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***AGAINST THE IMPERATIVE
OF THE CANON***

‘MY FATHER HAD A DAUGHTER’ OR THE ANATOMY OF DESIRE

ADRIANA RĂDUCANU

Yeditepe University

***Abstract:** Grace Tiffany’s debut novel, My Father Had a Daughter, is a vibrant tale of uninhibited desire, revenge and loss in the shape of a fictionalized ‘memoir’ of Judith, Shakespeare’s youngest daughter. The present paper will focus on the diegetic narrator’s trajectory of becoming; the theoretical framework will be informed by some of Deleuze and Guattari’s most important concepts, such as lines of flight, desiring machine, nomad and body without organs.*

***Keywords:** body without organs, desire, immanence, lines of flight, nomad, war machine.*

1. Introduction

The godly say that the dead are not dead, but stored up somewhere, and that one day parts of ourselves we have lost will be gathered and bound like the leaves of a book. Whole and perfect we will be, they say, their eyes lifted up to that other world that sent us here and lent us to ourselves. I am down here, in the valley of the shadow, where I walk by the river and at times skim a stone on the bank of the other side. And I hope very much they are right. (Tiffany 2003: 293)

As a character, Shakespeare appeared for the first time in the anonymous *Memoirs of the Shakespear’s-Head in Covent Garden: By the Ghost of Shakespear* (1755). As Dobson (1992: 212) details it, the narrator encounters Shakespeare’s ghost in a tavern and learns that the playwright is compelled to haunt the place, as a chastisement for his adventurous youth, which started with the deer-poaching at Charlecote. There is a moral side of the story related to the connection between the ghost and the personal circumstances of the average man, subject to ordinary weaknesses. Besides the inevitable assimilation of some of Shakespeare’s characters, the narrative also contains interesting anecdotes about his personal life and career. This is a starting point for later narratives, which substitute the ghost with the fallible man (Franssen 2009:15). The subsequent Romantic and Victorian forays into the makings of an authentic genius, while heavily capitalizing on the author’s mythical status, also attempted to render the mere human physicality of his Stratfordian origins and London trajectories. As Bourdieu (1984: 32) claims, this “popular aesthetic” relies on “the affirmation of the continuity between art and life”, which results in the gradual erosion of art’s privileged, autotelic, and self-consistent status, and its shifted focus towards life. In Shakespeare’s case, arguably

because of the many missing pieces from his biography, this has proved a considerable challenge, as well as an inexhaustible topic for generations of writers. Therefore, his life has been fictionally re-created in pop narratives that, whilst evading the inaccessible historical fidelity, adjust and sometimes construct biographical particulars, so that the Man Shakespeare and the 'Author as Myth' Shakespeare come to overlap (Lanier 2007: 100).

Shakespeare's female family members constitute no exception to this fictional mythologizing/humanizing venture. Building on Virginia Woolf's hypotext *A Room of One's Own*, various feminist fictions mirror the frequent disguise-mechanism of Shakespeare's plays. Their general plot is arguably formulaic, featuring the protagonist, a female relative of Shakespeare's, who, stifled by the rigidly male-controlled constraints of Elizabethan and Jacobean England, dons male clothes and flees to London, to become a player or a poet. Among the most significant titles that constitute a particular branch of this Shakespeare-based mythical/biographical fiction, Lanier (2007: 113) mentions Laura Shaman's *The Other Shakespeare* (1981), Mollie Hardwick's *The Shakespeare Girl* (1983), Doris Gwaltney's *Shakespeare's Sister* (1995), Judith Beard's *Romance of the Rose* (1998), Grace Tiffany's *My Father Had a Daughter* (2003), and Peter W. Hassinger's *Shakespeare's Daughter* (2004).

The focus of the present paper is Grace Tiffany's novel which trails the childhood and adulthood of the author's youngest daughter, Judith Shakespeare. My aim is to explore Judith's life path, by focusing on her transgressive, all-consuming desire to escape the fetters of her gender limitations and, even albeit temporarily, embrace a different identity. Although magnified by the loss of her twin and sprinkled with the seeds of revenge against an ever-absent father, this desire is nevertheless, as I will argue further on, a desire towards life, towards *becoming*. Taking my cue from Margherita Pascucci's (2019: 33) Deleuzian-inspired analysis of *Richard III*, I am going to call this 'affirmative desire', i.e., "a desire which stops desiring to repress itself and creates, coming out of the movement of his becoming, a new place of immanence". Moreover, I will connect this to Deleuze and Guattari's 'lines of flight' and 'war machine' and propose a reading of Judith Shakespeare as a 'Body without organs', the originator of an unfettered subjectivity, as the proper environment for desire to explore and surpass the limits of its becoming.

2. The beginning(s) of desire

At the core of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy lies the idea of 'becoming', famously put forward first by Aristotle, a clear departing point from Plato's 'being'. Following in the Stagirite's footsteps, Deleuze and Guattari also distinguish potentiality from actuality, *dynamis* from *entelecheia*. However, there is a fundamental difference; while for Aristotle, 'becoming' is conducive towards an end-point, a *telos*, for Deleuze and Guattari it marks a certain "everdiffering-from-onself", it is "endless", it "governs every aspect of existence", and it "obliterates all conventional notions of "being"":

Indeed, DG pointedly reevaluate Aristotle's distinction between potentiality and actuality. They stress that potentiality and virtuality – what a thing might become through the inexorability of difference and desire – is in fact its reality, rather than the identity that thing might momentarily seem to take at a moment in time. (Lanier 2014: 27)

The above quotation calls to mind the (in)famous Richard III, the acknowledged master of becoming, deceit, and crass manipulation. At a superficial glance, it would be difficult to imagine two literary characters more at odds with each other than Shakespeare's "Richard Crookback" and Tiffany's Judith Shakespeare. However, Freud's insights into the connections between fiction and life can certainly be expanded to encompass similarities between various fictional characters, thus providing adequate grounds for otherwise improbable associations:

[...] we feel that we ourselves could be like Richard, nay, that we are already a little like him. Richard is an enormously magnified representation of something we can all discover in ourselves. We all think we have reason to reproach nature and our destiny for congenital and infantile disadvantages; we all demand reparation for early wounds to our narcissism, our self-love ... Why were we born in a middleclass dwelling instead of a royal palace? (Freud 1961: 161)

Taking my cue from Freud, I would like to initiate my exploration of Judith's character and her desire by remarking on the shared features between her and that of the much-maligned Shakespearean villain. I am not taking this reading strategy as far as to argue that Tiffany construed a contemporary, female counterpart of the last of the Plantagenets. Nevertheless, separated as they are by their inner (im)morality, authorial intentions, and genre conventions, the two characters share a certain *ruthlessness* of desire, fuelled by the unusual circumstances of their being in the world. Richard's frustration with the unbecomingness of his body, his underprivileged position of a third son, and his own mother's cold, hostile attitude towards him resonate with the circumstances of Judith Shakespeare's fictional presence.

Firstly, there is the anomaly of her birth, since she has a copy (or *is* a copy of one organism, as her twin, Hamnet, was born ten minutes before her); secondly, she is a girl child; thirdly, the very beginning of the narrative introduces her as the daughter of a mother whose "wild envy" threatens to "choke her" when, herself deprived of marital affection, is exposed to the daily witnessing of the deep bond between her children (Tiffany 2003: 2). Furthermore, Judith inhabits an unconventional family-structure, where the father is ever-absent, the mother is generally emotionally unavailable, and Uncle Gilbert, the father's brother, is an awkward, albeit constant presence. All these narcissistic wounds are, in Deleuze and Guattari's view, solid foundations for interpreting the character in terms of lines of flight, war machine, and Body without Organs. As what follows will argue, the concepts coined by Deleuze and Guattari, reflected by the narrative, can be directed towards the realization of the character's potentiality, firmly opposing the actuality of the adverse biographical circumstances.

The novel begins *in medias res* with the image of a semi-pestilential riverbank due to the "offal dumped willy-nilly by housewives upstream", the playground and the looking-glass of twin children: "When Hamnet and I looked together and stayed still enough, it was easy to imagine that I was he and he was I, and that truly we were four" (Tiffany 2003: 1). This suggestion of an early conflict between the water's stagnation and the fluidity, multiplicity of the twins' reflected images is an early signifier of the protagonist's future trajectory, shaped by her constant attempts to reject a Platonian 'being' and embrace the Aristotelian 'becoming'. As Deleuze and Guattari explain it, the lines of flight articulate an escape strategy from an obstacle, consequently forging the lines of becoming. In

Tiffany's tale, the obstacle is paradoxically one of *absence*, as it is precisely the father's infrequent presence in the household, for which the twins compensate by mimetically constructing a private world of make-believe, by acting, and reading into his plays. Judith is the main initiator of these childhood games; significantly, her overpowering thirst for pre-eminence contaminates selfless, unconditional sisterly affection and explicates it as the consequence of Hamnet's unfailing obedience to her whims, his not running "riot to my desires", his constant willingness to entertain "all and any of my ideas and plots", as well as his being "the willing reflection of my spirit" (Tiffany 2003: 4). Thus, to the interiorization of an unconventional family structure – which she will betray with lines of flight – she counterposes a form of exteriority (power games with an obedient Hamnet) that from the very beginning of the novel announces her own interiority, directed towards multiplicity.

In *Dialogues*, Deleuze claims that Richard III, far from being a classic case of "trickstering" who cheated his way onto the throne, is one who "does not simply want power, he wants treason" (Deleuze and Parnett 1987: 40). In my reading of Tiffany's narrative, Judith is not a protagonist who simply wants recognition, but one who desires power - over her brother, over her father, later on over her romantic fling, Nat Field, ultimately over all those with whom she interacts. Hence, Richard's absolute treachery read as line of flight mirrors Judith's dreams of power; notably, such dreams are defined by an overwhelming need for an audience, charged with beholding her visions of becoming, despite (or precisely because of) the gender limitations.

One of the most important features of the lines of flight, as introduced by Deleuze, is the so-called evil dimension: "A flight is a sort of delirium. To be delirious [*délirer*] is exactly to go off the rails (...) There is something demoniacal and demonic in a line of flight" (ibid.). Judith's childhood recipes confess to the making of an "off the rails" character and reflect her early allegiance to the world of sorcery and political intrigue that outlines plot, character, and setting in her father's *Macbeth*, *Merchant of Venice*, and *Richard II*. Bearing bizarre names, such as "Horror Soup", "Death Juice", and ingredients of "human toes and rats' bane and papists' tongues and cooking times of a thousand years", they echo the parent's plays where people comment on murder, on "a murderous moneylender" and "about a poor young English king who got stabbed in the prison cell" (Tiffany 2003: 6-7). Significantly, in terms of desire-forging, this gradual exposure to the father's works of imagination has different consequences on the Shakespeare children. While Susanna and Hamnet merely clamour for the right to see the plays, Judith's desire is to be part of one (idem: 9). Unconfessed to anyone, this repressed desire mutates into the production of a new self of a new subject, the free author of a new composition of events. As the following section will reveal, this firm refusal of personal fixity embraces a philosophy of becoming, tragically oblivious to the consequences of its enactment.

3. Becoming a body without organs

In Tiffany's novel, the much-documented historical reality of the plague, responsible for frequently bringing the Elizabethan thespian universe to a standstill, is fictionalized as more of Judith's dabbling into the occult. Her spell calling for plague in London (followed by the father's homecoming) transgresses the safe

boundaries of filial affection and becomes the manifestation of ruthless, dark desire, not only for the return of the father, but also for the recognition of her uncanny power over his comings and goings. To Hamnet's concern regarding the potentiality of brutal death for countless children, she callously points out that "they will be London children", therefore strangers to them (Tiffany 2003: 18), "acres more wicked" than their local playmates (idem: 19). The father's return, albeit short-lived, establishes Judith's reputation as a "fine spell-caster" in her twin's eyes (idem: 26), a title which she proudly acknowledges, although it paradoxically frightens her.

Tragically, her successful experimenting with arcane forces inadvertently causes Hamnet's death by drowning, after yet another spell – cast for the same reason – in the middle of the night, by the same river that has witnessed all their childhood games, now turned into the gate to death. This narrative tragic peak and the complex array of emotions it releases, stretching from the survivor's guilt to the all-consuming desire to punish the author/father for turning this death into art immortal trigger a profound transformation of Judith's character into what can be read from a Deleuzian perspective, as a Body without Organs: "The BwO is what remains when you take everything away. What you take away is precisely the phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a whole" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994a: 151). The tragic death of her twin thus becomes for Judith an emptying of "phantasy, and significances and subjectifications as a *whole*" (ibid., emphasis mine), a state when everything is taken away – structured organism, meaningful *signifiante*, power of subjectification – and what remains is the immanence of desire.

In *The Highest Altar*, a book on human sacrifice, Patrick Tierney argues that the successful twin symbolizes the society of the living, and the unsuccessful one, his shadowy double – "the one who was sacrificed and then buried under the cornerstone, in order to deal with the Underworld, propitiate the gods, and protect the city" (Atwood 2002: 40). There is a similar mechanism at work in Tiffany's novel; the successful (because alive) twin is compelled to re-fashion herself in/for the society of the living, while the unsuccessful (dead) Hamnet becomes the revered sacrifice which will haunt Judith throughout her life journey. Thus, Hamnet's death is no ordinary death; it can be read as a ground-breaking 'event', as a philosophical concept almost. Hamnet's tragic demise, because of its incommunicability in terms of affect and its everlasting effects, challenges the conventional understanding of time; moreover, it also serves as a magnifier, a reminder of Judith's anterior desire of unfettered becoming. In Deleuze and Guattari's words (1994b: 158):

It is no longer time that exists between two instants; it is the event that is a meanwhile [un entre-temps]: the meanwhile is not part of the eternal, but neither is it part of time-it belongs to becoming. The meanwhile, the event, is always a dead time; it is there where nothing takes place, an infinite awaiting that is already infinitely past, awaiting and reserve. This dead time does not come after what happens; it coexists with the instant or time of the accident, but as the immensity of the empty time in which we see it as still to come and as having already happened, in the strange indifference of an intellectual intuition. All the meanwhiles are superimposed on one another, whereas times succeed each other.

There is a certain Nietzschean echo discernable through Judith's state and actions after her twin's death; this is not to say that the work of mourning and

melancholia does not take its due course. But, overall, we witness the character's superimposing her devastating survivor's guilt onto previous perceptions of her own problematic situatedness in the household. In that sense, elaborations on the 'event' can shed light onto Judith's affirmative, desire-building coming to terms with her brother's death: "There is a dignity of the event that has always been inseparable from philosophy as *amor fati*: being equal to the event, or becoming the offspring of one's own events – "my wound existed before me; I was born to embody it" (Deleuze, Guattari 1994b: 159).

Violently cut off from twinhood, Judith will consequently oppose disarticulation to the organization of the organism, free experimentation to the power structure of *signifiante* and finally nomadism to the suppression of subjectification. She will become, in Deleuze and Guattari's (1994a: 153) words, "matter that occupies space to a given degree – to the degree corresponding to the intensities produced", a BwO as "the *field of immanence* of desire, the *plane of consistency* specific to desire (with desire defined as a process of production without reference to any exterior agency, whether it be a lack that hollows it out or a pleasure that fills it" (idem: 154).

This desire is active in the presence of a BwO, "under one relation or another" (idem: 165). As I have mentioned in the previous section, Judith's 'fall into desire', the re-arranging of the self in a BwO, was initiated before the tragic event of her brother's death, with him as faithful accomplice to her manifestations of desire; post-event, it will continue with a temporary re-location in London, where she will oppose her gender-limited "intensities" to a world of male power and domination. Thus, in Badiou's words, a private world-shattering 'event' will paradoxically generate "Unlimited becoming", the ontological realisation of the eternal truth of the One, the infinite power [puissance] of Life". As such, in no way it can be perceived as a void, or a stupor, separated from what becomes:

To the contrary, it is the concentration of the continuity of life, its intensification. The event is that which donates the One to the concatenation of multiplicities. We could advance the following formula: in becomings, the event is the proof of the One of which these becomings are the expression. This is why there is no contradiction between the limitless of becoming and the singularity of the event. The event reveals in an immanent way the One of becomings, it makes becoming this One. The event is the becoming of becoming: the becoming(-One) of (unlimited) becoming
(http://parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia02/parrhesia02_badiou02.pdf: 38)

4. London calling

In Spinoza's (2000: 171) thought, *conatus* represents any being's "essential and intrinsic disposition to preserve" itself. A person's well-being is that which ensures the capacity for self-preservation, whereas the bad is that which hinders that capability; involved in self-preservation is desire (*appetito*), translated as capacity for action. Pleasure and joy derive from the capacity for action, whereas pain stems from the incapacity to act; moreover, according to Spinoza, pain is passion only, and not action, whereas joy is both pleasure and action. To illustrate this in Tiffany's novel, Judith continues the forging of the BwO by counterposing joy, pleasure, and the action of going to London after two years marked by the devastating pain (as passion, inaction) caused by the loss of her brother. This cluster of mourning-related affects accompanies another type of desire, that of exposing her father's callous adoption/adaptation of his son's death in *The Twelfth*

Night, “a comedy, a monstrous lie to please the public, no doubt to end in a gleeful morris dance” (Tiffany 2003: 67). It is this multi-folded desire which constitutes the grounds for the utmost “mobility”; as Bennet (2001: 28) notices, albeit in a different context, such mobility “is widest when is not random, erratic or too fast”; similarly, “space for becoming is greatest” when it is not the single *telos*.

Judith’s escape to London involves a disguise, a temporary exchange of identity. To survive in the metropolis while pursuing her dream of acting, as well as punishing her father’s cynical appropriation of the family tragedy, Judith dons man’s clothes. In Deleuze and Guattari’s (1994a: 277) words, she therefore becomes a war machine:

When the man of war disguises himself, as a woman, flees disguised as a girl, it is not a shameful transitory incident in his life. To hide, to camouflage oneself, is a warrior function, and the line of flight attracts the enemy, traverses something and puts what it traverses into flight: the warrior arises in the infinity of a line of flight.

The war machine thus creates the possibility for transformation to occur, it represents a site and a condition of possibility; furthermore, it is algebraic, and functions according to the logic of numbering, that which organizes the world to become. It also emerges in conjunction with the nomadic people, whose very existence is pure deterritorialization. To illustrate, in the novel, as a nomad, as a runaway girl disguised as Hieronymus Chupple, an enterprising lad with knowledge of the letters (Tiffany 2003: 88), Judith manages to find work in the Cardinal’s Cap inn, where “the ale and food was good but the patron somehow degenerate”, a place “which indulged a taste for bawdy talk, and sometimes more than talk (idem: 92). This less than respectable environment, by its very proximity to the theatres, allows Judith to closely watch the plays, and thus firmly immerse herself into her father’s thespian universe. Interestingly, she approaches these daily, strategic *reconnaissance* field trips in a double capacity; she is both an outsider, a traveller from elsewhere, a stranger to the inner workings of the Globe and the other theatres, and also an insider, the over-enthusiastic daughter with a previous privileged access to her father’s magic. This double posture enables her to critically assess the plays; the narrative renders such criticism as an echo of Hamlet’s reprimand of the exacerbated acting method, since she gets repelled by “a man or boy [who] did the emphasis ill or marred all with a distracting gesture” and wonders about “how my father bore with their folly” in spite of their overall crafty performance (Tiffany 2003: 96).

