alice Walker, particularly *The Color Purple* (1982).

The concluding four chapters of *Literatură americană și provocarea etnicității* are devoted to the works of Toni Morrison. Professor Sîrbulescu praises her capacity to integrate history, in which she is well versed, memory, folklore, and mysticism, into her novels of African American life, giving her characters and their actions universal significance and advocating for understanding, confrontation of hard truths, and forgiveness. He evokes Morrison's comment that without Black people, American history could not exist and her belief that dignity cannot exist without ethics. Professor Sîrbulescu notes how Morrison has spun a haunting, multi-generational, trilogy, *The Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992), and *Paradise* (1997), inspired by the very real case of a run-away slave, Margaret Garner, who, cornered in Ohio in 1856 by slave catchers, killed her daughter (and would have killed herself and her other children) so as to keep them from being cast back into slavery. Based on Morrison's worldview, Professor Sîrbulescu has titled the Prolegomenon to these four chapters, "The Solution to the Problems of Mankind is Mankind" [Soluția pentru problemele omului este omul], a statement which best encapsulates Toni Morrison's oeuvre.

Both of Professor Sîrbulescu's books are dense, well-written, comprehensive, and display a tremendous understanding of African American literature. He wrote them for a Romanian audience, who, already attracted by American literature, might wish to learn even more about its African American component. These books should be translated into English as soon as possible, for they will reveal facets of American culture and history, and a Romanian point of view, with which American readers might not be familiar.

In 1944, when the Swedish economist and sociologist, Gunnar Myrdal, published *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, his book offered Americans a broadened understanding of their society and history, particularly of what nowadays is referred to as America's original sin. Professor Sîrbulescu's two books will no doubt have a similar effect on how Americans view themselves and more particularly with regard to the cultural contributions and influences brought to bear by African Americans.

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**ATTILA IMRE**

**AN INTRODUCTION TO TRANSLATOR STUDIES**

Braşov: Editura Universităţii “Transilvania”, 2020, 218 pp.  
ISBN: 978-606-19-1285-8

**JULIANNA LŐRINCZ, GÁBOR LŐRINCZ**

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We present here an unconventional translation theory book that differs from other previously known and applied reference works in the field of Translation Studies. This difference is reflected not only in the interpretation of the process of thinking about translation, but also in the fact that it describes many other tasks that are important in the translator’s work. Attila Imre addresses a new field of research, whose importance was also emphasized previously by Andrew Chesterman (2009). This new field of research is now beginning with the name – *Translator Studies* – which differs from the name *Translation Studies*, the most well-known and accepted name primarily by researchers in linguistics. The author positions the translator in the centre of translation, seen as a language industry activity. Previous research has primarily focused on the translation of texts, during which translators have sought to establish some sort of equivalence.

The author reasons why a book with this approach is needed:

1. The IT revolution has increased the demand for translations.
2. Previous criteria posed to translations are re-evaluated.
3. The demand for translation in previously common fields, such as literary translation or cultural text translation, has shifted towards industry, commerce, and audiovisual entertainment, in accordance with new societal challenges.

Attila Imre interprets translation as a service, and in order for the various services to be effective, translators should not have only language proficiency, but also competencies enabling them to remain competitive and perform the special tasks required by a changed social environment. We note that such an approach is not alien to translation theory literature, as we have previously encountered similar suggestions, for example in the skopos theory (Vermeer 1996). According to the skopos theory, translation is a type of activity in which the key issue are the criteria set by the client regarding the target language text (TL), an idea also developed by Christiane Nord (1993). However, Nord replaces the skopos with the translator’s commission. In her view, this commission determines what expectations must be met by the end result of the translation process, i.e., the TL text. Being aware of the content of the book presented here, we can add that the translator’s commission can be determined by numerous factors, deriving from current social requirements or directly from the criteria posed by the client (cf. Joó 2005: 49, Simigné Fenyő

2006: 166-167). In Imre's book, the central role is given to the presentation of the translator's person, activities, competencies.

The book consists of six large chapters. We shall make comments on the parts that we have considered most important.