Armed with direct knowledge of her father’s theatre, plays and fellow actors, Judith (this time as Castor Popworthy) becomes a lodger of Henry Condell’s and gets to utter her first lines on the stage. This new line of flight, marked by a plausible forsaking of her gender characteristics, is arguably the refined result of “a making strange, or ‘deterritorialization’ of bodily experience, a disruption of its usual habits of posture, movement facial expression, voice” (Bennet 2001: 25). Almost immediately, in the highly competitive world of the Renaissance English theatre, in her capacity as the newest, most promising addition to the Globe, she colludes with the boy-actor Nathan Field’s own need for recognition, fame, and glory. The price he demands in order not to have her gender identity revealed is her virginity, and he obtains it without difficulty. Thus, the pact of youthful lust that brings on her wilful, hasty submission to Nat Field’s desire resembles the “masochist body” who, at his master’s request “dons horse gear - bridle, bit,

harness - and submits to carefully-timed, systematic whipping”; this regimen can be construed as an “attempt to create a new circuit of intensities, a new flow exchange among man, woman, and horse” (idem: 26-27). Significantly, this rushed consummation of youthful lust does not replace Judith’s original purpose to perform in her father’s plays. Instead, Nate’s misplaced remark about girls’ inability to act (Tiffany 2003: 148) reterritorializes her temporarily forgotten desire, which is actualized when she disposes of his rue (a plant consumed by boy actors to prevent their voices from cracking) and, as a last-minute replacement, she gets to stand in for him as Viola in *The Twelfth Night*. Her performance is exceptional, arguably because it challenges the limits of what was permissible in the strictly gender-based world of the Elizabethan theatre. Judith’s dramatic talent, her extraordinariness can be understood in terms of Deleuze and Guattari’s insights into the work of “itinerant labourers”. According to them (1994a: 364) “itinerant laborers – masons, carpenters, smiths” travelled extensively at the time of the building of the old Gothic cathedrals; at these multiple, scattered sites, “so skilled are the stone carvers in stone cutting, that they need make no reference to an architect blueprint, to a theoretical *eidōs*”. Instead, they manage to collapse the “static relation form-matter” which “tends to fade into the background in favour of a dynamic relation, material forces” so that it is “the cutting of the stone that turns it into the material capable of holding and coordinating forces of thrust, and of constructing higher and longer vaults”; such vaults are “no longer a form, but the line of a continuous variation of the stones” (ibid.). Similarly, Judith’s performance creatively departs from her father’s “architect blueprint”, while her “skilled” ‘mistakes’ – admittedly also caused by the excitement of the *debutante* – can be read as a sample of what Deleuze and Guattari (1994a: 368) designate as “nomad science”, a form of production in excess of the disciplinarity of the State’s “royal science”. Thus, the famous “*My father had a daughter lov’d a man*” becomes “*My father had a daughter was a man*” (Tiffany 2003: 159). Arguably, this slight turn of verse both confesses to the fluidity of gender boundaries that paradoxically gained her access into a forbidden world and temporarily rewrites the loss of the past albeit at the expense of obliterating the self. Judith’s most significant ‘addition’ to a play meant to entertain and mollify pain and loss involves a (non)utterance, a silence that can be construed as a symbolical castigation of the author’s callous appropriation of tragic fact to create joyful and optimistic art:

We stared at each other, the boy and I, and then I made my last mistake, which haply no one noted: I could not forbear mouthing along with my twin the lines that only he was meant to say: *Were you a woman,/ I should my tears let fall upon your cheek,/ And say, “Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!”* (Tiffany 2003: 161)

5. Conclusion

Judith’s London adventure ends when she is recognized by her father and swiftly packed off back to Stratford. Once there, she must face the consequences of her flight and the gossip of the townspeople, who, nevertheless, like her mother, attribute her actions not to “mere waywardness”, but to “something nearer to madness” (Tiffany 2003: 186). Interestingly, her London adventure reconciles her to the typical life of a maiden in a small, provincial town; desire(s) fulfilled thus become(s) experience in terms of both gender limitations and empowerment, since she confesses to her mother that London is “a wondrous place for man or boy”

although “it affords little scope for a woman” (idem: 187). Nevertheless, true to her newly gained freedom and ability to act upon limiting circumstances, Judith occasionally breaks the confines of respectable behaviour. On the tragic occasion of Edmund Shakespeare’s death by fever, yet again disguised as a boy, Judith drinks herself into a stupor. Years after, she returns to the big city and briefly resumes her affair with Nate Field, this time from a site of power granted by her privileged position as the daughter of a father comfortably situated in the circle of aristocratic patrons of the arts. However unconventional and wild, these brief interludes do not make a considerable dent in the armour of healthy ordinariness of her (relatively) well-adjusted persona.

What about *affirmative desire*, then? What is left there after a fictional journey marked, as it has been argued so far, by lines of flight, war machine, nomadic science and BwO? Does the return to the point of origin signal the death of Judith’s *élan vital*, to use Bergson’s term, the unquestioning and unquestionable re-arranging of selfhood? The end of the novel extends a new challenge to the architecture of Judith’s hunger for becoming, when Shakespeare himself reveals desire to his daughter as *the* mark of the entire clan, of Hamnet, who “had the Shakespeare blood” and “was mad for fantasies”, of the “Grandfer” who in order to “make good his application for a coat of arms” devised a tale about “his ancestry” (idem: 284), and of Edmund, who died as a young actor, in London. This acknowledgment of desire as a Shakespearean genetic code, since it is made by the most desirous of them all, who had forsaken family ties and affection to carve magic art in London, interestingly opens new, ultimate paths for becoming. When the father asks the daughter to have the “real courage to promise thy care and life’s company to another” (287), he actually engraves on her body and mind his own desire for the continuity of the family, arguably as a transgenerational act of reparation for major personal fallacies. Symbolically, the novel explains the mystery of the “best bed” which is gifted as a wedding present to Judith and Tom Quiney (288). However, there is no adequate analysis of desire which fails to consider the end of desire, no becoming without the ultimate becoming. This is the final interrogation into the workings of becoming, of beginnings and of endings with which an anguished Judith confronts her dying author-father:

If our lives are leant to us, does that mean that when they leave us they go off to where they began? That they came from a place and go back there? His eyes were closed, and for a moment I thought he had fallen asleep, and not heard me. But then he spoke: ‘I... will... find... out’” (Tiffany 2003: 289)

The various ways in which this arcane message can acquire meaning, fluctuating from the literal to the “less hopeful and more determined” with Will taking centre stage, and finally to Will “finding an out, an exit from our worldly stage” (Tiffany 2003: 290) should give us all pause.

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CRITICISM AND PREJUDICE: THE ISSUE OF CANONICITY AND NEO-VICTORIAN WORKS

JANA VALOVÁ

Masaryk University, Brno

Abstract: *This paper asks the question whether historical and neo-Victorian works belong to the same genre or if they need to be approached separately. The focus then switches to the criticism of these works and the effect it has had on the discourse surrounding them. It uses excerpts from The Western Canon by Harold Bloom to introduce some of the characteristics of canonicity and to discuss whether these criteria are fair and attainable. To demonstrate the frequently biased attitude towards these books, The French Lieutenant's Woman by John Fowles and Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem by Peter Ackroyd are discussed.*

Keywords: *canonicity, historical novels, John Fowles, neo-Victorian literature, Peter Ackroyd*

1. Introduction

The issue of literary canonicity is usually approached through two opposing positions, either for or against the canon, being opened to a greater variety of texts. In *The Western Canon*, Harold Bloom (1994) strongly argues against such opening as, in his opinion, this would lead to the destruction of the canon. When it comes to literary works, this selectivity also leads to the exclusion of historical novels. As a result, many of these works are deemed unworthy of their inclusion among other influential texts. The contempt aimed at historical novels leads to the discrediting of a genre which also contains books that deserve consideration.

Bloom (idem: 21) asserts that “[t]he historical novel seems to have been permanently devalued”. He references the observations of Alastair Fowler, who notes that certain genres tend to be more popular in different eras. Consequently, the literary canon might accept works that are “regarded as more canonical than others” at different times (idem: 20). Dean Rehberger (1995: 59) also tackles this issue, when he writes that:

Borrowing its form from the aesthetic conventions of the novel and its content from the pages of history books, historical fiction appears as both history and literature, information and entertainment; however, neither the discipline of History nor English accepts this impure and mixed form as a legitimate expression of its discipline's demands. On the other hand, the historical novel is considered to be vulgar because it is an immensely popular form.

According to Rehberger, historical novels are often viewed as “impure” because of their wide-reaching popularity, despite being worth admiring. Furthermore, because of depicting both truth and fiction, historical fiction might

appear out of place, never truly fulfilling the requirements of either. Neo-Victorian narratives continue in this tradition, and they have received a lot of attention due to their attractive themes, resulting in their influential position within contemporary culture.

Despite their popularity, works revisiting the past faced, and some still face, various obstacles. Although Harold Bloom's work was published almost thirty years ago, many of his arguments are echoed in critical works up to this day. On the one hand, historical fiction can be seen among the awarded and acclaimed literary works. Nevertheless, on the other hand, these texts still deal with the uniquely specific issue of being disregarded while also appreciated. Their omission from the canon created by Bloom is often addressed by critics; however, as Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn (2010: 10) note, there is criticism coming from within the genre as well. An issue arises when defining a constantly evolving category, together with having a tightly formed image of what makes a neo-Victorian text "good". These rather contrasting views show that the attempts to present neo-Victorianism as legitimate and valuable lead to omissions and bias aimed at works in the historical fiction genre. The limiting criteria do not result in a precise definition of this particular category of texts; therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge the changes likely to occur in the newer texts, instead of being tied down by rigid and harmful assumptions about what should and should not be accepted as neo-Victorian. This is not to say that all works whose plot is placed in the nineteenth century must belong to this genre or that their classification as neo-Victorian has to be overly vague. Heilmann and Llewellyn (2010: 6) argue that some of these texts "cannot be identified so precisely because they fall quite clearly into the category of historical fiction set in the nineteenth century rather than being texts about the metahistoric and metacultural ramifications of such historical engagement". As a result, there are features to be observed when discussing neo-Victorian fiction; however, it is necessary to take into account that the development of this new genre is still an ongoing process.

This article introduces and confronts some of the common criticism that both historical and neo-Victorian fiction face. In order to do so, it is also important to discuss certain features that could be viewed as typical for these genres. Furthermore, in order to illustrate some of the key aspects of neo-Victorian novels, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) and Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) are referred to. These novels challenge the criticism aimed at historical and neo-Victorian works by surpassing the limiting description of the genre and showing the significance of their plots. While Fowles's influential work has been acknowledged due to its critical and skilful engagement with the past, it still embodies many of the features critics cite as faulty when discussing the genre. Similarly, Ackroyd's work illustrates the (lack of) importance of historical accuracy and specificities of neo-Victorian revisitations. Therefore, although by no means marginal, these texts show that much of the criticism discussed in this article should be reconsidered.

2. Neo-Victorian, historical or both?

Before the discussion regarding the value of neo-Victorian and/or historical novels can be explored, it is important to establish the differences and similarities between these two genres. The most obvious distinction is the scope of historical novels that is not limited only to nineteenth-century depictions, as it is with neo-

Victorian fiction. However, there are still debates about whether neo-Victorian works should be viewed as a subcategory of the historical novel or whether they deserve to be placed in a distinctive category. Additionally, it is also debateable whether a text depicting the Victorian era is consequently neo-Victorian. Although this paper argues that these two groups should be viewed separately, their similarities cannot be overlooked as unimportant. Many critics also consider these genres in conjunction; therefore, it is currently impossible to omit either of them when focusing on their development and definition.

As with all expanding and changing approaches and genres in literature, it is difficult to arrive at a singular definition that could neatly categorise what it truly means for a work to be neo-Victorian and why it is different from the already established historical novel. Additionally, despite the long tradition of the historical novel, its definition is still much disputed. In *The Return of the Historical Novel?*, Johnston and Wiegandt (2017) discuss the two leading definitions of historical novels, one provided by Hungarian theorist Georg Lukács (1937) in *The Historical Novel* and the other coming from Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon (1989), who coined the term “historiographic metafiction”.

Lukács’s work is impossible not to consider when discussing the literary tendency to revisit past themes and events. The author also distinguishes between different types of historical novels, specifically the “old” (classical) and the “new” (modern):

The classical historical novel arose out of the social novel and, having enriched and raised it to a higher level, passed back into it. ... The new historical novel, on the other hand, sprang from the weaknesses of the modern novel and, by becoming a ‘genre in its own right’, reproduced these weaknesses on a greater scale. (Lukács 1989: 242)

The definition of the historical novel reflects the negative standpoint of many theorists who tend to devalue this genre. According to Lukács (1989: 237), there has been a decline in the quality of the portrayal of the past since the crucial “immanence” of history is missing. The new version of the historical novel is considered to be “a ‘contemporary novel’ on a historical theme, i.e. pure introjection” (ibid.). The way past experiences and events are portrayed is significant to truly understand the motivation behind people’s conduct (idem: 42). Lukács thus emphasises the social aspect of the novel. The roles and experiences of the characters are essential, and history should be deeply incorporated into the basis of the work to provide the relevant context.

On the other side of the argument, stands Linda Hutcheon’s postmodern point of view, which does not give that much importance to the authenticity of past portrayals. In *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, Hutcheon (2004: 146) writes that “[h]istoriographic metafiction, while teasing us with the existence of the past as real, also suggests that there is no direct access to that real which would be unmediated by the structures of our various discourses about it”. The postmodern scepticism overshadows the depiction of history; instead, it focuses on the various uncertainties occupying contemporary literature and its discourse. This “introversion, a self-conscious turning toward the form of the act of writing itself” (Hutcheon 1989: 9) allows for the focus to shift to the text itself, circumventing the anxieties of historiography. The (im)possibility of the authentic portrayal of the past is thus a common issue discussed in postmodern literary circles. The question

that could be asked and which is also revisited in this paper is whether historical accuracy is necessary and whether possible mistakes devalue neo-Victorian works. Dana Shiller (1997: 541) suggests that these revisitations have merit, regardless of whether they can retrieve authentic information or not. Just as Hutcheon emphasises, the focus should be on the narrative through which we experience the world.

Applying the label “historical novel” to neo-Victorian texts is insufficient, as the latter does not only evoke the past. Many neo-Victorian novels can be categorised as postmodern and as part of historiographic metafiction. It is not uncommon for works to receive more than just one label, which thus makes it possible for them to belong to multiple categories. However, while trying to describe the genre, there are some words that tend to be used more often than others. To elaborate, the prefix *re-*, as in *revision*, *re-reading*, *revisiting*, and so on, offers a look into the key elements of these novels. It is a significant aspect in Ann Heilmann’s and Mark Llewellyn’s (2010: 4) definition of the genre as well. As they write in *Neo-Victorianism*, “texts (literary, filmic, audio/visual) must in some respect be *self-consciously engaged with the act of (re)interpretation, (re)discovery and (re)vision concerning the Victorians*” (emphasis in the original). Since neo-Victorian novels are inherently secondary in their return to the nineteenth century, it becomes crucial for them to focus on the aspects that distinguish them from the previous writings and which add validity to their themes.

Another significant feature of neo-Victorian texts is pointed out by Jessica Cox (2019: 3), who talks about the importance of “the relationship between contemporary and Victorian culture”. Understandably, the relevance of this genre is directly affected by the connection and shared influence of the past on the present and vice versa. Kate Mitchell (2010: 39) comments on this crucial bond, stating that “the spatial distance between the present and the past is negligible”. However, she also adds that Victorian themes are often depicted with attention to their strangeness and “absolute otherness. Rather than the shock of recognition, we experience the terror (and sometimes pleasure) of alterity, the fright (and satisfaction) of estrangement” (ibid.). Mitchell’s remarks illustrate how the depictions of the other and the marginal grew in popularity. Hutcheon (1989: 12) similarly notes that “[t]he ‘ex-centric’ – as both off-center and de-centered – gets attention. That which is ‘different’ is valorised in opposition both to elitist, alienated ‘otherness’ and also to the uniformizing impulse of mass culture”. These points lead to another significant feature of neo-Victorian works, which is giving attention to the overlooked issues and characters. As Cora Kaplan (2007: 3) summarises, they “highlight the suppressed histories of gender and sexuality, race and empire”.

Thus, when looking at some of these influential definitions of the neo-Victorian genre, a more specific idea of what it actually is begins to take shape. Neo-Victorian works can be seen as critical, but also as revisionist. They are inventive, but in many ways secondary, coming after the age they depict. They address issues that deserve more attention and prove the importance of the continuous discussion of topics that are still relevant in the twenty-first century. It is no wonder that the time of Queen Victoria’s reign is popular to re-examine. The nineteenth century is in many ways romanticised and idealised, which also makes it the perfect candidate for critical re-evaluation.

To conclude, although there are differences between the definitions of historical fiction and Neo-Victorian literature, they are not always significant.

Nevertheless, as this paper argues, neo-Victorian works should be considered sufficiently unique to acquire their own category that takes into consideration their evolution and changes. The reason behind this attempt to separate historical and neo-Victorian texts is twofold. Firstly, it bestows more attention on the second half of the twentieth and first half of the twenty-first-century revisionist literature. Secondly, and more importantly for the argument of this paper, it gives neo-Victorian works a fighting chance, as they can distance themselves from the criticism which has been directed at historical novels for a long time. Because of the ongoing changes in the genre, treating neo-Victorian literature as a subset of historical fiction might have a negative impact on its development and subsequent understanding.

3. Inspired by the predecessor

In her book *Adaptation and Appropriation*, Julie Sanders (2006: 120) notes that neo-Victorian texts are often influenced by canonical works from the past and therefore require, as Harold Bloom suggested, close knowledge of such works (he even provides a list of what he considers important past canonical works). Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* as well as John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* serve as illustrative examples of this tendency. Ackroyd, whose interest in history is also visible in this neo-Victorian novel, repeatedly refers to influential, canonical texts and significant figures that form the book's structure. For example, Thomas De Quincey is one of the recognised authors referenced in Ackroyd's novel. De Quincey's essay "On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts" plays a crucial role in the investigation of the Limehouse murders and stands out as the possible motivation behind them. Other works, such as Alfred Lord Tennyson's *In Memoriam* and Charles Dickens's *Bleak House*, are also mentioned; however, their role in the narrative is not that significant.

Fowles, similarly to Ackroyd, does not shy away from mentioning real historical figures and texts in his postmodern novel. Besides the use of Victorian writings at the beginning of the chapters, the author also makes connections between characters in his work and Victorian books. An example in this sense is servant Sam Farrow and his literary counterpart Sam Weller from Dickens's *Pickwick Papers*. Fowles (1987: 40) acknowledges and embraces these similarities, calling Dickens's character "the immortal Weller", which points to the canonical importance of this Victorian text. Furthermore, the writing style of the novel reflects and, according to Hutcheon (2004: 45), "parodies" various nineteenth-century authors. The result is a book in which the depicted era inspires its style and characters.

Indeed, nineteenth-century texts and themes are a popular source for contemporary revisionist literature. Sanders (2006: 121-122) notes that this is "partly because of the lively interaction and cross-fertilization between the high and low arts in this period", but it is also due to the popularisation of the novel that could adapt itself to the readers, based on their reception of the work. Since the writings that were published in separate instalments could be adjusted, they gave more opportunities to the authors, who then participated in their own form of adaptation and appropriation. They got the chance to change problematic parts, develop storylines and characters that were positively received and minimise the features that the readers did not enjoy.

What results from these Victorian borrowings are novels that combine past and present and still manage to introduce something unique and worth reading. Fowles's work shows especially clearly what Tammy Lai-Ming Ho (2019: 3) describes as a "search for communion and identity-formation". She observes the complicated relationship between the two different ages – one being depicted in the work and the other being the time when the text was written. The results are often writings that "are aggressive, simultaneously pushing away and enthusiastically embracing their ancestors' influence" (ibid.). Although the connection to one's predecessor can be used to achieve a well-developed literary work, this is clearly a daunting task. Fighting against the past and trying to differentiate one particular text from others only for the sake of individuality is impossible and also illogical for neo-Victorian literature. Ultimately, authors can either embrace the connection or struggle to find a new way back to the past.

4. Fact and fiction

The complicated relationship between fact and fiction ultimately leads to inaccuracies and anachronisms in fictional works depicting previous eras. However, instead of interpreting them as an offence against precision and authenticity, it should be pointed out that some critics have concluded that history itself cannot always be believed, and complete historical accuracy is unattainable.

Peter Ackroyd does not strive to be accurate in his portrayal of nineteenth-century London, nor does he try to hide the mistakes that ultimately surface in his novel. Ackroyd himself states in an interview: "I have such a loose hold on the truth. I mean, continuously we are inventing ourselves as a person, so that I don't find any real sacrosanct quality about so-called facts and so-called truths" (Onega 1996: 214). In *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem*, he combines real historical figures with fictional ones and changes several dates and names. Some of the alterations are insignificant and do not lead to any major plot changes. They are there not because of the author's imprecision and lack of vigilance, but because Ackroyd does not want to be restricted by factuality. To quote Petr Chalupský (2003: 31): "Being a writer whose principal theme is the past is not an easy role in ... the period commonly referred to as postmodernity, during which the concept of history, its very nature and understanding, has undergone an ultimate transformation". On the one hand, striving for perfection is pointless; on the other, its lack is always used as an argument against historical/neo-Victorian works. Ackroyd does not avoid the postmodern doubt; on the contrary, he uses it in his novels to portray "a plurality of perspectives with the potential of generating a diversity of (hi)stories ... by exploring new, unconventional, unsought for or speculative coincidences, connections and motivations" (idem: 37). This uncertainty is a significant part of neo-Victorian literature, because it allows the author to explore areas that have not been sufficiently explored before. Staying within the limiting margins and only portraying the objective and verifiable truth goes against what defines these texts. Additionally, it could be argued that the combination of factual and fictional strengthens the novel, as it is not tied down by the rules and limitations of either.

In his significant neo-Victorian work, John Fowles not only refers to actual historical figures and events, but also starts his chapters with various fragments from other texts, including those of important Victorian authors, such as Thomas Hardy and Tennyson. His combination of the nineteenth-century themes and

setting with the twentieth-century narrator creates a novel that is situated both inside and outside the depicted era. The complicated love story between Sarah Woodruff and Charles Smithson is intertwined with commentary on the hypocrisy and double standards of the nineteenth century. Fowles points out the ridiculousness of Victorian novels, where love was portrayed in a very chaste and naïve way. At the same time, “the output of pornography has never been exceeded” (Fowles 1987: 232). As a result, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* merges the innocent angels in the house with the new women. It points out that the information which was predominantly featured in these texts does not truly reflect the reality of the times. This brings forth the impossibility of true authenticity when portraying an age known for its secrets and pretence.

This image of the division between the real and the fictional is relevant not only in the discussion of the historical and neo-Victorian works, but also when examining the narratives that often reflect the uneasiness between the two. Shiller (1997: 540) notes, inspired by Linda Hutcheon’s exploration of historiographic metafiction, that “neo-Victorian novels are acutely aware of both history and fiction as human constructs, and use this awareness to rethink the forms and contents of the past”. Therefore, even in a work that relies on facts about the nineteenth century, an admittedly fictional story (as the narrator himself points out) of Sarah and Charles is no less authentic or relevant.

5. (Un)original past

Bloom (1994: 4) notes that originality is the common link that connects canonical texts, and therefore it is what is expected of authors to achieve in their writings. According to him, “One mark of an originality that can win canonical status for a literary work is a strangeness that we either never altogether assimilate, or that becomes such a given that we are blinded to its idiosyncrasies”. Historical novels always come after the era which they depict, and this alleged secondariness is their foundation as well as the added complication in terms of their importance. Louisa Hadley (2010: 58), in her book *Neo-Victorian Fiction and Historical Narrative*, writes that “[t]he question arises as to whether these novels can be said to exist in their own right, as independent and unique works of art, or whether they are merely parasitic on their predecessors’ texts”. A short answer might be that there is a place and need for this genre in contemporary discourse that does not seem unnecessary or repetitive. An example of this importance is the connection people have to their ancestors and history.

A. S. Byatt (2002: 93), who is another author of influential neo-Victorian texts, states that the “preoccupation with ancestors has always been part of human make-up, and ... comes naturally”. The long history of novels revisiting the past supports this statement. Furthermore, “[r]eading [these works] becomes an act of communal recollection not only between ourselves and our contemporaries, but also between ourselves and our Victorian ancestors” (Mitchell 2010: 173-174). The societal need to understand both our present time and that of our ancestors fuels the stories explored in these narratives. Ackroyd’s character Elizabeth Cree, for example, is fascinated with the Ratcliffe Highway murders, which happened almost forty years before she was born. These real events, which resulted in the death of seven people, intrigues the murderess, who considers visiting the site of this crime a pleasant activity. The murders cause strong emotions in people who have heard

about them. They are also a powerful motivation for Elizabeth to kill the family that now lives there – repeating the history and bringing it into the present.

Another notable instance of the current importance of the historical novel as a genre mentioned by Hadley (2010: 3) is that “despite the extraordinary critical neglect of this area, the historical novel has been one of the most important genres for women writers and readers in the twentieth century”. Besides the space it creates for writers and readers, it also offers a unique platform for insufficiently addressed issues and topics that were not fully developed in the texts of their canonical predecessors. Fowles (1987: 379) keeps at the highlighted periphery of his work a New Woman, “flagrantly rejecting all formal contemporary notions of female fashion” and expectations of conduct. Sarah, who becomes ostracised for being a fallen woman, does not represent a typical Victorian heroine looking for security and love in the arms of a man. The author takes this expectation one step further in his dual ending, where the readers can choose whether the female character reconciles with her lover or not. Fowles also emphasises that both conclusions should be accepted as equally believable. Similarly, Ackroyd decides to create a heroine that refuses to embody a predetermined Victorian female role and to be constrained by the limits of her gender. As a result, these novels are able to critically address their predecessors and offer a more contemporary point of view that arguably enriches the portrayal of the characters and their obstacles.

6. Escaping the twenty-first century

The two words often used to justify the devaluation and rejection of historical novels are “secondariness” and “escapism”. The issue of secondariness has already been addressed, as the discussion of originality and influence inherently relates to this topic. Escapism is often mentioned when commenting on narratives that take place in the past, and their themes might be thus considered unimportant when compared to more contemporary and pressing issues. Additionally, such a revisitation is often described as a work that romanticises past times, without seriously attempting to explore problems worth debating. Diana Wallace (2005: ix), in *The Woman's Historical Novel*, concludes that “[t]he tendency has been to associate women's historical novels with romance and thus to stigmatise it as escapist”. Furthermore, she adds that we should re-evaluate “both the assumption that historical novels are necessarily escapist because they are set in the past, and the assumption that escapism is *per se* a ‘bad thing’”.

The two selected neo-Victorian works in this paper cannot be described as merely romance novels. Fowles presents the question of looking for and finding love, but its representation is much more complex than just an affair between two characters. The most important relationship for Sarah is the one she has with herself as she is learning to accept who she is, even if others do not do so. Clearly, the route to self-knowledge and, ultimately, freedom from the constraints of society is not a topic that was relevant only over a hundred years ago. As it has been mentioned on numerous occasions, one of the most discernible functions of neo-Victorian stories is to discuss topics that can still teach us something nowadays, and this is exactly what the novels discussed here also attempt to do. The narrator in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* invites the reader to critically evaluate the data presented about the Victorian era; furthermore, he also includes postmodern playfulness with the limits and preconceived notions regarding the construction of a novel.

This need for critical reading is significant in Ackroyd's book as well. The diary entries used as a source of information turn out to be filled with deceit, and the historical information included throughout the work is not always exact. Moreover, Elizabeth, just like Sarah, does not need to find validation through her marriage. She uses it as a means to expand her opportunities and to be able to explore her needs and desires regardless of what her husband wants or expects. As a result, both novels and their main heroines surpass oversimplified interpretations of neo-Victorian novels.

Some criticism related to escapism targets the reliance on nostalgia as a powerful but facile tool which attracts readers. Hutcheon (2004: 19) refuses the stance that postmodern revisitations are inherently nostalgic, noting that "[w]hat starts to look naive, by contrast, is the reductive belief that any recall of the past must, by definition, be sentimental nostalgia or antiquarianism". Nostalgia, just like escapism, limits the scope and importance of rewritings and adaptations of the past. The result is a justification for the omission of texts from serious critical discourse and their refusal to be considered worthy in any way. The issue of nostalgia is explored by Mitchell (2010: 4) as well, who does not refute its possible occurrence in these works; however, she elevates its importance and role in them. This move towards a re-evaluation of what nostalgia means in the critical discussion of the past brings forward a possibility to repossess this term and enhance its significance and nuances.

It appears to be impossible to address neo-Victorian writings without mentioning these terms used to devalue them. Kaplan (2007: 3) defines Victoriana as "more than nostalgia", automatically defending it from the anticipated criticism. Heilmann and Llewellyn (2010: 6-7) use a satirical list drawn up by Miriam Elizabeth Burstein on her website "The Little Professor", which identifies features in neo-Victorian works in a joking manner. This list echoes some of the criticism of the genre and its predictability; however, Heilmann and Llewellyn use it to explore some of the points that are true of this literature. Thus, the attitude of these contemporary critical works discussing and defining the historical and neo-Victorian genre reflects the assumption that they are going to be scrutinised chiefly for their interest in the past. Nevertheless, it could be argued that paying attention to the overlooked and underrepresented issues adds value and seriousness to the neo-Victorian novel in terms of its interest and scope, moving it further away from frivolous topics.

7. Conclusion

When discussing neo-Victorian and historical fiction, the weight of the long-term criticism that has been directed towards them is impossible to avoid. It is present in the new definitions of the emerging neo-Victorian genre, as well as in the discussion and analyses of novels that reassess the portrayal of the past and its specificities. This article has attempted to make a distinction between the contemporary works in the nineteenth century and the well-recognised historical fiction. However, it has become apparent that, as long as these genres share criticism, it remains difficult to separate them altogether. Therefore, in order to assess these texts and move past this stage, it is necessary to re-evaluate the validity of this disapproval.

Peter Ackroyd and John Fowles present a postmodern approach to the past in which the readers' expectations are continuously subverted in order to explore the

possibilities of the neo-Victorian literary works. These explorations, which constantly resurface in new revisitations, push forward and develop neo-Victorianism and should therefore serve as sufficient proof that texts like these deserve further consideration. While it would be misleading to argue that all works of this genre are worthy of more attention, it would also be equally unreasonable to dismiss these novels, based on preconceptions that do not necessarily hold up when closely scrutinised. The fact that Bloom's list of Western canonical works has been criticised is understandable. Not just because of some of the requirements presented by him, but also due to the inherent nature of writing a list that can never truly encompass all the writings that are worth reading and deserve more attention. The point of this criticism (whether it is concerned with historical/neo-Victorian fiction or other works that Bloom refuses to acknowledge) is not to demand more historical/neo-Victorian texts to be included in Bloom's canon. A much more meaningful goal would be for these books to be granted the same chance as works that do not have to face such an overwhelming amount of prejudice even before being read.

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**THE LEVEL OF PHYSICALITY
IN JANE AUSTEN'S MAJOR NOVELS,
THEIR FILM ADAPTATIONS AND HER PRIVATE LETTERS**

KRISTĪNA KORNELIUSA

University of Latvia

***Abstract:** The current paper explores the physicality in Jane Austen's novels, their film adaptations, and her personal letters. The nouns referring to human body are examined in terms of frequency and context. Corpus linguistics is used as a method, involving the use of in-built online corpora, offline microcorpus creation, and the use of part-of-speech tagger and a concordancer. The results allow to conclude that, firstly, to Austen, referring to the human body was less appropriate in private written communication than in fiction; secondly, the film adaptations use some words in a literal sense, while the novels – in a figurative sense.*

***Keywords:** Corpus linguistics, fiction, human body, Jane Austen, physicality*

1. Introduction

In the biography *Jane Austen*, Carol Shields (2001: 166) argues that Jane Austen's spinsterhood and sexual innocence was reflected in the ways she referred to the human body in her novels. However, Shields does not draw any comparison between the frequency and context in which this or that item referring to the human body is found in Austen's works and her letters to her relatives. Besides, since the adaptations of Austen's novels are much more recent in history than the novelist's writings, it can be presumed that the adaptations are more overt and liberal in terms of references to the human body.

The aim of the current research is to explore the references to the human body in Jane Austen's novels, her personal letters and the scripts of film adaptations of her works. In order to achieve this aim, corpus linguistics method was employed: a microcorpus containing the letters of Jane Austen was created; for examining the texts of her novels, an embedded Lextutor Corpus *Jane Austen* was used; as to the film adaptations, the option of creating a virtual corpus in BYU Corpora was applied. The research question which is going to be answered with the help of these corpora is the following: what is the difference between the frequencies and the context in which the nouns referring to the human body are used by Austen in her novels and letters, and by the screenwriters in the film adaptations of her novels?

The nouns referring to the human body are chosen as the linguistic feature to be researched in the three corpora, because these linguistic items are the most overt reference to human physicality. Also, they are often used in a figurative sense, which gives me the opportunity to compare literal and figurative references.

2. Literature review

2.1. Defining the corpus and its criteria

In *What is a corpus?* from *Web as Corpus: Theory and Practice* (Gatto 2014) and *What Is a Corpus* from *Corpus Linguistics: The Basics* (McEnery et al. 2006), the authors provide a text corpus definition, and describe the corpus criteria: authenticity, representativeness, balance and sampling, and size. Quoting McEnery and Wilson (2001), Gatto (2014: 8) indicates that a corpus is a set of more than one text, while McEnery et al. (2006) specify that this set is characterized by electronic format and authenticity. The latter is also called a “naturally-occurring language” by Sinclair (1991: 171), who argues that corpus should also be representative of the “language or language variety” it is compiled in (ibid.). Gatto further describes both sampling and balance, while McEnery and Wilson (2006: 5) point out that not all corpora are balanced, e.g., the corpora of specialized texts.

Applying these characteristics to the corpora used here, it has to be said that all of them are electronic, authentic, representative of the field they are dedicated to - Jane Austen’s language and the language used in the film adaptations of her work; they are comparatively small, and, according to McEnery and Wilson’s remark, not balanced, if compared to a general corpus.

2.2. Defining meaning, context and co-text

The corpus research in literary studies “[enables] insights not possible through intuition alone” (Wahid 2011: 105) – it provides quantitative evidence for any supposition made during a close reading. Moreover, given the amount of texts which has to be analysed in the current paper, the systematisation of the texts allows us to extract both quantitative and qualitative data more effectively. In order to specify what is meant by qualitative data here, such concepts as context and meaning (Moon 2010) and context vs co-text (Thornbury 2010; Ferrin et al. 2011) have to be explained.

According to Moon (2010: 202), “corpora indicate the context in which we find the word”. Meanwhile, Thornbury (2010: 270) argues that corpora are more applicable for indicating co-text rather than context, while Ferrin et al.’s study (2011) allows us to see how much it is possible to rely on corpus data (co-text) and the historical background (context). Co-text is defined as “the set of features necessary to bind the variables introduced” (Ferrin et al. 2011: 1491), i.e., it refers more to cohesion and coherence or text linguistics, while context answers the questions “who, where, when, what, how and why” and puts the text in a physical situation (ibid.); such an approach refers to discourse rather than text linguistics.

2.3. Co-text and collocations

Co-text is the text surrounding the query. In order to analyse it, it is necessary to look at collocations.

According to McEnery and Hardie (2012: 122-123), “the term *collocation* denotes the idea that important aspects of the meaning of a word (or another linguistic unit) are not contained within the word itself, considered in isolation, but rather subsist in the characteristic associations that the word participates in, alongside other words or structures with which it frequently co-occurs”. The

queries used for the current research are the nodes, while the words surrounding them in a certain position are collocates (idem: 124).

3. Corpora description

Table 1 summarises the basic information about the corpora used for the current analysis

	Lextutor Corpus	BYU Corpus	Microcorpus created by the author of the paper
Title	Jane Austen	Jane Austen Film Adaptations	Letters of Jane Austen
Size (no. of words)	648 000	58 999 (note: the sizes of six subcorpora added up)	77 520 (note: the sizes of three subcorpora added up)
Text types	Major novels by Jane Austen: <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> , <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , <i>Emma</i> , <i>Mansfield Park</i> , <i>Persuasion</i> , <i>Northanger Abbey</i>	The scripts of six film adaptations: <i>Emma</i> (1996), <i>Mansfield Park</i> (2007), <i>Northanger Abbey</i> (2007), <i>Persuasion</i> (2007), <i>Pride and Prejudice and Zombies</i> (2016), <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> (1995)	Personal letters written by Jane Austen to her sister Cassandra Austen, her relative Anna Lefroy and her niece Frances Knight
Source/Way of data extraction	An embedded corpus available from https://www.lexutor.ca/conc/eng/	A virtual corpus created by the author of this paper by selecting texts from Movie Corpus on BYU Corpora (available from https://www.english-corpora.org/movies/)	An offline corpus created by the author of the paper by extracting texts from <i>Letters of Jane Austen</i> (2013) (available from https://www.gutenberg.org/files/42078/42078-h/42078-h.htm)
Purpose of use	To identify the frequency and context of words referring to the human body in Jane Austen's novels	To identify the frequency and context of words referring to the human body in film adaptations of Jane Austen's novels	To identify the frequency and context of words referring to the human body in Jane Austen's letters to her relatives

Table 1. The description of the corpora analysed

These corpora have the following additional characteristics.

The Lextutor Corpus has a column with the name of the novel the concordance line was taken from. The results can be sorted according to the name of the novel in the alphabetical order, as shown in Figure 1.

Line	Text	Novel
061.	...e flow of spirits, an't I? But I want to set your HEART at ease as to Mrs. S. - My representation, y	[emma]
062.	...ntley's absence, or when it came to the point her HEART would have failed her, and she must have put	[emma]
063.	...reat. - However, I must say, that Robert Martin's HEART seemed for him, and to me, very overflowing;	[emma]
064.	...doleful disappointment of five weeks back! Such a HEART - such a Harriet! Now there would be pleasur	[emma]
065.	...e you joy in person." He thanked her with all his HEART, and continued some time to speak with serio	[emma]
066.	...entered into with doubtful feelings, with half a HEART. I thought it my duty as a friend, and older	[emma]
067.	...dear Sir Thomas, with all my faults I have a warm HEART; and, poor as I am, would rather deny myself	[mansfield]
068.	...oliage of summer, was enough to catch any man's HEART. The season, the scene, the air, were all fa	[mansfield]
069.	..."It is a pleasure to see a lady with such a good HEART for riding!" said he. "I never see one sit a	[mansfield]
070.	...ld never happen again. Fanny went to bed with her HEART as full as on the first evening of her arriv	[mansfield]
071.	...rty on each side of the road," without elation of HEART; and it was a pleasure to increase with thei	[mansfield]
072.	...onsideration of others, that knowledge of her own HEART, that principle of right, which had not form	[mansfield]
073.	...s what may tranquillise every care, and lift the HEART to rapture! When I look out on such a night	[mansfield]
074.	..., and nurse, the despondence that sunk her little HEART was severe. The grandeur of the house astoni	[mansfield]
075.	...with the advantage of knowing half the scenes by HEART already, he did now, with the greatest alacr	[mansfield]
076.	...ife's speeches, I would undertake him with all my HEART." "With all your partiality for Cottager's w	[mansfield]
077.	...I like it." Fanny's eyes followed Edmund, and her HEART beat for him as she heard this speech, and s	[mansfield]

Figure 1. The arrangement of concordance lines according to the novel title

This feature allows not only to compare the data obtained from this corpus from the ones from other corpora, but also to compare the results across the novels themselves, and it was used when calculating the results.

The BYU virtual corpus consists of six subcorpora (see Figure 2).

LIST NAME ↓	# TEXTS ↓	# WORDS ↓	FIND KEYWORDS ● SPECIFIC ○ FREQ	CREATED ↓
EMMA	1	13,954	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	54 d
MANSFIELD PARK	1	8,863	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	54 d
NORTHANGER ABBEY	1	9,615	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	54 d
PERSUASION	1	8,544	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	54 d
PRIDE AND PREJUDICE	1	8,632	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	52 d
SENSE AND SENSIBILITY	1	9,391	NOUN VERB ADJ ADV N+N ADJ+N	54 d

Figure 2. The structure of the compiled BYU virtual corpus with Jane Austen film adaptations

Each of them contains the script of one film adaptation of a different novel. The adaptations were selected according to their year of release - the most recent available in the Movie Corpus were preferred. Thus, the time gap between the film adaptations and the original novels was increased.

The microcorpus *Letters of Jane Austen* has been divided into three subcorpora, according to the addressee of the letter. The quantitative information about the subcorpora is given in Table 2.

Subcorpus (file) name	No. of letters	No. of tokens
jane-cassandra	62	66742
jane-anna	9	4631
jane-fanny	5	6147

Table 2. The structure of the microcorpus Letters of Jane Austen

The tokens were calculated using the Lancaster University Statistics tool (available at <http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/stats/toolbox.php>). All the texts are taken from *The Letters of Jane Austen*, edited by Sarah Chauncey Woolsey (2013).

It should also be added that this microcorpus is annotated, as some of the research nodes are subject to conversion (e.g., *hand – to hand*). The primary interest if this research are nouns - they need to be separated from the verbs whose forms can coincide with those of the nouns. Therefore, the corpus files were inserted into the Simple Part of Speech Tagger. A small annotated fragment is added below for illustration:

MY_NNP DEAR_NNP ANNA_NNP ,_PPC [/LRB 31_CD]/RRB —I_NNP
 am_VBP very_RB much_JJ obliged_JJ to_TO you_PRP for_IN sending_VBG
 your_PRPS MS_NNP It_PRP has_VBZ entertained_VBN me_PRP extremely_RB
 ;_PPS indeed_RB all_DET of_IN us_PRP ._PP I_PRP read_VBD it_PRP aloud_RB
 to_TO your_PRPS grandmamma_NN and_CC Aunt_NNP Cass_NNP ,_PPC
 and_CC we_PRP were_VBD all_DET very_JJ much_JJ pleased_JJ ._PP The_DET
 spirit_NN does_VBZ not_RB droop_JJ at_IN all_DET ._PP Sir_NNP Thos_NNP
 ._PP ,_PPC Lady_NNP Helen_NNP ,_PPC and_CC St_NNP Julian_NNP are_VBP
 very_RB well_RB done_VBN ,_PPC and_CC Cecilia_NNP continues_VBZ to_TO
 be_VB interesting_JJ in_IN spite_NN of_IN her_PRPS being_NN so_IN amiable_JJ
 ._PP It_PRP was_VBD very_RB fit_VB you_PRP should_MD advance_VB
 her_PRPS age_NN ._PP I_PRP like_IN the_DET beginning_NN of_IN
 Devereux_NNP Forester_NNP very_RB much_JJ ,_PPC a_DET great_JJ deal_NN
 better_RB than_IN if_IN he_PRP had_VBD been_VBN very_RB good_JJ or_CC
 very_RB bad_JJ ._PP A_DET few_JJ verbal_JJ corrections_NNS are_VBP all_DET
 that_IN I_PRP felt_VBD tempted_VBN to_TO make_VB ;_PPS the_DET
 principal_NN of_IN them_PRP is_VBZ a_DET speech_NN of_IN St_NNP
 Julian_NNP to_TO Lady_NNP Helen_NNP ,_PPC which_WDT you_PRP see_VBP
 I_PRP have_VBP presumed_VBN to_TO alter_VB ._PP As_IN Lady_NNP H_NNP
 is_VBZ Cecilia_NNP 's_POS superior_JJ ,_PPC it_PRP would_MD not_RB be_VB
 correct_JJ to_TO talk_VB of_IN her_PRPS being_NN introduced_VBD ._PP
 It_PRP is_VBZ Cecilia_NNP who_WP must_MD be_VB introduced_VBN ._PP
 And_CC I_PRP do_VBP not_RB like_IN a_DET lover_NN speaking_NN in_IN
 the_DET 3rd_CD person_NN ;_PPS it_PRP is_VBZ too_RB much_JJ like_IN
 the_DET part_NN of_IN [/LRB 263_CD]/RRB Lord_NNP Overtley_NNP ,_PPC
 and_CC I_PRP think_VBP it_PRP not_RB natural_JJ ._PP If_IN you_PRP
 think_VBP differently_RB ,_PPC however_RB ,_PPC you_PRP need_VBP not_RB
 mind_VB me_NN I_PRP am_VBP impatient_JJ for_IN more_JJR ,_PPC and_CC
 only_RB wait_VB for_IN a_DET safe_JJ conveyance_NN to_TO return_VB
 this_DET ._PP
 Yours_NNP affectionately_RB ,_PPC
 J_NNP A_NNP ._PP

4. Procedure

4.1. Setting up a list of n nodes

Due to such limitations of research as time and volume, the list of nodes to be checked in the corpora had to be narrowed down. It was decided to focus on the words provided by Carol Shields in her biography of Jane Austen. Shields (2001: 166-167) listed the nouns related to human body which she could (or, on the contrary, could not) find in Austen's novels: *brain, head, toe, finger, hips, thighs,*

shin, buttocks, kidney, intestine, womb, navel, tooth, chin, ankle, nose, ear, leg, wrist, eyebrow, eyelash, breast, eye, heart, hand, face, skin. These words were arranged in the alphabetical order and their absolute frequency was checked in all the three corpora. Those which could not be found in any of the corpora were excluded from further analysis. The final list of nodes can be seen below:

ankle(s)	Eyebrows	heart(s)	wrist
brain(s)	Eyelashes	leg(s)	
Breast	face(s)	nose	
Chin	finger(s)	skin	
ear(s)	hand(s)	tooth (teeth)	
eye(s)	head(s)	toe	

It has to be noted that, for most of the nodes, both the singular and the plural form were checked. The frequencies of each were summed up together. For further research, the differences between the frequencies and the context of the singular and the plural forms could be explored, because some preliminary qualitative observations were made, which will be touched upon in the Discussion of the results section, but cannot be elaborated upon in more detail in this paper, due to space limitations.