Equivalence of source and target language texts has been central in the 20<sup>th</sup> century translation theories. Confirming the argument of Albert (2011: 599), the author states that although the adequate reproduction of the source language in the target language is a prerequisite, the demands and orders of the customers and clients are of the utmost importance, and it is the translator's experience that creates the matching equivalence. This is also consistent with Nida's (1964) equivalence types, which can be formal and dynamic (see also Klaudy 1994). The author also makes reference to the denial of equivalence (Snell-Hornby 2006) and Venuti's opinion (2000: 470), according to which acceptance in the target culture is the most important aspect in text translation. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century is more interested in pragmatic considerations than in theoretical ones.

The book also briefly discusses the definitions of translation and concludes that the various theories bear witness that even linguists do not agree on the purpose and circumstances of translation. That is why there is a need for introducing the so-called *umbrella terms*, such as language services, in this case.

While examining the concept of translation and presenting various theories in parallel, Attila Imre finds that the concept of translation is so complex and subjectively evaluated that reassessment is necessary. Due to the 21<sup>st</sup> century IT revolution, further translation means are necessary, such as Machine Translation (MT) or Computer-Assisted Translation (CAT).

The author considers that translation is a language industry service (cf. Gouadec 2007), thus – along with the translator's professional competencies – a much greater role than before is played by:

1. register knowledge of the specific domain, besides basic linguistic skills;
2. user-level knowledge of ICT tools;
3. knowledge of various translation systems and handling real knowledge and misbeliefs associated with translations carried out with these tools etc.

The translator has to pay attention not only to the translation process, but also to all the parts of the service: for example, commissioning contracts, delivery of final target language texts to the customer, tracking translation fee transfer etc.

The author dedicates a separate subchapter to language power. He observes that the entire world, languages included, are controlled by economic interests, thus the languages spoken in economically more powerful countries will be more popular. The new virtual communication spaces opened by the Internet have a major role in this process. The author highlights the relationship between the English language and translation. Together with the spread of the Internet, the English language globalisation is visible in almost every area of economy.

In our view, the sub-chapter "Translator Competence" is an extremely important part of the book, as the translation profession requires various and specific types of translator competence. The most important types of competence are the following:

1. translation skills and ability;
2. knowledge;

3. linguistic competence; here the author discusses the following sub-competence types: translation into one's native language, bilingualism, cultural competence and domain competence, where the translator may need extended knowledge of professional working languages, technical skills (e.g., the ability to use hardware and software) or dealing with people in certain specific fields;
4. research competence, which combines research, acquiring and processing information, necessary not only for understanding the source language text content, but also for creating an adequate target language text;
5. technical competence, which requires the translator's constant updating, since technology is constantly developing, so specialized translators have to do constant checks of CAT-tools;
6. finally, translation competence is an important umbrella term, as it best reflects the concept of the translator as a mediator (cf. Simigné Fenyő 2006).

In the subchapter "Technology and Translation", the author writes about the technological revolution that resulted in the very rapid spread of computers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. With the spread of machine translation, the role of translators has completely changed as well, as they have to handle and control this technology.

The author presents a brief history and usability of Machine Translation and Computer-Assisted Translation. He notes that – at least for the time being – Machine Translation cannot entirely replace human translation, as it often yields inaccurate texts.

A further chapter discusses translator management. It often happens that the translators themselves have to deal with the various tasks and marketing that precede and follow translations, and this turns them into project managers as well. The chapter also contains a detailed discussion on the translator's self-management, which should be a daily activity (Hemera 2008: 3).

Self-promotion is vital in all fields where there are potential clients (e.g., personal websites, Facebook, or targeted e-mails); the preparation of a logo, business cards, and other promotional material often requires investing money and energy.

The author deals in a separate chapter with the management of cont(r)acts, that is with both contacts and potential contracts, which play an important role in the translators' activity.

Translators must deal with the status-lowering factors too, of which the most important is the so-called market disorder. Besides the continuous competition among translators, this also includes the fact that unqualified translators ask for a lower price than the qualified ones, so it is difficult to exclude them from the labour market: there are always clients who decide on the choice of a translator exclusively on the basis of price offers.

The final chapter of the book is about the ethical aspects of translation. The most important elements of the Translators Code of Ethics are related to the principles of text translation and the attitude towards partners. The translator's most important task is to find the balance between faithful renditions, target standards and client expectations. As translators are service providers, the translation becomes a product; hence translators are bound to their clients by written and unwritten rules, such as fidelity, quality assurance, deadlines etc.