4.2. Frequency normalisation

Due to the different corpora sizes, all the absolute frequencies obtained for the chosen nodes were normalised, i.e., the frequency was adjusted per a fixed number of words. The base of 10 000 was chosen - the corpora sizes being comparatively small. The absolute frequencies in the subcorpora were also normalised. The wordcounts for Austen's novels were taken from Eleanor Turner's (2016) blog article.

4.3. Extracting collocates

The definition of collocation, node, and collocate was given in section 2.3. In the empirical part, a list of collocates for the nodes *heart(s)* and *head(s)* was drawn up. These nodes were selected because *heart(s)* was the most frequent word found in Lextutor and BYU Corpus, while *head(s)* was the most frequent word found in the *Letters of Jane Austen* microcorpus. The collocates in the position -1 (a pre-noun position) - noun modifiers or determiners - were adjectives, possessive adjectives, articles. Only the absolute frequencies for the collocates of nodes *head(s)* and *heart(s)* were extracted, because it is the ranking of the collocates that mattered. The collocates for other nodes are a subject for further research.

5. Discussion of the results

I have found out that Jane Austen's novels contain more nouns related to the human body than the film adaptations or her private letters – both in terms of absolute and normalised frequency (see Table 3).

Novels		Adaptations		Letters	
Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.	Word	Freq.
heart(s)	496	heart(s)	55	head(s)	26
eye(s)	446	hand(s)	18	eye(s)	21
hand(s)	349	eye(s)	17	hand(s)	18
head(s)	237	head(s)	16	heart(s)	15
face(s)	161	brain(s)	14	face(s)	13

Table 3. The frequency data for the selected nodes
(five most frequent items for each corpus)

This can be explained by the fact that both film scripts and letters can be compared to direct speech, while the novels also contain the narration. The difference in normalised frequency between the novels and the adaptations is comparatively minor - 27.9 and 23.9 per 10 000 words respectively. In the letters, however, the normalised frequency of nouns referring to the human body is only 15.6. Apparently, the written communication, even if among family members, was highly formal, and referring to the human body too often was not considered appropriate. The fictional genre, on the other hand, provided more freedom.

When comparing the results across the subcorpora of the Letters of Jane Austen corpus, it was found out that, in terms of frequency per 10 000 words, Austen's letters to her niece Fanny contains the most nouns referring to the human body, while the letters to her sister Cassandra, contrary to the expectation that Austen would discuss physical matters more overtly with her, contain the least (see Table 4).

Cassandra	Anna	Fanny
15	15.1	22.8

Table 4. The summed-up relative frequency data of the selected nodes
across the letter addressees

Nevertheless, context has to be taken into account as well. Despite the fact that the frequency of nouns referring to the human body in the adaptations is smaller, the supposition that physical references in modern cinema are more common than in Austen novels proved to be correct. For example, the word *brain* (and also *brains*), which is used in Austen's novels as a word standing for mind and thought, in *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* refers to the actual physical human brain. Compare:

- (1) [...] though Kitty might in time regain her natural degree of sense, since the disturbers of her brain were removed, her other sister, from whose disposition greater evil might be apprehended, was likely to be hardened in all her folly and assurance by a situation of such double danger as a watering-place and a camp. (*Pride and Prejudice*: the novel)

(2) Daughters do not dance well with masticated brains. (*Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*: the film adaptation)

Similarly, while the word *breast* (used only in the singular) in the novels refers to emotional experiences, the 2007 adaptation of *Northanger Abbey* quotes a passage from the novel *Monk* by Matthew Gregory Lewis, where female breasts are mentioned:

(3) Poor Mr. Woodhouse little suspected what was plotting against him in the breast of that man whom he was so cordially welcoming (*Emma*: the novel)

(4) At this moment a tame Linnet flew towards her, nestled its head between her breasts, and nibbled them in wanton play. (*Northanger Abbey*: the film adaptation; a quote from *Monk* by M. G. Lewis)

It should also be added that, according to normalised frequency, the novel *Pride and Prejudice* contains the smallest number of the researched nouns referring to the human body (see Table 5), while its 2016 adaptation is the most *physical* of all the films selected (see Table 6). This can also be explained by the addition of the zombie element in this adaptation.

Emma	Mansfield Park	Northanger Abbey	Persuasion	Pride and Prejudice	Sense and Sensibility
21,3	25.8	34.2	25.8	18.5	29.2

Table 5. The summed-up relative frequencies of the nodes analysed across the novels

Emma	Mansfield Park	Northanger Abbey	Persuasion	Pride and Prejudice	Sense and Sensibility
15.8	26	25	14	41.7	25.6

Table 6. The summed-up relative frequencies of the nodes analysed across the novels

The most frequent of all the researched nodes in the novels and the adaptations turned out to be the node *heart(s)*, while in the letters – *head(s)*. It can be presumed that Austen's novels deal more with feelings, while the letters are more reserved and deal with mind and thought. For these two nodes, which turned out the most frequent in different corpora, a list of collocates in the position -1 was extracted (see Table 7).

Heart(s)						Head(s)					
Novels		Adaptations		Letters		Novels		Adaptations		Letters	
Word	Fr.	Word	Fr.	Word	Fr.	Word	Fr.	Word	Fr.	Word	Fr.
Her	118	my	18	my	5	her	68	your	3	my	5

Table 7. The most frequent collocates in -1 position for heart(s) and head(s) in each corpus

It was found that the most common collocate for both nodes in Jane Austen's novels is *her* (i.e., the collocation *her heart*, *her head*). Since Austen's protagonists and focalizers of the story are women, the prevalence of this possessive adjective is understandable. In the film adaptations and the letters, it is the possessive adjective *my*, and also *your* – in collocation with *head* – that are the most common, because in these texts, the speakers and the writer respectively refer to themselves or their partner in conversation in the first and second person, and third parties are referred to much more seldom.

The extraction of collocates has also confirmed that *heart* in Austen's novels and letters refers to emotions and human qualities, collocating with such words as *amiable*, *affectionate* and *joyful*, while *head* – for opinions and thinking abilities (*capacious*, *stronger*). In the adaptations, most of such adjectives were omitted from the dialogues.

However, the word *head* often did not refer either to the human body, or to mind. Often found in the collocation *the head of*, it was used in phrases like *the head of the house*, *the head of the table* etc. Also, Austen often used in her writing such phrases as *on this/that head*, which do not refer to the physical organ, but impacts the frequency of the noun considerably.

6. Conclusion

The comparison of the three corpora has allowed me to draw two main conclusions: (1) there are more references to the human body in Austen's novels than in her private letters, which implies that, for Austen, referring to the human body was less appropriate in private written communication than in fiction; (2) the context of the researched words shows that film adaptations use some words in a more literal, physical sense, while Austen does it in a figurative sense or in set expressions which have no connection in meaning to the human body; at the same time, the frequency of the researched words in the screenplays is lower, which shows that, in corpus research, frequency is not always enough to draw conclusions on language features. The second conclusion is related not only to Austen's language, but also to using corpora in research.

It has to be mentioned here that the limitations of my research, the decision to focus on nouns only and to focus just on the nouns in Carol Shields's list do not allow me to provide a deeper insight into physicality in Austen's novels, letters, and film adaptations. Also, the collocations I have analysed were extracted only for two nodes, occurring only in one position. Further research needs to be carried out, with an enlarged scope for more precise conclusions to be drawn.

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MABEL DEARMER'S APPROACH TO CERVANTES'S NOVEL IN HER PLAY *DON QUIXOTE. A ROMANTIC DRAMA*

MARÍA JOSÉ ÁLVAREZ FAEDO

University of Oviedo

Abstract: *This article analyses, with the specific tools of comparative literature, the way Mabel Dearmer's play Don Quixote. A Romantic Drama (1916) revisits Miguel Cervantes's novel The Ingenious Gentleman Don Quixote of La Mancha (1605/1615). It discusses the work of this less known English novelist and playwright as a modern adaptation which successfully offers the Knight of the Sad Countenance the ending she believed he deserved, imbuing her text with intertextual echoes from the English pastoral tradition and the Byzantine adventure novel.*

Keywords: *comparative literature, Don Quixote, Mabel Dearmer, Miguel de Cervantes, rewriting*

1. Introduction: Mabel Dearmer

Jessie Mabel Pritchard White (later Dearmer) was an English novelist and playwright, as well as an author and illustrator of children's stories. She was born on March 22, 1872, in White of Caernarvon (Wales), and died on July 15, 1915, at the age of 43, after leading an exciting life (Bailey 2017).

Mabel White was educated in London by W. G. Willis, until she entered the Hubert von Herkomer School of Art in Bushey, London, in 1891. There she was to study for only one year, because she abandoned her training to marry the Reverend Percy Dearmer, a socialist priest with whom she would share her life, a life characterised by intense cultural and political activity, as well as by her unconditional commitment to socialist, pacifist, and feminist ideals. Percy Dearmer was vicar in Lambeth, South London, until he was appointed minister of the Church of St. Mary the Virgin on Primrose Hill in 1901, where they resided until 1915 and raised their two sons, Geoffrey and Christopher. For a woman of her time, Mabel Dearmer travelled a lot: she visited France, Italy, Germany, Tobago, British Guyana, and Venezuela.

During World War I, her husband volunteered as a chaplain of the British Red Cross and she accompanied him, as a nurse of the Third Relief Unit for Serbia in April 1915 (Mitchel 1965), stopping en route in Athens. But in Serbia, Mabel became ill with typhoid fever in June and died of pneumonia on July 15 of the same year (Dearmer 1915).

Diana Maltz, professor in the Department of English Studies at the University of Oregon, does not include *Don Quixote: A Romantic Drama* on the list of the author's plays in her online biography of Mabel Dearmer:

Inspired by a passion play she attended in Germany in 1910, she founded the Morality Play Society in 1911, mounting productions of her plays *The Soul of the World* (1911) and *The Dreamer* (1912). Adept at directing children in parish Christmas plays, she revised her *Noah's Ark Geography* as a children's play, entitled *The Cockyolly Bird* and published as a book in 1914. She also staged multiple productions of her *Brer Rabbit and Mr. Fox* (1914). (Maltz 2012: 4)

This is a curious omission, given that, in 1916, it was already included in Stephen Gwynn's edition of Mabel Dearmer's *Three Plays* and, in 1999, Jill Shefrin included it in the bibliography of her lecture "Dearmerest Mrs. Dearmer" (1999: 47), in which Dearmer is praised as a playwright in the following terms: "When George Bernard Shaw saw her morality play, *The Soul of the World* (1911), he wrote to her, 'You are one of the few people living who can write plays'" (Shefrin 1999: 36). Gwynn adds that, "had she survived, she would have ended up with her own professional theatre" (idem: 37).

Then, if Mabel Dearmer was a promising playwright, what happened to her *Don Quixote*? Why was it not published until after her death? Stephen Gwynn offers us the answers to those questions in the foreword to his 1916 edition: "Her dramas, written to be acted, appeared singly in book form to accompany performances; and 'Don Quixote,' the earliest written, remained unpublished because unplayed" (Gwynn 1916: 1). Gwynn praises the beauty of that work and confesses that he does not understand why it was not taken to the stage by any director (idem: 3). In fact, that may have been due to several factors: Victorian drama was scarce at the end of the nineteenth century due to the prevalence of fiction, although Oscar Wilde's plays were exceptionally successful; with Edwardian drama, there was a growth of realism secured by the introduction of contemporary social problems and their naturalistic treatment. Besides, a new genre that had started in the Victorian age gained ground until after World War I: the Edwardian musical comedy. In this context, Dearmer's romantic drama was probably not very appealing for the stage. The fact that it has not been performed ever since, as well as the realization that scholarship on this play is virtually non-existent led me to focus on it as my object of study.

César Domínguez, Haun Saussy, and Darío Villanueva, in their preface to *Introducing Comparative Literature, New Trends and Applications* (2015: x), commenting on Borges's 1951 short story/essay "Kafka and His Precursors", explain that "Both Lodge's and Borges's examples deal with the influence of a 'future' [...] literary work on a 'past' literary work" and suggest replacing "influence [...] with *rewriting*, both in a metaphorical sense [...] and a literal one", and they illustrate their point with one of Borges's examples:

The (imaginary) late nineteenth-century / early twentieth-century French writer Pierre Menard aims to write *Don Quijote* again, exactly as it was written by Cervantes in the seventeenth century. Though Menard's *Quijote* is an exact replica of Cervantes's *Quijote* – line for line, word for word – it is not the *Quijote* of Cervantes, for many reasons. Suffice it to mention here only one. "[...] The archaic style of Menard – quite foreign, after all – suffers from a certain affectation. Not so that of his forerunner, who handles with ease the current Spanish of his time." (Borges in Domínguez, Saussy, and Villanueva 2015: 43)

Mabel Dearmer does not make Menard's mistake, since she does not write a replica of Cervantes's masterpiece, nor does she write a work influenced by it.

What she does is to rewrite it, in the form of a play, endowing the character of Don Quixote with the characteristics she considered he had – she portrays him as a wise, good-hearted and noble man, who fought for what he deemed as good and brave causes – and offering the play the ending she believed the knight errant’s story deserved: he lives, being admired and treated with affection and respect. And we can see that from the beginning of her play *Don Quixote: A Romantic Drama*, when, even before the prologue, Mabel Dearmer blurts out a declaration of intent in her “Note”:

In this play Don Quixote is not only the visionary, and dreamer, but the essentially sane man. The whole action of the play is determined by his wisdom at crucial moments. He, “the madman,” alters the destiny and the character of everyone concerned in the play. His madness is a distemper (always heralded by music, the “Dulcinea motif”); its beginning is shown, its culmination in the adventure with the windmills, and its end. The windmills to the audience must be dim forms; to Don Quixote they were monsters, the embodiment of the world’s evil. It is only when he is shown defeated with broken sword and helmet in the light of day that they are seen to be windmills. In the adventure with the enchanter, Don Quixote is gradually returning to the “sanity” of the world. When he consents to be carried off in the cage, he has grown doubtful of himself, and half suspects that he is being duped. The Epilogue shows the agony of his humiliation, the momentary dominance of mere materialism, and the end of the final triumph of “Dulcinea,” the ideal, touching the everyday world with immortal beauty. (Dearmer 1916: 10)

Her play is structured in five acts, which are called “Prologue”, “First adventure: The adventure with the two armies”, “The second adventure: The adventure with giants”, “The third adventure: The adventure with the enchanter”, and “Epilogue”.

The reason for me to choose Domínguez, Saussy, and Villanueva’s work to frame my approach to the analysis of Dearmer’s play in comparison with Cervantes’s masterpiece was not only that they offer the first critical introduction to the field of comparative literature since the 1990s, written in English, but they also analyse this discipline within a globalized context (I am examining an English work in contrast with a Spanish one) and in comparison with other arts and audio-visual media, a perspective that fits in perfectly with the study of a 17th century novel that has been adapted or appropriated into a late-19th-early-20th-century play).

In the pages which follow, this essay is structured in four main parts: “A change in the main character’s nature: ‘I am not mad!’”, “A tribute to Pastoral literature and Byzantine novels”, “A Romantic drama” and the final “Conclusions”.

2. A change in the protagonist’s nature: “I am not mad!”

In the first act, called “Prologue”, the setting is Don Quijote’s library, where the niece (here Donna Juana), the housekeeper, and the priest (here Dr. Perez) decide they should burn the evil spirits in his chivalry books. This happens after Don Quixote returns from a six-day absence, fighting what (according to him) were giants, dressed in his rusty armour, on the back of a scarecrow-looking donkey. The housekeeper objects to such a drastic idea, but the priest categorically states: “Master Quixada’s sanity is more to me than a thousand books. As long as they remain here there will be no end to his madness” (Dearmer 1916: 14). The housekeeper expresses her doubts again, but starts pulling the books off the shelves

and then throwing them out the window into the courtyard. Meanwhile, Don Quixote climbs towards them, with Dulcinea in his mind, without realising what they are doing. In fact, his rapture is such that they take away the book he is holding in his hands, without his being aware. He is waiting for the news that Sancho brings him after having taken a letter to Dulcinea and, as soon as he arrives, Don Quixote asks him if she kissed it when it was delivered to her. Sancho ruins his master's romantic expectations, denying this scenario and quoting a very mundane Dulcinea: "Can't you see I'm winnowing, blockhead!" [...] "Put it down on that sack till I've done." (idem: 17) Finally, he reveals that he "saw her reading it" after a while. To which Don Quixote replies:

O, fair discretion!
Unparalleled excellence!
And what jewel gave she you at parting? (Dearmer 1916: 18)

Sancho shows signs of not understanding his lord and explains that what really happened was that the lady broke out into laughter when reading the letter, and all she gave him was an onion and some cheese.

The hilarity of the prologue is present not only in the way the priest, the housekeeper, and the niece try to get rid of books without Don Quixote seeing them do it, but also in the verbal exchanges of Don Quixote and Sancho, where, as in Cervantes's work, Don Quixote's noble expectations contrast with Sancho's crude reality, which is still interpreted by his lord as something wonderful, since Don Quixote's response to Sancho's words is none other than "This is not a dream. I swear it is not a dream. Say, good squire, have you no word of praise for your lady?" (idem: 18). To this, Sancho, after thinking about it for a while, replies: "Hum! Well, I will say, Master Don Quixote, that Madam Dulcinea is the best hand at salting pork in all Toboso" (ibid.). At the end of his verbal exchange with Sancho, Don Quixote realises that the book he had in his hands is missing, and so are all the other books on his shelves. When his niece explains that they were taken by an enchanter on a dragon, it is enough for Don Quixote to smell the smoke of the pyre where his books were burning in the courtyard for him to immediately identify that enchanter as a magician named Freston, his enemy. This triggers his reaction that puts him in the epic mode, as he calls Sancho to bring him his weapons in order to engage in combat. And when his niece tries to stop him, Dearmer has Don Quixote deliver a beautiful monologue on madness, in which he invokes his heroes from chivalry books, from Amadis to Arthur, imploring their help:

Yet a doubt haunts me —Mad!— they say —He's mad!
Power stirs with me. My soul's mightiness
Could compass all the world, engulf deep seas,
Out-soar the highest hills, and make the stars
My spangled trophies. Yet they say: He's mad!
Mad! Mad! Aldonza —ah, the Queen Dulcinee,
The veritable Queen of joy and love!
Yet, what said Sancho? —I grow faint to think,
This solid globe of earth sinks to a dream,
And dreams take substance. Yet —I am not mad!
Why not believe my reasonable sense
Rather than Sancho's judgement? I've a soul

And he a body, there the difference lies.
 The world cries “Madman!” Well, let the world go.
 Men have grown mad for love, for lust, for gold;
 I will go mad for honour.

Then he invokes the knights-errant, the walls of the stage disappear in the darkness, and, as the light goes out, all the mentioned knights march in, with their names on their banners. The protagonist continues naming them one by one, to the sounds of music. The scene ends with Don Quixote invoking his Dulcinea, because to her call he comes “crowned” (Dearmer 1916: 25), rather than armed as a “knight”.

In Cervantes’s novel, the curate and the barber examine Don Quixote’s library in chapter VI. The intertextual intervention is already strong, as Cervantes makes these characters revise and comment on his books, to see which are dangerous and should be burnt, but select, for saving, among other volumes, the four books of *Amadis de Gaul*, because, according to them, they are the best of the chivalry books. The rest of the books are burnt by the housekeeper in chapter VII, who blamed some Muñatón for it, whom Don Quixote would be ready to identify as Fristón.

In the novel, instead of a monologue on madness, in part II, chapter I (Cervantes Saavedra 2018: 458-59), Don Quixote evokes the famous knights-errant of chivalry books, as he laments that there are no such men left in his time and misses the golden age of chivalry.

Mabel Dearmer took all those elements from chapters VI and VII of the first part of the novel, and from chapter I of the second part, and rewrote them, creating the first act of her play.

It is worth pointing out that Miguel de Cervantes might have been inspired by Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam’s essay *In Praise of Folly* – printed in 1511, where he argues that only through madness will man know how to reason correctly – when he created his Don Quixote. And we should not forget that, in the seventeenth century, both in England and in Spain, it was generally thought that insanity led to death (Boulton and Black 2012; González Duro 2021). That is probably the reason why Cervantes’s Don Quixote has to die at the end of the novel: because he has been mad for the better part of it. However, the great popularity of this novel in eighteenth-century England, which explains the increasing cult of chivalry in 19th century England (Eisenberg 1987), leads to the Romantic interpretation of Don Quixote’s psyche and deeds, that turns the character’s madness into idealism (Close 1978). That Mabel Dearmer’s play has a romantic flavour is something she even states in its very title, and, hence, she offers us an idealised interpretation of the knight’s presumed madness. Therefore, it is not surprising that the above-quoted monologue on madness uttered by Don Quixote, in heart-felt blank verse that could very well have been written by Shakespeare himself, should remind us of one of Hamlet’s famous utterances – another reputed fake madman, by the way. Unfortunately, Dearmer’s contemporaries never had the chance to enjoy Don Quixote’s monologue, since, as already mentioned, the play has never been performed.

3. A tribute to pastoral literature and Byzantine novels

The second act, entitled “First adventure: The adventure with the two armies”, takes place in a forest, and the first character on the scene is the beautiful

Dorothea, dressed as if she were a young man, singing, and explaining to the audience how exceptional it is for her to look like a man.

As Sancho and Quixote, who have gone out in search of Freston the magician, step on stage, Dorothea hides. Other characters arrive, making Don Quixote state he shall not let anyone pass until he admits that the unparalleled Dulcinea del Toboso is “beauty’s queen” (Dearmer 1916: 28).

Cardenio arrives first, and he ends up succumbing to the knight’s request, after Sancho advises him that he should humour his master, because the latter is crazy and believes he is a knight errant (29). Meanwhile, Dorothea leaves her hiding place and is taken for a boy by Don Quixote. Then she runs to Sancho and hears from him his master’s curious definition of a knight errant: “A beggar to-day and an emperor to-morrow” (30).

Suddenly, Cardenio realises that Dorothea is a woman, and she is prompted to tell them about her misfortune: how her husband betrayed her with another woman and tried to compensate her with jewels, but she was not able to forgive him and fled away to hide from him.

Cardenio then tells them about his own misfortune: how, when he was about to marry his beloved, the Duke of Andalusia’s son came and, with his riches, conquered the family of the lady and the lady herself. When Dorothea asks if the nobleman and his lady got married, Cardenio answers that he does not know. At the end of their conversation, they discover that Lucinda, Cardenio’s beloved lady, is the woman for whom Dorothea’s husband, the son of the Duke of Andalusia, left her. Don Quixote encourages her to take revenge on her husband, but she refuses. Then the knight offers to find him and tries to contain Cardenio’s yearning for revenge by telling him that trust is bought with confidence and love with love (36). Cardenio expresses his surprise at the wisdom of Don Quixote’s words, which contrasts with the insanity of his actions. To reinforce this impression, Dorothea confesses she sees in him only “a knight and a true gentleman” (38).

Don Quixote does not see any adventure in this situation, because it lacks the extraordinary elements he likes to expect from his readings, but a music that he hears in his head tells him something is going to happen, so he waits. He soon sights the dust raised by two armies and rushes against them, although they turn out to be nothing other than herds of sheep.

In this first adventure, Mabel Dearmer rewrote chapters XXIII, XXIV and XXVIII-XXXII of Part I of Cervantes’s novel, containing the story of Cardenio – making its protagonists look up to the knight errant as a wise man – and finished the adventure with the episode of the armies that turned out to be herds of sheep, taken from chapter XVIII in the novel. The playwright combined two pastoral stories (Holloway 2017) included by Cervantes: the bucolic wandering of Dorothea and Cardenio in the forest on the one hand, and the comic episode with the sheep mistaken for armies by Don Quixote, imbued by the English pastoral tradition, on the other. The English pastoral tradition was initiated by John Lyly’s *Endimion* (1579) and was continued, to mention but a few representative authors, still in the 16th century, by Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Christopher Marlowe, and William Shakespeare; in the 17th century, by John Fletcher, Emilia Lanier, Ben Jonson, John Milton, Andrew Marvell, and Katherine Philips; in the 18th century, by Alexander Pope, Thomas Gray, George Crabbe, and Robert Burns; and in the 19th century by Percy Bysshe Shelley and Matthew Arnold (Gifford 2019).

While in Cervantes’s novel, Cardenio and the account of his misfortunes are introduced in chapter XXIII, far before Dorothea appears for the first time in chapter

XXVIII, Dearmer makes Dorothea – cross-dressed as a boy, as in the novel – enter the stage before Cardenio. Then she hides, but, when found, she tells her story before Cardenio reveals his. The playwright might have chosen to do this, on the one hand, due to a matter of economy, since being on stage, while Dorothea offers the account of her misfortunes, Cardenio is enabled to resort to a process of recognition that makes it unnecessary for him to offer the account of his story as well. On the other hand, having Dorothea reveal her version of the story before Cardenio's confers her more prominence. This is very relevant, since it is going to be Dorothea who will insist, throughout this play, on Don Quixote's nobility and wisdom – unlike in Cervantes's novel, where these characters see the knight errant as deluded and out of touch with reality.

The third act, called "The second adventure: The adventure with giants", is set in an inn. Don Quixote is seated, having a rest after the battle, accompanied by Dorothea. While they discuss with the innkeeper about the dinner menu, Lucinda enters, breathless. They engage in conversation, and she confesses that she wants to go to a convent because of her misfortunes. She fled from a marriage that her parents had arranged, in order to be with her beloved, but eventually he abandoned her. When she reveals that her lover's name is Cardenio, Dorothea asks Don Quixote to intervene in the matter, so he tries to comfort Lucinda with wise, though cryptic, words. When he prepares to leave, in search of new adventures, Cardenio, who had been looking for Don Quixote, walks in and has a happy reunion with Lucinda, who then summarises the scene, characterising Don Quixote in the following way: "That strange knight determines all our fates". The knight errant says goodbye, and when he leaves, an officer comes with soldiers, looking for him for being mad, since he had attacked a shepherd and his flock. But, at the inn, they are sent in the opposite direction to the one the gentleman took. And Dorothea states that "if he be mad, then all great men are mad" (Dearmer 1916: 59).

In this second adventure, Mabel Dearmer rewrote chapters XXXVI-XXXIX and XLII-XLVII of Part I of Cervantes's novel, continuing with the story of Cardenio, making its protagonists admire and sympathise with the knight errant, and finishes the adventure with an added episode of the soldiers looking for Don Quixote because he had attacked the sheep. The soldiers are then diverted by the knight errant's new friends, who respect and admire him.

Scene II presents Sancho in the countryside, with the windmills blurred in the background, very far away. Cardenio enters and asks Sancho whether he is hungry or thirsty, but the servant is more concerned with his having lost his master, who appears next on the scene, fighting the windmills.

Here Mabel Dearmer offers a flashback, since she had reported the adventure of the windmills already in her prologue, rewriting the adventure introduced by Cervantes in chapter VIII of his novel, and adding the character of Cardenio, who does not appear so early in the novel.

Apart from the above-mentioned clear reference to pastoral literature, Cervantes's story of Cardenio and Lucinda also has clear traits of the Byzantine novel (Garrido Ardila 2015, since the theme to be addressed is that of the inevitable separation of young lovers, who are to meet with a series of challenges and obstacles that will put their loyalty and the strength of their love to the test. Apart from a possible wish to pay tribute to the different literary genres present in "Don Quixote", Mabel Dearmer intended to subvert the main characters in the Byzantine plot, unlike what happens in Cervantes's novel, in order to dismiss the

idea that Don Quixote was mad, and to make the characters and the public sympathise with him and admire him.

Metaphorically, Mabel Dearmer even engages the reader in a sort of Byzantine romance, since she introduces the reference to the adventure with the windmills – probably one of the most widely known –, at the beginning of the play, to separate the reader from that tale for several pages, while she engages Don Quixote in different adventures, until she finally reunites the famous episode with the windmills and the reader in act III. And, when that happens, we realise there is a new character involved in the exploit: Cardenio, who does not play a part in this episode in Cervantes's novel, but he does so in Dearmer's play, since his going after Don Quixote to take him back with them is a sign of both worry and affection.

Act four, "The third adventure: The adventure with the enchanter", presents the group of characters in the forests of the Duke. Antonio explains to Cardenio that the Duchess has invited Don Quixote in order to test his madness: if he claims he is a knight errant, she is going to put him to the test, a trial she has designed especially for him. Cardenio informs Lucinda and Dorothea about it, and they feel offended by what the Duchess intends to do and decide to offer their support to their friend, Don Quixote.

The Duchess begins to make fun of his madness in front of her guests, but, as Don Quixote is not perturbed, she decides to send someone to look for Dulcinea del Toboso and bring her to Don Quixote (Dearmer 1916: 76). But when the latter sees the country maiden, he thinks she has been bewitched by Freston, his enemy – which the Duchess, mocking him, confirms. Finally, some officers take him in a cage, but only after he leaves everyone astonished with his gentlemanly behaviour and decorum, to the point that the Duchess herself sheds some tears, ashamed of her own behaviour.

Meanwhile, Don Fernando meets Cardenio, Lucinda, and Dorothea, and he reconciles with his wife. The Duchess tries to convince the officers not to carry Don Quixote away in that cage, but they decide to complete their mission. Then Cardenio asks them to take him home to La Mancha, where his niece and housekeeper will take care of him. To spare Don Quixote the humiliation of being caged, the Duchess devises a plan for him to be caged voluntarily: Freston the magician wants him to go before him in that guise, or, otherwise, he will harm the Duchess. The promise of an adventurous scenario inspires the knight, who immediately and gallantly agrees.

In this third adventure, Mabel Dearmer continues with the story of Cardenio, in the fashion of a Byzantine novel, including the final recognition of Ferdinand and Dorothea, but, unlike in Cervantes's novel, making its protagonists sympathise with the knight errant, and follow him to the Duchess's place, to help him. Thus, she rewrites chapter XXXIII in Part II of Cervantes's novel, where the characters in the story of Cardenio do not appear anymore. At the end, Don Quixote's wisdom and good-heartedness even win the Duchess, who repents for having intended to mock him and ends up by growing fond of him and helping him.

4. A romantic drama

In the fifth act, or the "Epilogue", the housekeeper and the niece are worried about Don Quixote's wanderings, but the priest arrives, and announces the knight's safe return. All the characters express their concern about whether he has recovered his sanity, but the priest regrets Don Quixote's recovery, a state in which he feels

very unhappy, since he has lost his other world, one that gave him a purpose. The Duchess and her friends, who have travelled to La Mancha to see him, are not allowed to do it, so they hide to catch a glimpse of him from a distance.

Don Quixote asks his niece to tell him what she learned in his absence, and he marvels at her reply, because he realises that, in the end, his convictions and lifestyle were an example for her:

I learnt that death is sometimes beautiful,
More beautiful than life, and that to live
Were worthless without honor". (Dearmer 1916: 94)

When Sancho calls him "Master – Don Quixote," the latter corrects him: "Nay, Quixada, now! / The name of my humility is dead" (Dearmer 1916: 94). The meaning of "humility" in this context is "humiliation" rather than "humbleness", since, having recovered his sanity, he now regrets having made his neighbour Sancho call him "Master". He also apologises for having dragged him in his madness. Now, he is left "to eat, to sleep, and then, dear God, to die!" (idem: 95), that is, Quixada is determined to forget about the Don Quixote who had been a product of his once deranged mind, to enjoy his present return to sanity and to lead a peaceful life until the end of his days.

On hearing those words, his friends come out of their hiding place to tell him how meeting him was a turning point in their lives and what a positive role he has come to play. When the Duchess's turn comes, she confesses that he has changed her life, to the point of falling irresistibly for him, in admiration for his gentlemanly behaviour, since he replaced the wickedness in her heart with love for the others. The Duchess's words lead Master Quixada to think that perhaps his Dulcinea has not disappeared completely... The play ends with his friends extolling the goodness of Don Quixote and his wisdom, refusing to allow him to disappear and revert to a state of rationality and normality.

In this part, Mabel Dearmer rewrites chapter LXXIV, the last one in Part II of Cervantes's novel, where Don Quixote recovers his sanity, rejects chivalry books, and dies. In the romantic fashion that, as mentioned above, turns Don Quixote's madness into idealism, she refuses to let him give up his gentle manners, which imitate the manners of the knights errant, and keeps him alive at the end of her play, as someone to look up to, preventing Quixada from forgetting Don Quixote, because the latter's selfless behaviour has gained him the admiration and affection of many – and very diverse – characters, whom he eventually redeemed.

5. Conclusion

Mabel Dearmer rewrites Cervantes's *Don Quixote of La Mancha*, subverting certain episodes and making the main characters sympathise with Don Quixote, including, in her play, the episodes that pay tribute to pastoral literature and Byzantine novels; she rewrites the characters in these episodes in order to serve her purpose – that of composing a romantic drama. Thus, Cardenio, Lucinda, Dorothea, and Fernando, as well as the Duchess, end up admiring the knight errant, who is redeemed by his honest and gentlemanly behaviour. Even his niece finally realises that her uncle may not have been entirely mad and that he has something to teach her.

Mabel Dearmer wisely leads her play and, implicitly, Don Quixote's story, toward the glorious end that, from her point of view, the knight errant deserved: the

acknowledgment by the rest of the characters that his life was not ruined by madness, but enriched by wisdom and noble principles, and that his model of behaviour was one to imitate and admire.

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“PENDULUM WOMAN”: EDITH WHARTON'S STRATEGIC FORMATION OF TRIANGLES IN REAL-LIFE RELATIONSHIPS

NARUMI YOSHINO

Kindai University, Osaka

***Abstract:** The present paper concerns Edith Wharton's strategic formation of triangular relationships in her real life. As the reticent wife of an upper-class renowned family, Wharton used all she had to make male acquaintances that would enhance her intellectual stimulation and deepen her insight as a writer. Including her husband Teddy in her social circle, she skillfully entertained guests by creating a private space in her automobile and her mansion in Lenox. In this paper, her rather “strategic” methods to establish these relationships will be examined in detail.*

***Keywords:** automobiles, Edith Wharton, the Mount, Teddy Wharton, triangular relationships*

1. Introduction

The present paper concerns Edith Wharton's strategic formation of relationships with several men in her social life, which contributed in no small measure to the successful establishment of her career as a renowned female writer in the early 20th century. As a prominent writer at the turn of the century in the United States, Wharton undeniably led a life that was as dramatic as her fiction. A number of Wharton's biographical studies confirm this. The present paper will extract relevant parts from several biographical studies focusing on Wharton's way of constructing her real-life relationships nurtured through her life, in which we find the same pattern: her attempt to triangulate human relationships when making male acquaintances. Her way to build and nurture friendships with some intelligent, cosmopolitan men like Henry James, helped to enrich her personal life and career, and eventually influenced the very contents of her oeuvres, where protagonists agonize over and learn from their own entangled, triangular relationships, deliberately constructed by the author.

Triangles formed in Wharton's real life, unlike those depicted in her fiction, do not necessarily involve “love” affairs. On occasion, the relationships might look romantic, but all of them, except for that in which Morton Fullerton was involved, had nothing to do with sexual intercourse as far as her real life was concerned. Rather, the triangles discussed here simply mean groups of “three”, usually two men and Wharton.

Before we begin to analyze these triangles, we must note that Wharton's career as a writer was achieved not only with her pure devotion to writing, but also with her ceaseless effort to upgrade her cultural surrounding by making the

acquaintance with cosmopolitan, educated men, from lawyers to writers, who inspired her in her work. If Wharton, a woman, was to be as active a writer as a man in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it must have been important for her to obtain necessary information and stimulation from male peers.

Thus, Wharton developed close friendships with a large number of men outside her own social circles after her marriage, expanding her knowledge and building her career through her interactions with them. If there is one rule in her way of doing this, it is that her friendships are never one-to-one closed relationship, but one-to-two, or “triangular” relationships that are always open, leading to other promising encounters in the future, eventually to form what Susan Goodman (1994: 3) called, “Wharton’s inner circle”.

As the reticent wife of an upper-class renowned family, Wharton, so as to avoid any possible scandals, was deliberate in approaching the targeted men, always making her relationship with them rather conspicuous; she successfully attained sources of her writing materials through them, all of which inevitably contributed to making her into an established female writer. How could she manage to do this? Here, her rather “strategic” method of establishing these relationships will be examined in detail. As no scholars have so far mentioned this tendency in Wharton, it would be worthwhile to give some thought to it, which will, hopefully, enable us to read her works from a new perspective.

2. Walter Berry and Henry James

Let us consider two men to start with - Walter Berry and Henry James, who stand out as the most influential figures in Wharton’s life. Both got acquainted with her either before or during her marital life. This means that they inevitably shared a considerable amount of time with her husband Teddy, especially while they were invited to the couple’s country house in Lenox, the Mount. Berry, an international lawyer, met Edith Wharton for the first time in 1883, the same year when Teddy Wharton met her, and soon became one of the most frequent visitors at the Mount at the beginning of the 20th century. Judging from several biographical studies, we can state that Berry was the first to be involved in the series of triangular relationships of which Wharton was the center. As Berry and Teddy got along very well, there was no trouble between the three, and thus Wharton succeeded in forming the first triangle. Lewis (1975: 278) notes that “... Berry was ... a pleasant male companion with whom Teddy could exchange jokes and stock-market tips.”

Undeniably, the most important male figure in Wharton’s life was Henry James, with whom she had craved for a fruitful friendship, for the sake of her own career. She clearly states in her autobiography, *A Backward Glance*: “Henry James was perhaps the most intimate friend I ever had....” (Wharton 1998: 173). In order to make contact with him, Wharton fully took advantage of Teddy from the beginning. She had made various attempts since the late 1880s to get access to this literary giant, who was 20 years older than her. Notably, it was Teddy’s cooperation which enabled Wharton to meet James; she got her first opportunity to meet James in the house of an old friend of Teddy’s:

The encounter took place at the house of Edward Boit, the brilliant water-colour painter... Boit and his wife, both Bostonians, and old friends of my husband’s...asked us to dine with Henry James. I could hardly believe that such a privilege could befall me, and I could think of only one way of deserving it to put on my newest Doucet dress, and try to look my prettiest! (Wharton 1998: 171-172)

As a young lady in her 20s, Wharton tried to impress James by wearing a pretty dress, which simply failed. However, the next time she had the opportunity to meet James, Wharton seemed not to have learned her lesson:

A year or two later, in Venice (probably in 1889 or 1890), the same opportunity came my way. Another friend of my husband's, Ralph Curtis of Boston, had the happy thought of inviting us to meet Henry James.... Well this time I had a new hat; a beautiful new hat! (Wharton 1998: 172)

The above two episodes can be read as a comical recollection of Wharton's youthful shallowness in thinking that she could attract James with her femininity. Her feminine attempts failed, as James never recognized her.

Then, more than ten years later, she visited him at his house, where she went by car, with Teddy beside her. Lewis states:

If Henry James always associated Edith Wharton with a shiny and resplendent new motorcar, it was because she and Teddy first appeared before the door of Lamb House in just such a vehicle. This was in May 1904, and by that time the car had already covered a great miles. (Lewis 1975: 128)

Here, the car functions as her new battle suit, which has been enlarged by changing its materials from fabric to steel, and even incorporating her husband as a companion. Teddy's role as husband is very important here. To James, the presence of her husband by her side has the effect of making the visitor's genuine intentions even clearer. As a young, beautiful, but novice writer, Wharton was not there to flirt, but to have him get in her automobile, both physically and figuratively, in order to create a new triangle of friendship. Certainly, Wharton is fully aware that, in order to win James' attention, their relationship has to begin as an open and triangular one, with Teddy included. The semi-private space in her automobile is a symbolic pre-invitation to her life journey. Obviously, Wharton's meticulously calculated strategy worked, as James got in the couple's motor-car, and eventually became her best friend.

3. How Wharton utilized her automobile

Let us examine Wharton's relationship with the automobile in detail here. In the early 20th century, when Wharton first purchased her automobile, it functioned as a leisure product, unique to the upper-class. In addition to the unpaved road conditions at that time, the automobile was still too fragile a machine to be fully trusted. Moreover, it did not serve as a means of transportation just as the horse-drawn carriage did. Nevertheless, Wharton preferred the automobile because, unlike the train, which was a public vehicle that ran on a fixed route at a fixed time, the automobile user was in control of the time and destination of the car, and one could have the same private space in the car as in a carriage, as stated in the opening of *A Motor-Flight Through France* (Wharton 1991: 1).

The automobile, which serves as the ultimate movable private space, is not, however, completely cut off from the public space. Unlike horse-drawn carriages, it is physically difficult for the driver and other passengers in a car to be invisible while driving on public roads. Even if privacy can be maintained to the extent of the content of conversations in the car, a car on a public road is much more

exposed to the public eye than a living room in a building, in the sense that passengers are visible. Furthermore, if the car is like a huge garment that embodies the person who owns it, the visibility of not only the owner of the car, but also of the passengers will become important as an indicator of the owner's value and status.