The introductory list of abbreviations and acronyms is very useful, helping the readers to understand the content of each book chapter. The Appendix includes a rich bibliography and various documents belonging to the work of a translator.

We consider Attila Imre's book a reference work in the field of translation training, as it includes all essential aspects required for professional translators in their successful activity as entrepreneurs.

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DOI: 10.35923/BAS.28.40

**CARMEN CONCILIO, DANIELA FARGIONE (Editors)**

***TREES IN LITERATURES AND THE ARTS.  
HUMANARBOREAL PERSPECTIVES IN THE ANTHROPOCENE.***

Lanham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 2021, 297 pp.  
ISBN 978-1-7936-2279-2; 978-1-7936-2280-8

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In official geologic terms, our age is known as the Holocene, but, unofficially, the term Anthropocene is more and more frequently used to refer to the recent centuries and decades, in which the human impact on the planet, its climate and ecosystems, has had visible and irreversible effects. Ironically, the rise of rationalism, the triumph of science and the advances in technology have been responsible both for progress, improving living standards and enlightenment, and also for the confirmation of the destructive power of the human species. Reacting against the effects of industrialization and urbanization, the Romantic poets and artists were, in many ways, the first environmentalists. Their nostalgia for a pre-industrial world, for the natural rhythms of life and work, their belief in the protection and love God offers all creatures, animals, and plants, all follow intuitively the principles much more recently outlined by eco-ethics.

The book edited by Carmen Concilio and Daniela Fargione, academics at the University of Turin, Italy, in the Environmental Studies series of Lexington Books goes beyond the abstract purposes of literary criticism and theory, in a successful attempt to draw the readers' attention to important and urgent contemporary concerns. As philosopher and cultural critic Santiago Zabala argues in the Foreword, the relevance of this volume lies in its powerful evocation of an emergency which most of us do not confront directly. But the absence of urgency doesn't make silent emergencies any less serious. If in 2020 the pandemic grabbed us all, more or less symbolically, by the lapels, after it had been an ignored emergency for years, the same can be said about the environmental crisis humanity is facing at the beginning of the third millennium. At the same time, the value of this book consists in its capacity to demonstrate that, while science follows its own path, often inexorably, literatures and arts are more capable of raising public awareness, because of the emotional hold they have on the public. If scientists can barely make their warning reach our ears, written stories, poems, photographs and music will hopefully reach our hearts. In Santiago Zabala's words, "while science seeks to rescue us *from* emergencies by improving and preserving knowledge, the arts rescue us *into* emergencies, calling for our intervention, as this book does." (2021: xiii, emphasis in the original)

Eco-studies are, by definition, interdisciplinary, so this book brings together contributions from a vast array of subjects. Carmen Concilio is professor of English and postcolonial literature, but her interests also include urban studies, migration, landscape and ecology, age and ageing. Daniela Fargione teaches Anglo-American literature, as well as literature in connection with other arts, like photography and music, but her interests are also in the area of environmental humanities (climate change, food, and migration). Similarly, the scholars, academics, and practitioners invited to offer their own perspective in this volume are poets, artists, theologians, pedagogues, cultural and social anthropologists, film critics, scientists, philosophers, historians, experts in Italian literature, Russian literature and art, Romanian literature, Irish studies, postcolonial criticism, Pacific cultures, imagology, reproductives, etc.

The richness of expertise justifies the organization of the book into five large sections, all revolving around the presence and importance of trees. If the Cartesian body-mind divide was translated, in the western world, into the nature vs. culture dichotomy, it is not surprising that trees have regressed farther and farther away from the foreground into the décor of our perceptions and mentalities. In the editors' words, we feel nowadays "mentally and spiritually separated from trees that have become invisible" (2), even if – or maybe especially because – we value them as resources. Only a reconceptualization of the human, the book invites us to see, can lead to a revalorization of nature (and trees) in terms of a relation of interdependence, rather than of dominance and control. This is why the first part of the book focuses on the *Human-Tree Kinship*, in four essays that follow the human-arboreal connection in English-speaking, Korean, and Russian literatures. Carmen Concilio offers a survey of canonical western literature, from Ovid and Virgil, to Dante and Shakespeare, but also of contemporary non-European, non-canonical literatures, in which humans turn into plants, displaying an implicit or even unconscious challenge of established anthropocentrism. Instead, the values promoted approach the infra-human dimension, a form of acceptance which is only natural. Anthropologists Emanuela Borgnino and Gaia Cottino discuss Oceanian customs of promoting human-nature relationships, which include trees in all the practices and rituals of the community. Shannon Lambert analyzes two novels in which trauma and mourning are interceded by trees. Plants, in her view, have a degree of awareness, knowledge, and memory which complements the human capacity. Igor Piumetti describes the tree as a national Russian symbol, commenting on a graphic novel and an animated film, produced several decades apart, the former in full Stalinist propaganda during World War II, the latter in the last years of the Soviet Union, when the political giant was already heading towards dissolution. The tree of the nation symbolizes citizenship, resilience, and community, or, alternatively, freedom and regeneration of the self.