Wharton's preference for the automobile over the carriage is mainly justified by the car's showy aspect, with its publicly visible design. Let us refer to Scharff's writings on the design of automobiles, with female passengers seen at the turn of the 20th century. Scharff writes:

...the open vehicles of the day, built chiefly by carriage-makers, were high-riding, sometimes doorless affairs that exposed all passengers to public scrutiny, and women seemed particularly to be on display. (Scharff 1992: 24)

As she states, women in automobiles were very eye-catching at that time, when cars were still a rarity. For Wharton, the automobile was the embodiment of a bloated self that could best display her wealth and modernity. The self she wanted to show to the passersby during her drive was a figure outside of the private space, in which women have traditionally been confined. At the same time, it can also be said that the design of an "open vehicle" required Wharton to maintain a one-to-many rather than a one-to-one interpersonal relationship for public perception. As long as there was Teddy the husband, or, more than two men sharing the same space in the car, the risk of bothersome prying eyes from the outside world was reduced. Wharton must have instinctively recognized that the automobile, the state-of-the-art vehicle of the day, had both public and private characteristics which other alternative conveyances did not have. She, then, skillfully used them to overcome her disadvantageous and inconvenient position as a married woman and to establish triangular "friendships" with several male friends.

After successfully impressing James by driving him in her private car to his house, Wharton invited him to the Mount, her newly-constructed mansion in Lenox, where, with other guests and Teddy, they enjoyed more driving. Wharton (1998: 153) writes: "I remember in particular one summer night when Henry James, Walter Berry, my husband and I sat by the roadside till near dawn while our chauffeur tried to persuade 'George' to carry us back to the Mount". This is one of the adventurous episodes of her favorite friend set - James, Berry, and the Whartons - struggling through the night to repair "George", their automobile, on their way back to the Mount. In those days, automobiles broke down quickly and therefore were unreliable compared to horse-drawn carriages as a means of transportation. But Wharton insisted on riding in an automobile rather than a carriage, even if it meant nothing but inconvenience. Being modern was valued more than being practical, and personifying the automobile as "George" indicates she fully enjoyed the trouble as an adventure, forgetting that the vehicle was actually a means of transport. In another episode, after enjoying the drive, they encounter the hardship of getting out of the ruts and searching around for a blacksmith to repair the broken-down automobile:

...there was inexhaustible delight in penetrating to the remoter parts of Massachusetts and New Hampshire..., and coming back, weary but laden with a new harvest of beauty, after sticking fast in ruts, having to push the car up hill, to rout out the village blacksmith for repairs, and suffer the jeers of horse-drawn travellers trotting gaily past us. (Wharton 1998: 153)

Note that Wharton writes that they "suffer the jeers of horse-drawn travellers trotting gaily past us," mentioning the curious looks from other ordinary travellers. Wharton herself was fully aware that her driving around in a stylish, but useless new car, with male cosmopolitan intellectuals, was an uncommon event.

And how did James view Wharton, who was so dynamic, and tactful in dealing with several male friends in a modern automobile? Or more clearly, how did Wharton perceive herself evaluated by the adored literary giant? With nostalgia and pride, Wharton recalls how James enjoyed his days at the Mount with her:

On his first visit, however, he was still in fairly good health, and in excellent spirits, exhilarated (at first) by the novelty of the adventure, the success of his revolt against his own sedentary habit (he called me "the pendulum-woman" because I crossed the Atlantic every year!), and, above all, captivated by the new experience of motoring. ...and this mode of locomotion seemed to him, as it had to me, an immense enlargement of life. (Wharton 1998: 177)

In James' eyes, Wharton must have been the embodiment of mobility itself. "Pendulum," "locomotion", and "motoring" were all new to James' life; it was this mobility of the younger Wharton that influenced him. The word James chose to describe Wharton, "pendulum", suggestively is suggestive of more than just her physical movement between two continents, but also of her way of making male friends, as she moved from one man to another.

4. The Mount and more triangles

As seen in the case of Berry and James, Wharton's formation of heterosexual relationships before divorce involved Teddy, who was almost always included in the triangles Wharton created. And his role as a mediator is probably symbolized by the layout of the bedroom floor in the Mount.

The Mount, which Wharton herself designed, purchased, and lived in, was completed in 1902 in the suburb of Lenox. After settling in, the Whartons gradually began inviting friends to their home in 1903, and finally succeeded in inviting James as well in 1904.

Teddy is often spoken of in a negative way as a husband, especially by feminist critics. Wolff (1977: 215-216), for example, points out the contrast between Teddy, the unemployed and mentally ill husband, and his wife Edith, who makes money as a writer and is financially independent. In Fraiman's (2011: 501) viewpoint, "*Decoration* and the Mount functioned in advance of the law to grant Wharton a de facto divorce – a critical distance from marriage, in keeping with the ethos of her novels", suggesting that the years spent at the Mount were a prelude to her divorce, which eventually led to prepare for a new phase in her later life as a successful, independent woman writer in Europe. While it is universally acknowledged that the Whartons did not always have a happy marriage, it is clear that Teddy was still of considerable importance in Wharton's life, at least, at the beginning of the 20th century, supporting her career. Besides behaving in a positive and friendly manner, enabling Wharton to form friendships with acquaintances of the opposite sex, Teddy also played an important role when the couple decided on Lenox as the place of settlement. In other words, the Mount would not have been purchased without Teddy, whose family home was located in the same region, as Lee (2007: 138) explains: "Why did Edith choose Lenox? Proximity to the

Wharton family...was not an incentive for her, though it would have been for Teddy". The fact that the couple ultimately decided on Lennox indicates that Teddy's right to speak was valid, and that for Edith, Teddy, at that time, was still a life partner, whose opinion was eligible enough for consideration.

Perhaps Teddy's significance and indispensability as husband is best reflected in the layout of the third floor where there were the bedrooms, the most private part of the house. In the Mount, Edith had two corner rooms on the north side, at the end of the floor, whose west side was her office, and east side, the bedroom across from the bathroom. These two rooms could be completely separated by closing the door on the corridor side. Teddy's bedroom, on the other hand, was located in the center of the building section, on the east side, to "command a fine view of the gardens, pond, lake, and mountains", indicating that he was the head of the mansion, responsible for managing the entire property and the farm (*Edith Wharton Restoration* 1997: 100). Between Edith's and Teddy's rooms was a dressing room shared by the couple, through which they had access to each other. In fact, only he and the servants had access to Edith's room, as "Edith's bedroom across the hall from the boudoir remains a somewhat unknown quantity, since no photographs survive; except for servants and Teddy occasionally, no visitors were allowed" (Wilson 2012: 92). This indicates that, although Wharton invited many male guests to the Mount and shared meals and entertainment with them for extended periods of time, the bedroom, her ultimate private space, still remained a place where Teddy, her husband, alone could enter. James stayed in the largest and best of the three guest rooms, the only one facing the garden, located next to Teddy's room. In other words, Teddy's room served as a spatial barrier between James and Wharton. Given that the Mount was designed by Wharton herself, it can be inferred that the triangular relationship between the Whartons and their guests found in the third-floor layout was a style of friendship that Wharton had deliberately planned long before the building was actually completed. As a married woman of the upper class, Wharton never neglected her husband (at least publicly); and this floor plan shows a smart, calculating, and shrewd side of Wharton, who attracted and fed male guests in order to advance her career.

In addition to Berry and James, there were several other male friends with whom Wharton was close, according to Wright's (1998) meticulous research on Wharton, in her *Edith Wharton A to Z*. Characteristically; they were almost always brought in either by Teddy or by other male friends. Paul Bourget, a French novelist and critic, was introduced to the Whartons by a relative of Teddy's mother. Even before the Mount was built, Bourget had visited them at their home, where he was hosted and entertained by Teddy. After the couple's divorce, his association with Wharton still continued until he died in 1935. George Cabot (Bay) Lodge, a poet, was introduced by Berry in 1899, and later became a regular visitor to the Mount. Once James was on the list, he would also introduce her to various people on Teddy's behalf. Howard Overing Sturgis, a novelist, was brought to the Mount by James for the first time in 1904, and became a regular visitor there. Morton Fullerton, a journalist with whom Wharton later fell in love, came to visit the Mount in 1907, with James' introduction. Although only Fullerton went so far as to have an affair with her, John Hugh Smith, a banker, is also known as Wharton admirer. He stayed at the Mount with Lapsley and James in 1911.

Even car trips in mixed gender companion could be easily arranged as long as there were at least three members. Gaillard Lapsley, a historian who first became acquainted with Wharton in 1904, traveled by automobile through France

with Wharton and James in 1907. Percy Lubbock, one of Wharton's biographers and regular visitors at the Mount, traveled by car with Wharton and Lapsley in Africa in 1914. Indeed, the space in the car must have served as a second salon, with the additional intimacy and privacy ensured by being in a different continent. However, since Wharton was taking this car trip with three or more people, it was also crucial that this shared space should not be too intimate or too private. Moreover, for Wharton, sharing this space and time with her male friends was never just a recreational vacation. Her travel journals would later feed her writings and bear fruit as *A Motor Flight through France* (1908) and *In Morocco* (1920).

The triangular friendships Wharton formed here and there with her male friends undoubtedly broadened her literary horizons and range of activities, which was not something Teddy could have provided alone. Nevertheless, Teddy's presence at one end of the triangle could balance the power relations between the couple and their invited guests and this is how Teddy, though suffering from neurasthenia, could find his place at the Mount, where his wife had created her ideal world with intellectual people that shared her interests. The couple tried to maintain their marriage life in the most decent way until 1907, when Wharton encountered Morton Fullerton. With his emergence, the stability of the triangles, as far as Teddy was concerned, was broken. Lewis explains the clear difference Teddy sensed between Wharton's male friends such as Berry and James, and Fullerton, who visited the Mount for the first time with James's introduction:

For a number of years, meanwhile, he [Teddy] had witnessed his wife's heightened enjoyment in the company, first, of Walter Berry, and then of Fullerton. He seems to have been aware that Berry was no real threat.... But Teddy could not have failed to detect, in the Paris winters of 1908 and 1909, that...Morton Fullerton was playing a role in her life very different from that of the others. (Lewis 1975: 278)

Besides that, Teddy's family in Lenox and especially his mother-in-law, Nancy, was not happy about Wharton's heterosexual associations, as Gilder points out:

The problem, in her mother-in-law's eyes, as well as many Lenox observers, was Edith's behavior. As an emerging celebrity author, she was sidelining Teddy for her adoring circle of intellectual male friends - Howard Sturgis, Walter Berry, Henry James - to say nothing of disappearing to Paris for an affair with Henry James's journalist friend Morton Fullerton. (Gilder 2017: 37)

Both Lewis's and Gilder's references to Teddy's side clarify that, as Wharton's friendships expanded, his place in them was gradually lost, resulting in an irretrievable collapse of the balance of the triangles.

As it was sexual, the relationship with Fullerton should naturally have been a more private and intimate, one-on-one male-female relationship, different from the other love triangles she had established in the past; yet, in reality it was not. It seems that no matter how intimate and private their relationship was, Wharton could not help but share it with someone else; and in this case, it was James who took Teddy's place in the triangle, playing the role of intermediary. To cite Powers:

...by that autumn [of 1908] she had unburdened herself by the double confession that marriage to Teddy was growing unsupported and that she had accepted Fullerton as her lover. James immediately extended his full sympathy and emotional support to her in her affairs of the heart. (Powers 1990: 84)

Powers, elsewhere, also states that James was also actively involved in Wharton's new male friendships and enjoyed playing a part in the triangle:

The association with Wharton's dalliance with John Huger Smith and later, if less obviously, with the calmer and more discreet Robert Norton clearly gave James a good deal of stimulation and gratification; it "completed" the special relationship he enjoyed with Edith Wharton. That relationship - the marriage of true minds, sympathetic companionship, frank and intimate confidence and trust - was rounded out by the safely controlled but invigorating element of the erotic. (Powers 1990: 17-18)

Note that Powers describes the relationship of James and Wharton as "marriage of true minds," not excluding the erotic elements. The fact that Wharton confessed to James about her love affair with Fullerton can be interpreted as the best proof of the unwavering trust and intimacy that had been established between Wharton and James.

Meanwhile, as Wharton's romantic relationship with Fullerton was nearing its end, her old friend Berry made an appearance and brought stability to her heart, as Lewis (1975: 285) states: "Berry's temporary establishment in her household marked the start of his gradual replacement of Fullerton in her deepest affections". Indeed, Walter Berry was Wharton's oldest male friend, and their friendship continued after her divorce from Teddy and even after James' death. Berry was so special to Wharton throughout her life that it is not at all unreasonable to say that their friendship sometimes may have included romantic feelings, which even enabled him to function as a replacement for Fullerton when necessary. It is no wonder, therefore, that Berenson's jealousy was stirred by Berry's presence, when, as Lewis notes:

Edith, Walter Berry, and Berenson were together frequently, Berenson observing that "we make a good trio, and have got to terms of real affection." But he had it fixed in his head that Edith's emotional commitment was exclusively to Berry.... (Lewis 1975: 294)

From the discussion above, it is quite right to conclude that, for Wharton, heterosexual friendships were never formed between two people, but among three or four, to keep a balance between herself and the men involved.

5. Conclusion

As a married woman with an upper-class background, Wharton used all she had in order to gain acquaintances who would enhance her intellectual stimulation and deepen her insight as a writer in the restrictive environment of her time. Of course, she also made sure to include her husband Teddy in her social circle, and she entertained guests by creating a private space in her automobile and her mansion in Lenox. It is clear from this examination that she avoided one-on-one relationships and always tried to maintain balance by establishing a triangle or circle of relationships that included her husband. Even after the demise of her marriage, however, Wharton skillfully exploited this triangular relationship. In her private life, James and Berry were always present and involved in the trios she formed.

After observing Wharton's way to form friendships with male figures, we are likely to find in her fictional works many triangles that are sometimes complexly entwined. Perhaps the first well-known work which tackles this motif is *Ethan Frome*. Agonizing in the middle, the protagonist Ethan wavers between Mattie, the young, attractive girl, and Zeena, the old, jealous wife. The triangular relationship depicted here overlaps that of Wharton's in real life, where she struggles between Fullerton the lover, and Teddy the husband, to whom she is legally bound. Six years later, Wharton writes *Summer*, which illustrates two triangles. In the main triangle, the heroine Charity wavers between Harney the lover, and Mr. Royall, her foster father, whom she reluctantly marries. In another triangle, Harney is the center figure, with Charity the abandoned girlfriend, and Annabel, the future wife on each side. In *Twilight Sleep*, we find three triangles, resulting from the heroine Pauline's repetitive divorces and marriages, with the incestuous relationship between brother Jim and sister Nona. Likewise, in *The Children*, in *Mother's Recompense*, in *The Age of Innocence*, Wharton never fails to depict protagonists suffering in the labyrinth of love triangles.

But the most important work which deals with triangles is *The Custom of the Country*, in which the protagonist Undine Spragg repeatedly marries, divorces, and remarries among three men. Unlike other works, where two women fight over one man, or one man suffers between two women, Undine's triangles are very similar to those of Wharton in that they are more practical and mobile. To apply James' words, Undine can also be a "pendulum woman", swinging back and forth between multiple men across the Atlantic Ocean. This presumably indicates that, for Wharton, heterosexual relationships are never confined to a male-female pair. There is always room for one more, and this is where Wharton begins her stories.

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“FOREVER LOOKING BACK”: MEMORY AND UNRELIABILITY IN KAZUO ISHIGURO’S *THE REMAINS OF THE DAY*

SENAR ARCAK

Başkent University, Ankara

Abstract: *Kazuo Ishiguro’s novel The Remains of the Day studies the notion of narrative unreliability through the exploration of the relationship between memories and one’s sense of identity. Ishiguro employs a narrator who communicates a struggle between reality and what he can partially remember about himself, his idea of Englishness and the house he has worked in, through gaps, omissions and ambiguities that install unreliability as the key vehicle with which the narration operates. However, the unreliable narrator in the novel challenges any notion of stable identity, and the impossibility of fixating either the national or the personal identity into singular, essentialist and idealist framing.*

Keywords: *identity, memory representation, truth, unreliability,*

1. Introduction

Kazuo Ishiguro’s *The Remains of the Day* portrays an English butler’s mental trip, through his memories that seem to control and even overpower his narrative. Stevens, as a narrator, attempts to shape and control his narrative by recreating his memories, to prove that he fits into the definition of the “great butler” who had served in the house of a great gentleman, Lord Darlington. However, the novel progresses to show the discrepancy between Stevens’ interpretations of his own memories and what they actually represent. Stevens oscillates between an idealisation of Englishness that he wants to protect and fixate, and a gradual acknowledgement of its absence. Ishiguro’s narrator communicates this unresolved struggle through gaps, omissions, and ambiguities that make his narrative unreliable. However, I believe that Stevens’ unreliability, in fact, “guides us to other inferences that lead us to recognize that [he], nevertheless, captures some underlying truths about life” (Phelan 2008: 13). Thus, I argue that the novel’s use of an unreliable narrator challenges any notion of a stable identity, and the impossibility of fixating either the national or the personal identity into a singular, essentialist and idealist framing.

2. A narratological approach to the issue of unreliability

Unreliability, as a narratological term coined by Wayne Booth, characterises the “moral” distance “between the norms of the implied or real author and those articulated by the narrator” (Nünning 2008: 36), whereby “the speaker is himself the butt of the ironic point’, since ‘the author and reader are secretly in collusion, behind the speaker’s back, agreeing upon the standard by which he is found

wanting” (D’hoker 2008: 149). When the reader notices this mentioned distance, he detects the unreliability embedded in the narration. However, many critics, such as Rimmon-Kenan, Wall, and Nünning, find such a definition insufficient, since it does not fully explain how unreliability is detected by the reader. According to Rimmon-Kenan, the norms and values of the implied author “are notoriously difficult to arrive at”; he goes on to talk about certain textual factors that

may indicate a gap between the norms of the implied author and those of the narrator: when the facts contradict the narrator’s views, the latter is judged to be unreliable (but how does one establish the ‘real facts’ behind the narrator’s back?); when the outcome of the action proves the narrator wrong, a doubt is retrospectively cast over his reliability in reporting earlier events; when the views of other characters consistently clash with the narrator’s, suspicion may arise in the reader’s mind; and when the narrator’s language contains internal contradictions, double-edged images, and the like, it may have a boomerang effect, undermining the reliability of its user (Rimmon-Kenan 2002: 104).

Unreliability is recognized when the evaluations and interpretations of the narrator contradict or misrepresent the actual event or claim what it might stand for. Although these indicators which reveal that the narrator’s interpretation of his own experience or of external events might be misleading or simply missing, it is important to note that usually “the unreliable narrator’s account of events can be trusted” as it is according to the accuracy of these events that the reader judges the narrator to be reliable or unreliable (D’hoker 2008: 151). Moreover, according to Wall (1994: 19-20), unreliability can also be marked through the discourse, because it “offers clues to narrator’s unreliability, their verbal tics giving us some indication of preoccupations that render their narration problematic... - a signal that does not demand the complex cross-referencing that diegetic inconsistencies require”.

What seems problematic with the emphasis on the implied author and “self-explanatory yardsticks, like ‘normal moral standards’ and ‘basic common sense’”, for both Wall and Nünning is that “no generally accepted standard of normality exists which can serve as the basis for impartial judgments” (Nünning 2008: 44). Attempting to define the unreliable narrator by basing the notion of reliability on the “norms and values” of the implied author suggests that “an unreliable narrator presupposes a reliable counter-part, who is the ‘rational, self-present subject of humanism’, who occupies a world in which language is a transparent medium that is capable of reflecting a ‘real’ world”; an attempt that is quite impossible (Wall 1994: 21). In fact, the unreliable narrator mirrors that the incoherence and dynamism of human subjectivity “is indeed a sight of conflict; that, like unreliable narrators, we frequently ‘lie’ to ourselves, and-with just a shadow of awareness-avoid facts that might undermine the coherence or the purpose of narratives we construct about our lives (ibid.). Nünning presents a definition of the unreliable narrator that is aware of these contradictions:

The structure of unreliable narration can be explained in terms of dramatic irony and discrepant awareness because it involves a contrast between a narrator’s view of the fictional world and the contrary state of affairs which the reader can grasp. The reader interprets what the narrator says in two quite different contexts. On the one hand, the reader is exposed to what the narrator wants and means to say. On the other hand, the statements of the narrator take on additional meaning for the reader,

a meaning the narrator is not conscious of and does not intend to convey. Without being aware of it, unreliable narrators continually give the reader indirect information about their idiosyncrasies and states of mind. The peculiar effects of unreliable narration result from the conflict between the narrator's report of the 'facts' on the level of the story and the interpretations provided by the narrator. The narrative not only informs the reader of the narrator's version of events, it also provides him or her with indirect information about what presumably 'really happened' and about the narrator's frame of mind (Nünning 2008: 38).