Part II, *Spiritual Trees*, adds a religious dimension to the human-arboreal relationship. Providing a Christian perspective, Bernard Lukasz Sawicki gives trees as models for monks and ascetics, with their solitary but firmly rooted existence, an inspiration and an example of patience and perseverance. Drawing on Christian mysticism, Stefano Maria Casella reads Ezra Pound's poems, paying special attention to the symbolism of the ash-tree in mythological metamorphoses, where it



frequently appears as the central axis of the universe. Non-Christian approaches to tree veneration are taken by Irene De Angelis, who presents the echoes of Celtic traditions and beliefs in Seamus Heaney's poetry. Māori animism explains the depiction of tree worshipping in contemporary New Zealandese fiction, which deplores the alteration of human-arboreal connections by European mentalities. Film studies complete the picture of this section, in the chapter by Alberto Baracco, who analyzes Cosimo Terlizzi's cinema as an example of ecophilosophy, in a dialogue between humans and trees that enables the former to discover their innermost selves.

The third section, *Trees in/and Literatures*, introduces the pedagogical element, with Bahar Gürsel's chapter on Flora Cooke's educational methods of children's immersion in nature, an approach which, in the late 1890s, was way ahead of its time. The next two chapters can be considered mildly didactic in the sense that they discuss literary texts as warnings. Patricia Vieira reads classical adventure and jungle novels, in which the primeval Amazonian forest is the "green hell", as expressions of political and economic agendas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In contrast, new pseudo-jungle novels respond to this literary tradition with a clear environmental stance, paying homage to the ever dwindling Amazon. Roberto Merlo presents another "green hell", the urban jungle, in which the ugly city sprawl makes both human and vegetal victims, in an unconventional reading of George Bacovia's poetry. Giulia Baselica looks at the palm tree, recurrent in the early twentieth-century poetry of Nikolaj Gumilëv, as an escapist symbol, its exoticism making a stark contrast with the every-day realities of Russia.

Part IV, *Trees in the Arts*, focuses on performative arts, which often contain an element of "dendrosophy", a term coined by Italian poet Tiziano Fratus, author of the first chapter, where he describes his concrete poetry, or "tree poems", as being the result of his epiphanies near millennial Sequoias. Annette Arlander writes about the inclusion of trees in her artistic performances and experiments, her message being the importance of sharing (time, space, care) with the natural environment. Poet and photographer Marlene Creates describes her multimedia and multimodal artwork in eco-digital humanities, whose purpose is to lobby for salvaging the eco-systems of Northern Canada.

The last section, *Trees and Time*, wraps it all up. Trees have their own stories "written" in their rings, stories that go further back in time than individual human memory. Daniela Fargione's chapter starts from this observation, arguing that humans and trees occupy different positions in the time continuum and that, to compensate for the absence of tree-like memory, humans have developed auxiliary media for memory storage, like writing, photography, and cinema. No wonder then, that trees have inspired humans to define their identity, belonging, and genealogy, as Eva Zehelein demonstrates in the closing chapter of the book, about family trees.

To sum up, Carmen Concilio and Daniela Fargione's collection is as much about trees as it is about humans, who only recently started to realize that plants are living species, like animals, and, more importantly, that it turns out we need them more than they need us. The editors offer readers the eighteen chapters of this book

so as to allow themselves to be cured of “plant blindness” (2) for their own benefit, in order to “forge our collective imaginary and prompt us to healthier behaviors and lifestyles” (16). That we are given this opportunity by being reminded of some of the most beautiful pieces of literature and visual arts can only be a great privilege.

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