Another question related to Nünning's definition is about how consciously or rather unconsciously the narrator keeps or hides the information, and, if he does so unconsciously, is it really possible to label him as unreliable. In Stevens' case, he compartmentalizes his memories and their "true" evaluation not because he is simply ignorant or unaware, but in order "to avoid the psychological conflict that inheres in being aware of one's fractured subjectivity, or of the way in which values that rule one part of one's personality diminish one's ability comfortably to meet the needs dictated by another part" (Wall 1994: 23). Stevens' omission and silences in the novel seem to show his subtle awareness that he has to face these issues, and his fear to do so. According to Wall, Stevens' partial acceptance at the end of the novel closes the supposed gap between the implied author and the narrator and thus the novel "asks us to formulate new paradigms of unreliability for the narrator whose split subjectivity, rather than moral blindness or intellectual bias, gives rise to unreliable narration" (ibid.).

3. Unreliability in *The Remains of the Day*

The Remains of the Day is a narrative account of Stevens' memories and his attempts to remember and order these memories. As memories are changing, slippery textures, narrative unreliability is at the centre of the novel. This unreliability is observable in a number of places throughout the novel, such as the narrative discourse, and "the conflicts between scenic presentation and Stevens's commentary" (Wall 1994: 22). The discursive elements that install Stevens's unreliability are given through his defensive protestations and attempts to clarify his claims in the way he wants the reader to understand them, by saying "Let me make this clear" (Ishiguro 1999: 10), "I am able to refute it with absolute authority" (122), "I would like to explain" (63). Kathleen Wall (1994: 24) sees these slippages as "largely unconscious, meant as a defence of his life and the values that have shaped it" But these slippages also suggest that it is Stevens' discomfort and disturbance caused by a partial awareness of the accuracy of his claims about Lord Darlington's failures and "misguidedness", as well as his own that cause him to amend his life and mistakes by correcting and controlling his memory and its meaning. Stevens' narrative progression reveals that he "would rather not show and tell all that he knows, even while he is painfully aware that he must cover up what he hopes to never know" (Wong 2007: 500). For example, when Stevens refuses to see his own father on his death bed, claiming that "To do otherwise, I feel, would be to let him down" (Ishiguro 1999: 111), he believes to have displayed "in the face of everything, at least in some modest degree a dignity worthy of ... my father" and feels a "large sense of triumph" in contributing to international politics that will serve the continuation of peace (115). Although Stevens has the impression that he has managed to hide his emotions, the questions asked by Mr.

Cardinal and Lord Darlington about his state, whether he “is alright”, or the fact that that he looks as if he were crying shows that his pain is visible and readable by others, despite his attempts to brush it off as “hard work” (110). Stevens’ account of professional triumph shows the narrative “unreliability in the repression of the personal and in the deeply fractured subjectivity that follows such an enormous and significant bracketing off or denial of aspects of the self” (Wall 1994: 26). Moreover, when he recalls that moment, he claims that “I may have given the impression earlier that I treated [my father] rather bluntly... The fact is, there was little choice but to approach the matter as I did – as I am sure you will agree once I have the full context of those days” (Ishiguro 1999: 73). Stevens’ attempt to rearrange his memory according to his own view of what is correct seems to be an attempt to comfort himself by recreating a past that could be explained otherwise, justified, and pardoned. Of course, the more Stevens explains the events of March 1923, the less we agree with him and his actions.

Stevens’ unreliability lies in his attempts to exchange what he truly feels and thinks for the rearranged and polished version of a “professional” interpretation that further justifies his previous actions and mode of thinking. This is also evident in the way Stevens reads Miss Kenton’s letter. The first time he mentions the letter, Stevens claims that the letter holds in its “long, rather unrevealing passages, an unmistakable nostalgia for Darlington Hall” and rereading it confirms that “there is no possibility I am merely imagining her presence of these hints on her part” (Ishiguro 1999: 9-10). However, the closer Stevens gets to Cornwall, where he meets Miss Kenton, the more drastically his understanding of the letter changes and, after perusing it again, in order to “indicate unambiguously [Miss Kenton’s] desire to return to her former position”, Stevens admits that “one may have previously- perhaps through wishful thinking of a professional kind- exaggerated what evidence there was regarding such a desire on her part”(149). The change of meaning in the two different readings of the letter seems to show that Stevens “projects his own wish for [Miss Kenton’s] return onto a letter”, revealing that Stevens’ interpretation of the key events in his life have been faulty (Guth 1999: 133). Stevens seems to project his own emotions and desires onto Miss Kenton’s letter, assuming it is she that holds a great longing for Darlington Hall, when in truth, it is he who truly misses her presence in the house, while also wishing for the revival of Darlington Hall’s old glory. His memory is shaped by this longing, which is eventually mirrored in his retelling of the past events. However, at the same time, the reader is given hints about the unreliability of such instances by Steven’s constant concern with correcting himself and his attempts to reimagine and relive the moments he is describing, for the sake of accuracy. Such corrections indicate that a narrative dependent upon memory cannot be fully coherent and complete.

4. Memory, unreliability and identity

Stevens draws attention to how much he depends on his memories and on understanding them in order to make sense of his present journey. Throughout the novel, Stevens feels the need to express that “I see I have become somewhat lost in these old memories. This had never been my intention” (Ishiguro 1999: 167), since he admits it is “hard for me [him] to recall precisely” (99) and that “It is very possible there were a number of other instances... which I have now forgotten” (59). Stevens’ doubts about his own narrative suggest the impossibility of

remembering events fully and coherently, since one might actually choose to remember certain memories in a particular way, if they have a noteworthy contribution to the understanding of present events, aims, and personality of an individual, or memories themselves point to their own incompleteness and arbitrariness. The fact that most of Stevens' self-regulation and questioning is centred around his memories, which are also changing, fragmentary, and slippery, makes it impossible to arrive at an "entirely reliable version" of what happened. In fact, an example is when Stevens experiences difficulties in "properly" remembering and locating his memory of Miss Kenton's crying:

One memory in particular has preoccupied me all morning- or rather, a fragment of a memory, a moment that has for some reason remained with me vividly through the years. It is a recollection of standing alone in the back corridor before the closed door of Miss Kenton's parlour... as I recall, I had been struck by the conviction that behind that very door, just a few yards from me, Miss Kenton was in fact crying. However, I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstances which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor. It occurs to me that elsewhere in attempting to gather such recollections, I may well have asserted that this memory derived from the minutes immediately after Miss Kenton's receiving news of her aunt's death; that is to say, the occasion when, having left her to be alone with her grief, I realized out in the corridor that I had not offered her my condolences. But now having thought further, I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from the events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton's aunt. (Ishiguro 1999: 222)

Ishiguro's employment of an unreliable narrator serves to complicate the act of truth-telling with the help of the memory. Stevens' confusion about his memory of Miss Kenton's crying and locating its cause in two different occasions suggests that he does not possess any control over his memory, over his narrative and identity. Stevens' preoccupation with this particular memory presents an attempt to assign clarity and direction to himself as well as to his narrative, by trying to reverse his confusion and correctly locate that memory. This effort through which Stevens "attempts to grapple with his unreliable memories and interpretations and the havoc that his dishonesty has played on his life" serves to gain some sense of stability and control of his identity, since this is his duty as a butler (Wall 1994: 23). In that sense, Stevens' struggle with his own memories shows that "human subjectivity is not entirely coherent; that it is indeed a sight of conflict" (ibid.), which serves to problematize Stevens' attempts to fix his identity in an idealist image of Englishness and dignity.

In *The Remains of the Day*, the idealism and stability of both personal and national identity are deconstructed, since these identities depend on memory, which is itself already unreliable. Stevens' preoccupation with defining the ideas of greatness and dignity, which constitute his identity, his life, and his public image, reflects the parallelism between a personal identity crisis and a crisis of national identity. Stevens provides a static definition for both "greatness" and "dignity" in the very beginning of his narrative, connecting these notions, first, to a butler's identity and then to Englishness, claiming that "We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that, when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman" (Ishiguro 1999: 44). Stevens portrays greatness to be an essential element of his

self-image as a butler, but also a necessary and even compulsory part of Englishness, thus, also establishing a link between greatness and Darlington Hall. He explains that the greatness of a butler is measured directly by an “association with a truly distinguished household” and that “A great butler can only be, surely, one who can point to his years of service and say that he has applied his talents to serving a great gentleman- and through the latter, to serving humanity” (Ishiguro 1999: 123). As the stability of Stevens’ identity is directly linked with Lord Darlington and Darlington Hall, Stevens attempts to conjure up a fixed image of the house and its owner that fits into this definition. He wants to locate a more stable and unchanging definition for his identity by attributing greatness and dignity to the house he works in.

Thus, the resurrection of Stevens’ memories is accompanied by his attempts to explain them as corrections of the “small errors” and misunderstandings of Lord Darlington’s image and the decency of the house he works for. Before going on to narrate about Lord Darlington’s sudden dismissal of two Jewish maids for the “best interests” of the house and “the safety and well- being” of its guests (155), Stevens tries to persuade the reader, as much as himself, that “the allegation that his lordship never allowed Jewish people to enter the house or any Jewish staff to be employed is utterly unfounded”, while, at the same time, adding, “except, perhaps, in respect to one very minor episode in the thirties which has been blown up out of all proportion” (146). By contradicting the evidence he soon presents, the evidence that Lord Darlington indeed does not allow Jewish maids in his house, Stevens attempts to justify Lord Darlington’s actions, and euphemise quite a serious signal for Lord Darlington’s anti-Semitism that challenges the latter’s “greatness” and moral decency. Since Lord Darlington’s failures and mistakes entail that Stevens also failed as a butler, Stevens “work[s] to protect his image of the world, and to clarify and stabilize his role in it, by rationalizing and/or concealing contradictions like these” (Westerman 2004: 161). He does not voice his own opinion that “the maids had been perfectly satisfactory employees and.... my every instinct opposed the idea of their dismissal”, claiming that, as a professional butler, “there was nothing to be gained at all in irresponsibly displaying such personal doubts” (Ishiguro 1999: 156). Openly admitting Lord Darlington’s narrow-sightedness and mistakes means also accepting the collapse of the idealized image of the English identity that Stevens strives to protect. Therefore, he establishes an alternative narrative, where he tries to deem Lord Darlington’s acts, and consequently his own acts and unconditional loyalty, as acceptable and explainable.

In fact, by going through his memories, Stevens attempts to centralize the glory of the “grand English house” with “the staff of twenty-eight” (Ishiguro 1999: 7), and relocate the house as well as Lord Darlington within history and politics by reimagining the “large social occasions” (8) held in the house “with distinguished visitors” (247). Of course, this greatness of Darlington Hall is only illusory, as both the house and its owner represent the collapse of the world peace, because of Lord Darlington’s relation with the Nazis. This is symbolized in the house’s current standing, as it is turned into a “mock period piece, and so are its inhabitants, gentleman and butler alike, and all the values it used to stand for” (Nellis 2015: 14). Furthermore, the house is purchased by an American, who admits that he has bought it because it is the “genuine grand old English house” with a “genuine old-fashioned English butler” (Ishiguro 1999: 131). The country house as the symbol of Englishness is marginalized and Englishness is “itself mocked, that it is a myth that, when not regularly twisted, can lead to nationalistic manipulation and

prevents the kind of critical cosmopolitanism” (Nellis 2015: 14). Mr. Farraday’s questioning of Stevens whether he is indeed “the real thing”, not just “some waiter pretending to be one”, does not only threaten Stevens’ identity that is built on being a “great” butler, but also his national reality, history, and Englishness (Ishiguro 1999: 131). This threat grows further with Stevens’ journey away from the house. If Darlington Hall stands as a “site of being in which [Stevens] assumes a pre-determined, static sense of self primarily because of his role of a ‘good butler’”, the butler’s detachment from the house suggests an emotional and ideological movement away from the idealistic English identity (Toprak Sakız 2019: 1055). While Stevens’ distance from the house grows, his idealism built around the ideas of “greatness” and “dignity” gradually fades, as he begins to acknowledge that he had served a man who “sees international affairs as an extension of sports day at school, treats war like a cricket match ... and despises the French for not understanding that when a war- like any other sporting event- is over you ought to simply shake hands”, without ever “mentioning the millions of Englishmen who died” (Guth 1999: 127). Stevens’ journey from an enclosed space to an open sphere, with ordinary working-class people, symbolizes a detachment from “the grand narratives and grand characters of earlier historiography toward the lives and experiences of the ordinary, the mundane, the marginalized, and the dispossessed” (Wong 2007: 499). The importance Stevens assigns to himself by claiming that his butler duties contributed to the international politics of the 1920s and the 30s is challenged by his realisation that his master’s “efforts were misguided, even foolish” and therefore, his too (Ishiguro 1999: 211). His discussion with Harry Smith on dignity, in which his companion claims that “no matter if you’re rich or poor, you’re born free and you’re born so that you can express your opinion freely... you can’t have dignity if you’re a slave” (196), further challenges his definition of dignity and eradicates the “key gauges by which to measure his self-worth”, as he realizes he has been the slave of illusory ideals about the English butler and Englishness (Wong 2007: 499). The collapse of the English house and Englishness also means the collapse of the individual in *The Remains of the Day*, since these are the values with which Stevens attempts to control his memories, life, and narrative. He tries to justify Lord Darlington’s political moves, because his master’s ultimate failure “marks his recognition of the inconsistencies implicit in justifying his own life through praising that of the man he served” (Wall 1994: 35). Hence, Stevens attempts to free himself from his overwhelming memories, from the idea that he has indeed wasted away his life by attempting “to keep one’s [his] attention focused on the present; to guard against any complacency creeping in on account of what one may have achieved in the past” (Ishiguro 1999: 148). He is confronted with a re-evaluation of his past and the gradual acknowledgement that nothing meaningful, as he claims, remains behind the mask and the performance of the butler, as he has indeed been serving a man who sympathized with the Nazis. The deconstruction of his identity as the great English butler, in the end forces him to relocate himself in the present moment with the aim to “make the best of what remains of [his] day” (256).

5. Conclusion

In *The Remains of the Day*, Ishiguro’s employment of a narrator who mainly deals with remembering and memory as the central elements of narrative creation shows that it is not simply the narrator who is unreliable, but memory and its

workings as well. The gradual awareness Stevens gains about his own self and his narrative “challenges an approach to unreliable narrators that focuses on a fixation with an authoritative version of events that the implied reader cleverly constructs in spite of the narrator’s purposeful or unconscious obfuscation” (Wall 1994: 34). Such narrative awareness by Stevens suggests that Ishiguro ponders on what may be considered unreliable. Since the very notion of reliability does not exist, what passes for truth may vary greatly and change, and may affect the way the reader might choose to follow the text. The recent approaches to the notion of unreliability mentioned above suggest that the element of unreliability provides a more focused engagement with the text and an easier identification with the fictional characters. The misunderstandings and the mistakes result from the fallibility of memory and mirror the reader’s own fallibility as a human being. In this sense, experimentation with different levels of unreliability in the fictional space may transform our own sense of identity, belonging, and engagement with the past or the present.

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**ACROSS THE OCEAN SEA:
HETEROTOPIC RECONFIGURATIONS OF SPACE
IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S RECENT FICTION**

DANA CRĂCIUN

West University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** Salman Rushdie's more recent fiction goes beyond the exploration of East and West that characterised his early work. If his pre-2000 novels focus on the clash and commingling of the two worlds, the texts Rushdie wrote following his move to the US show his interest in exploring a different third space, which escapes a traditional postcolonial understanding. This paper will discuss the way in which Salman Rushdie constructs the New World, this alternative space, in the "American phase" of his fiction, with a particular focus on his 2015 novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*.*

***Keywords:** American space, intertextuality, heterotopia, Salman Rushdie*

1. Introduction

The recent tragic events that Salman Rushdie was a victim of have brought to the fore again the controversy surrounding *The Satanic Verses* (1988). Although he had been living in relative freedom in recent years, the writer was never able to fully shake off the shadow of this book. Inevitably, the attack last August not only sent a maimed Rushdie back into hiding, but brought back into the limelight what is, perhaps, one of the greatest misreadings of the past century. This is not to say that *The Satanic Verses* is not a book that challenges established canons, nor is this a suggestion that Rushdie's fiction is not militant. However, what I would like to argue is that his more recent narratives, which, for various reasons, have not been given the close attention they deserve, are even more undermining of orthodoxies, if in a different way. Held prisoner for a long time in the dichotomies of East-West, religion-secularism, democracy-dictatorship, etc., in what I will call the "American phase" of his writing Rushdie has tried more intensely than in his earlier fiction to transcend these binaries. By exploring the American space through politicised intertextual lenses, Salman Rushdie complicates his critique of the foundational pillars of Western civilisation in some of his recent novels, such as *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017), and *Quichotte* (2019).

The three novels share several elements, among which an attempt to rethink the means for critiquing our contemporary world, heavy intertextuality, and an American setting that Rushdie constructs in innovative ways, by reconfiguring space. They also share a favoured triad of spatial coordinates, namely the Bombay-

London-New York axis, and still foreground migrant characters, although their arrival is of a different nature now. The political dimension is just as present as in previous works, but it is both more nuanced at first sight and more subversive, an element that recent readings of Rushdie have not always picked on. It is the intention of this paper to examine the way in which reconfigurations of space, viewed in relation to Michel Foucault's (1986) notion of heterotopia, enable Rushdie to mount an ever more subversive critique of the contemporary context. *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015) is the first in a series of what, building on Foucault, I will call *hysterotopic* fiction, a form of construction of space that forces a (violent at times) coexistence of drastically different features.

2. Of space and intertextuality

By and large, space has been an uneasy interest in Rushdie scholarship. Attention has been paid to the cities featured in his work as postcolonial spaces, where staple postcolonial concepts such as hybridity, third space, liminality, etc. can be applied to untangle some of the intricate narrative threads of this most prolific writer. Mostly these readings have stayed within the confines of the East-West dichotomy. Part of the generation who did a lot of "writing back" (ironically his own pun-coinage, made famous then by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's seminal *The Empire Writes Back*, 1989), Rushdie has consistently explored the way in which the two worlds clash, coexist, intermingle, and overlap, forming palimpsest structures.

The "spatial turn" in cultural studies, a development advanced by such thinkers as Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Edward Soja or Arjun Appadurai, opened new avenues of interdisciplinary exploration and readings of literary texts. Several such readings have been done on some of Rushdie's early work, for e.g., *Midnight's Children* (Röder 2018) or *The Satanic Verses* (Gane 2002), and on the trope of the city in several novels, for e.g., in *Roy and Roy* (2015) or Parashkevova (2012). (A review of scholarship on the topic of space in Salman Rushdie's work can be found in "The Spatial Imperative: The Need to Read Space in Salman Rushdie's Novels", by Yuying Liang, 2020). Less attention has been paid, however, to the way in which Rushdie uses the American space/geography following his move to the US. Taking my cues from Michel Foucault and Edward Soja, but also incorporating some of the postcolonial terminology put forth by Homi Bhabha, I will investigate the possible changes in Rushdie's treatment of space and what this might suggest in terms of the politically subversive intentions of his more recent novels.

Given Rushdie's compelling and constant connection with the network of world literature, I will also employ the additional lens of intertextuality. Famously defined by Julia Kristeva (1980: 85) as "a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another", intertextuality soon became a favourite concept for the poststructuralists of the last decades of the twentieth century. For Roland Barthes (1977: 146), "a text is (...) a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture", from which, however, the author disappears. For the purpose of this analysis, I will draw on Rushdie's own view on "in-flowings" (2002: 70), or the influence exerted on a writer by the body of work s/he emerges from and works in. As different from Barthes, for whom the author is dead, Rushdie sees the writer as much strengthened by this

influx of influence, which becomes an important strategy for renewal (2002: 72-73) and, I would add, for resituating texts in highly globalised contexts.

As Andrew Teverson (2013: 54) observes, “Rushdie’s concept of intertextuality (...) is intimately bound up with the concept of hybridity”. Allowing texts to flow freely into one another, without establishing a hierarchy of any kind, is “a paradigm for (or a product of) the mixing of cultures in society” (ibid.). In this respect, it is both informed by postcolonial understanding of hybridity (cf. Bhabha 1994) and different from it, as it transcends contiguous (post)colonial spaces.

In the way in which, like his famous alter-ego, the “Shah of Blah” (Rushdie 1990), Rushdie allows the streams of the Sea of Stories to mingle, he is never far from political involvement and even commentary. The politics in his texts (as different from, as Johannes Wally (2018: 67) also clarifies, “the politics of a novel”) has always provided readers with a network of connection to contemporary contexts. It is “the politics of a novel (...) a reception oriented category dealing with the socio-political effect the publication of a given novel might have” (ibid.), the novel being *The Satanic Verses* in this case, that has landed Rushdie into significant amounts of trouble; the politics in his recent texts, the territory where substantial subversion is taking place, has fallen under the radar upon occasion. One of the reasons for this relative neglect might be the way in which the reader’s attention is distracted by Rushdie’s shift towards America. However, it is precisely this shift and the way in which he uses the American space that enables us to investigate just how controversial Rushdie’s critical intentions can be.

3. The American third space: a new world

At the end of the 1990s, following a political thaw in and with Iran, Rushdie slowly emerges from hiding and eventually decides to relocate to the US permanently. The move reflects not only the author’s understandable desire to put the *fatwa* years more firmly behind him, but also his continuous drive to find means through which to renew his writing. In an interview for *The New York Times* (republished in *The Guardian*) soon after his move, he confesses falling in love with New York, “where a lot of people had a lot of stories not unlike mine. Everybody comes from somewhere else. Everyone’s got a Polish grandmother, some kind of metamorphosis in their family circumstances.” (Max 2000) This already makes clear Rushdie’s need for a kind of third space to transcend the previous spaces of his personal and writerly experience.

I will run the risk of terminological confusion and stick, at least provisionally, with the concept of third space. In the context of the present analysis, by third space I will understand a hybrid between Homi Bhabha’s (1994: 217) understanding of Third Space as “the interstitial passages and processes of cultural difference that are inscribed in the ‘in-between’, a “precondition for the articulation of cultural difference” (idem: 38), and Edward Soja’s (1996: 57) Thirdspace, a “real and imagined space”, where “everything comes together... subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history”). I find this combination necessary for any attempt to name and operate with a spatiality that is “almost but not quite” (Bhabha 1994:91) what emerges from established postcolonial discourse.

Soja claims Foucault as a Thirdspace fellow-traveller. In the chapter “In Thirdspace with Michel Foucault”, he argues that Foucault describes his “new approach to space and spatial thinking that he called *heterotopology* (...) in ways that resemble what is described here as Thirdspace” (1996: 154). However, it seems to me too quick a claim and for the purpose of the current analysis, it is important to keep Foucault’s distinctions separate. In “Of Other Spaces” (an essay based on a lecture delivered in 1967), Foucault (1986: 24) focuses on spaces “that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect”. There are two main types of such spaces: utopias and heterotopias. The latter, Foucault says, are places “outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (ibid.). An extension of this view of space as heterotopia enables a reading of Rushdie’s recent fiction that can both reconcile critics with what they have perceived as a baffling course Rushdie’s work has taken and shed a different kind of light on the political intentions of these texts.

Although when he writes *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) Rushdie is already spending time in the US, and *Fury* (2001) puts New York centre stage, it is starting with *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) that one can begin to detect a change in Rushdie’s treatment of the American space. What I call Rushdie’s “American phase” begins with *The Enchantress...* and contains the three novels I mentioned above: *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* (2015), *The Golden House* (2017), and *Quichotte* (2019). It is in this corpus that I think a different reading of space through each novel’s specific intertextual entanglements can help with a new understanding of the political dimensions of the texts.

The reception of these latest novels has been tepid, to put it mildly, many faulting Rushdie for his “narrative sprawls” and the way in which his “digressions and minor characters multiply” (Theroux 2015), for being “wide and shallow” (Garner 2017), or for “suffering from a kind of internetitis”, and being “swollen with the junk culture he intended to critique” (Thomas-Corr 2019). Looking for the “old Rushdie” in the new work, most critics fail to pay the right kind of attention to the shift I alluded to above. I would argue that there seems to be a turn – a spatial turn accompanied by a differently politicised tone – in Salman Rushdie’s writing in his “American phase”. Arguably, the 9/11 events may have influenced this turn, yet it does not seem to necessarily hinge on the terrorist attacks against the World Trade Centre, although there has been speculation about a possible change in Rushdie’s political tone and positioning (see, for e.g., Sawhney and Sawhney, 2001, for a useful review of this speculation). Rather, it is a shift that reflects an attempt to use the cultural and political geography of the United States both to look for a utopian synthesis transcending the contraries of his previous work and, its polar opposite, to explode all certainties.

Rushdie’s actual arrival in the US following his decision to start living a more normal kind of life is accompanied by an attempt to “arrive” fictionally as well. Surprising as this suggestion may seem, it is *The Enchantress of Florence* (2008) that provides the key to this arrival in the way in which it reimagines the discovery of the New World. This *Mundus Novus* is described as a world in which

the ordinary laws of space and time did not apply. As to space, it was capable of expanding violently one day and then shrinking the next, so that the size of the earth seemed either to double or to halve. Different explorers brought back radically

different accounts of the proportions of the new world, the nature of its inhabitants, and the way in which this new quadrant of the cosmos was prone to behave.(...) The locals, those few who mastered European languages, confirmed that theirs was a world without change, a place of stasis, *outside time*, they said, and that was the way they preferred it to be. (Rushdie 2008: 328)

This place which is both real and imaginary, both in time and timeless, will enable previous identities and cultural assumptions to blur and disintegrate. The way in which the New World is represented in *The Enchantress of Florence* makes America analogous to what Foucault (1986: 24) calls heterotopia, a “counter-site”, in which the “other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted”. *The Enchantress* introduces us to that other space in terms that echo what Foucault calls a “heterotopia of compensation”. While one could also look at it as a “heterotopia of illusion”, in that it “exposes every real place” previously known as “still more illusory” (idem: 27), another passage in *The Enchantress* could give us a clue to a different possible reading of the American space that Rushdie is going to construct. Musing on the Western world, Akbar the Great says that: “In those fabulous Western climes people seemed prone to hysterias (...) that swept through their countries like diseases and transformed things utterly without warning” (idem: 329). We can thus see emerging something that, developing Foucault’s categories, could be called a *hysterotopia*, a place that simultaneously allows for a form of return to the womb (a utopian version of home or of conflict resolution) and for a hysterical unleashing of forces that defy all forms of space and time constraints. This concurrent pulling in various directions is the main vehicle of political commentary in Rushdie’s recent novel, *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*.

3.1. The transplanted Scheherazade

Published in 2015, the novel is Rushdie’s nod to the *One Thousand and One Nights*, for reasons that become immediately obvious in the text, namely the power of storytelling. This, however, ends up being subverted not in its life-affirming potential but in the way in which its imaginative impetus can be thwarted. Told from the future, the story takes us to a moment “now more than a thousand years ago”, when “a storm fell upon our ancestors’ city like a bomb” (Rushdie 2015: 19). The ancestors’ city is New York, but the wider stage is that of the United States in the early 2000s, as well as, over the course of the narrative, India and parts of Europe at various points in time. The early description of the city echoes closely the account of the New World that Akbar receives in *The Enchantress of Florence*. It is a world unhinged, thrown off kilter, whose metaphorical portrayal emphasises the way in which the established rules of space and time no longer apply:

Their childhoods slipped into the water and were lost, the piers built of memories on which they once ate candy and pizza, the boardwalks of desire under which they hid from the summer sun and kissed their first lips. The roofs of houses flew through the night sky like disoriented bats, and the attics where they stored their past stood exposed to the elements until it seemed that everything they once were had been devoured by the predatory sky. (...) Their power failed them. Darkness fell. (Rushdie 2015: 19)

Thus begin the “strangenesses”, which will continue for two years, eight months and twenty-eight days, in a hysterotopic setting, which will engender both narratives searching for a sort of return to origins and narratives foregrounding hyperbolically the “hysterical” dimension of the contemporary context. The novel offers us an illustration of the way in which Rushdie uses this hysterotopia to make a compelling point regarding the possible outcome of an age long battle between religion and secularism, between irrationality and reason.

At first sight, we have a familiar cocktail of magic realist ingredients. These strangenesses, we find out soon, are caused by the return of four evil jinn through the slits separating the human world from Peristan, or Fairyland: “the slits in the world had reopened, the seals had been broken and there were laughing sorcerers in the sky, satanic horsemen riding the galloping clouds” (ibid.). These slits had been sealed about a thousand years before, in the aftermath of a passionate love affair that the most powerful jinnia princess, Dunia, had with Ibn Rushd. The result of this love affair was a great number of descendants, spread all over the known world and recognisable after their lobeless ears and supernatural powers (of which, though, they are not aware and which they resist as the new strange reality begins to dawn on them).

The sealing of the passageways between the “real” and the “magic” world is presumably meant to help settle the human world into knowable spatial and temporal coordinates. It is also meant to put an end – at least a provisional one – to the quarrel that actually lies at the heart of the book, the quarrel between Ghazali, the pious theologian of Iran, also known as Renewer of the Faith and Proof of Islam, and the rationalist Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes, and between their respective texts, *The Incoherence of Philosophers* and *The Incoherence of the Incoherence*. Although both dead a long time, now that “the barriers of distance and time no longer pose a problem” (idem: 57), they can resume their conversation about reason and faith, about the possibility of a benevolent God rejoicing “like a proud parent” (ibid.) in his children’s growing independence from him. Ghazali retorts by asserting the supremacy of faith and dismissing reliance on reason. “Faith”, he says, “is our gift from God and reason is our adolescent rebellion against it.” (idem: 58) This is the crux of the book’s ambitions and Rushdie pursues it through a spatial derangement meant to disorient.

The act of sealing off worlds – and, by extension, any act of drawing boundaries – creates a tension that has the potential to unleash chaos. Such artificial separation, Rushdie seems to suggest, even when the reason appears justified, will not cancel the conflictual dimension. Dichotomies leading to clearly delimited camps are dangerous, and showdowns between “good” and “evil” don’t always work out in fairy-tale fashion. The book traces alternative routes of exploring this conflict and seems to want a conclusion as well as a meditation on this conclusion. These routes are potentially more controversial than Rushdie’s earlier work not only because of the dark notes they strike but also because of where they lead.

The New York of this novel is both a real place and a place “outside of all places” (Foucault 1986: 24). It is itself, but it also mirrors and at times inverts the other spaces of the novel: contemporary Bombay (or a “Mumbai” always between inverted commas, which can never become “real”) and London, or the twelfth century Spain of Arab-Christian-Jewish texture. It has the “property of being in relation with all the other sites” (ibid.). It spreads in all directions and has the ability to morph. It shrinks and expands, and also twists itself in destructive

vortexes. It is no accident, then, that Mr. Geronimo, one of Dunia's lobeless descendants and one of the protagonists of the book, begins to levitate just as the "strangenesses" begin. The ground is literally taken from beneath his feet to suggest a broader kind of disconnect between people and the world they live in, a separateness that has become a way of life. Rushdie takes issue not just with the old dispute between reason and lack thereof, but also – or rather – with the fragmentariness this dispute leads to. To be grounded again, to regain spatial bearings and escape the turmoil of disconnectedness will become not only Geronimo's quest, but the quest of humanity as well.

The climax of these strangenesses opens up two possible hysterotopic paths. On the one hand, there is the going back, the search for a way to retrieve or resuscitate what has been lost. This can be metaphorically equivalent to a return to a point of origin (Bombay or Wombay, as Rushdie calls the city in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, the tomb of the two philosophers, Peristan, Mount Qaf, etc.), or it can be a return to a point in time and a reflection of the self in that time and place, which could be the nostalgic version of Foucault's heterotopic mirror. On the other hand, there is the temptation of blowing it all up, of the fire and smoke of the jinn, a conflagration meant to result in fear and submission. The two are, of course, simultaneous in the text, and the hysterotopic stage of this cataclysmic showdown is, necessarily, La Incoerenza, the estate of a Lady Philosopher this time, whose garden Mr. Geronimo has been tending to and which has also seemed to be a favourite target or landing pad for mysterious lightning. The accumulation verges on too-muchness towards the end of the novel, but it is an intensity meant to encourage – or even force – (self)scrutiny and repositioning in relation to the core issue of the text as well as of the turn of the millennium, namely faith vs. reason.

If one is willing to look at Rushdie's excesses in this novel not as a sign of his not caring for the fruits of his imagination, as a review in *The New Republic* claims (Hendrix 2015), but as an attempt to explore different ways of settling old tensions, this recasting of the *Thousand and One Nights* reaches disturbing conclusions. As we know from Rushdie's previous fiction (and non-fiction), going back is not truly possible, because with the passage of time not only the past but space as well are rewritten. Going forward in this novel offers an apparently non-Rushdiean clear-cut resolution: the evil jinn are defeated ("which was unreason itself, unreason which was the name of the dark jinn within people" and this "irrational in man as well as jinn had to be defeated, so that an age of reason could begin" (Rushdie 2015: 274)) and order is restored. Geronimo's neatly arranged garden at La Incoerenza becomes "a well-looked-after place of secular pilgrimage and reverence" (idem: 271), a final metamorphosis of place, falling into the mould of recognizable reason.

The conclusion of the novel, offered by the detached plural narrator from the distance of a thousand years, may look promising, a kind of much-needed utopian resolution to a big clash of worlds:

It seems to us self-evident, however, that the use of religion as a justification for repression, horror, tyranny, and even barbarism (...), led in the end to the terminal disillusion of the human race with the idea of faith. (...) [F]or at least five hundred years, such places of worship as survived the Dissolution have taken on new functions, as hotels, casinos, apartment blocks, transportation termini, exhibition halls, and shopping malls. (269)

These “converted” places seem to reinforce the idea of a purging of religion and irrationality from the human world. They also become “other spaces”, where, possibly, Foucault’s functions of “illusion” and “compensation” overlap. However, there is one more disturbing turn in store:

We take pride in saying that we have become reasonable people. We are aware that conflict was for a long time the defining narrative of our species, but we have shown that the narrative can be changed. (...) But something befell us when the worlds were sealed off from each other. (...) [S]omething that once happened to us all every night, every one of us, every member of the greater “we” which we have all become, stopped happening. We no longer dreamt. (...) This is the price we pay for peace, prosperity, understanding, wisdom, goodness, and truth: that the wildness in us, which sleep unleashed, has been tamed, and the darkness in us, which drove the theatre of the night, is soothed. (285-286)

Had they bothered to read this book (not that they read the one they condemned either), the ayatollahs of the world may have been dismayed by Rushdie’s treatment of Ghazali and of the whole idea of faith. However, the secular rationalists can be even more dismayed by the way in which Rushdie stops the rationalist argument in its tracks. A more attentive reading of this text reveals the way in which Rushdie subverts not the idea of faith as much as that of settling controversy at all cost. In a world where, as he himself says in an interview occasioned by the publication of *Joseph Anton*, his memoir of the fatwa years (2012: online), a book like *The Satanic Verses* would probably no longer be published, we condemn ourselves to dreamlessness in the name of moral high grounds of various kinds. Scheherazade may have survived again but what stories will she be able to tell in such a world?

4. Conclusion

Salman Rushdie’s recent fiction, texts that belong to what I call his “American phase”, plays with reconfigurations of space in order to cast political reflection and subversion into new forms. *Two Years, Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Days* revisits one of Rushdie’s most controversial topics, namely the clash between faith and reason. If the highly imaginative and playful at times way in which he dealt with this in *The Satanic Verses* had catastrophic consequences on the writer’s life, the more subtle way in which this is addressed in *Two Years...* has not drawn a lot of critical attention. This is not because Rushdie’s critical intentions have become more subdued but, perhaps, because his vehicle for rendering them has changed. However, a close reading of the hysterotopic construction of the novel reveals a clear departure from a typical postcolonial treatment in tones that are darker and more disturbing than what readers might be used to.

The investigation of the American hysterotopias needs to continue with the other two novels, *The Golden House* and *Quichotte*. With different intertextual anchors, they touch on other controversial issues in the US and globally, such as gender, for e.g. in *The Golden House*, or opioid and TV addiction in *Quichotte*. The shared element remains the American space, which, whether it shrinks or expands, closes or opens, facilitates a critical exploration of a different nature.

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HOW A COLONY WAS CREATED BY THE FAILURE TO CREATE A COLONY: V.S. NAIPAUL'S *THE LOSS OF EL DORADO*

ROXANA ELENA DONCU

“Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Bucharest

Abstract: *Trying to elucidate the enigma of how a colony was created in the New World, V.S. Naipaul employs El Dorado as the dream behind the colonial narrative which fueled adventure and conquest. He focuses on two historical moments in which he selected as representative for the history of his native Trinidad. Engaging critically with the colonial material that he researched in the process of writing the book, Naipaul renders visible the paradox of how a colony was created in the New World by the failure to create a colony: that is, by an accumulation of historical mistakes, confusion, disorder, and terror.*

Keywords: *colonial history, genocide, slavery, torture*

1. Introduction

As he points out in the foreword to the book, Naipaul's idea when writing *The Loss of El Dorado* was to show “how a colony was created in the New World” (xviii). Here “colony” and “The New World” take on a specific meaning. The main problem when trying to approach Naipaul's non-fiction is that of interpretation. In order to do that, we can start from Michel Serres' observations on metalanguage, universal methods, and singularities in his *Conversations on Science, Culture and Time* (1995), having Bruno Latour as an interlocutor. Latour (1995: 92) remarks that what makes Serres' work difficult to read is that his metalanguage “comes always from the thing in question and not from the methodology used”. In response, Serres (1995: 91) contends that texts are singularities, and so “the best solutions are local, singular, specific, adapted, original, regional”. A true critic must perpetually invent the tools with which s/he works: “You have to invent a localised method for a localised problem. Each time you try to open a different lock, you have to forge a specific key, which is obviously unrecognisable and without equivalent in the marketplace of method” (idem: 92). This is what Naipaul did when writing the history of Trinidad: as a native of the place, he invented his own method for tackling the puzzle of how the colony was created. And this is also how this essay will proceed in analysing that history: searching for a key to understand Naipaul's concept of colony within his own writing.

2. Trinidad: the first moment

The invitation to write the history of Port-of-Spain, which Naipaul received from the American publisher Little, Brown & Co, must have offered him the perfect occasion for delving into a past which had become an obsession. It was his own

sense of being cut off from the past (xvii) that prompted him to investigate the enigma of Trinidad – which rested on a linguistic irony. Not, of course, on that foundational irony of the New World, of Columbus sailing in search of India and finding the West Indies, a misnomer for a geographical confusion, but of his birthplace, a country town called Chaguanas. The wonder that grew out of finding that Chaguanas, a name that the indentured Indians had appropriated and pronounced as “Chauhaan” (a Hindu caste name), was the name of the West Indian tribe of the Chaguanes, provided the incentive Naipaul needed to start his investigation. The Chaguanes had been massacred by the Spanish in retaliation for their rebellion. More than just an irony - it was a symbolic irony - surrounding a web of confusion: first, the New World natives being miscalled Indians, then, the real Indians, transported across the ocean and misplaced in the settlement belonging to the now wiped out West Indians.

Thus, the colony was founded on genocide, by wiping out a whole population, whose memory was only preserved in the mispronounced town name. For Naipaul, the foundational moment of a colony is a break-up in the organic link between man and land. The history of Trinidad will begin with the story of how the Chaguanes were swept in the whirlpool of history leading to their extinction. Naipaul recasts this story as the story of Walter Raleigh and his adventures in search of El Dorado.

If the colony is founded on genocide, the New World is founded on a dream, which, appropriated and filtered through the cultural imaginary of two empires, turns into a collective fantasy: El Dorado. Naipaul (2010: 3) calls El Dorado “essentially a Spanish delusion” and uncovers the historical roots of this fantasy:

There had been a golden man, *el dorado*, the gilded one, in what is now Colombia; a chief who one year rolled in turpentine, was covered with gold dust and then dived into a lake. But the tribe of the golden man had been conquered a generation before Columbus came to the New World. It was an Indian memory that the Spaniards pursued; and the memory was confused with the legend, among jungle Indians, of the Peru the Spaniards had already conquered. (2010: 4)

Naipaul describes the circumstances of this transfer from myth to reality with a historian’s sense of detail: the large Spanish Empire, the slowness with which correspondence (and news) travelled from the New World to Spain, the King’s bankruptcy and greed, the discrepancy between the conquistadors’ expectations and the reality of the tropics, all of which made El Dorado both a mirage worth pursuing and the inexorable doom of all who pursued it. The quest for El Dorado is rendered as a typical European medieval enterprise, thriving on the ideas of the court, the knight, and the miraculous. It gives Antonio de Berrio, the first Spanish governor of Trinidad, space for imagining himself as one of “the heroes of antiquity” (Naipaul 2010: 12). Berrio had inherited the idea of the quest from another conquistador, Quesada, whose dream had been to be “the third marquis of the New World, after Cortés and Pizarro” (11). The failure to reach El Dorado does not act as a deterrent, but as an incentive. As Naipaul remarks, here is the second fantasy of the New World at work: “To be the first man on the earth, to see the first shoots of the first crop, to let off ‘the first gun that had been fired there since the creation of the world’: it is an aspect of what the El Dorado quest had become” (27).

El Dorado, refashioned by the Spanish from local Indian legend into a quest for honour and wealth, is taken up by yet another adventurer, coming from a

different empire: Sir Walter Raleigh. For him, El Dorado becomes a pretext for something larger, a vision of a different world. Naipaul notes that Raleigh “was planning an empire of Guiana in which Indian numbers and English skill would destroy the Spanish” (28). While “the Spaniards [...] remained individuals, committed to a holy war and an outdated code of chivalry”, “Raleigh could merge personal ambition into a greater cause”, as he “had an idea of society and association” (ibid.). Thus, while the Spanish were still living along the coordinates of the Dark Ages, England was pushing towards modernity: Naipaul calls Raleigh's vision “lucid, three-dimensional” (29).

There is an underlying tension in Naipaul's description of Raleigh and his adventures. He strains to be objective, yet he also sees him as the one responsible for the many deaths his adventure ended in. Naipaul dubs Raleigh “unskilled [...] and timorous” as an explorer and describes him rather paradoxically: “He longed for the new, but was nervous about the unknown” (49). Naipaul refrains from using any ideologically-tainted words, but makes it clear that Raleigh's is an imperialistic enterprise. In his discourse to the Indians, Raleigh uses freedom and liberation as concepts justifying conquest:

I made them understand that I was the servant of a Queene, who was the great casique of the North, and a virgine, and had more casiqui under her than there were trees in that land; that she was an enemy of the Castellani in respect of their tyrannie and oppression, and that she delivered all such nations about her, as were by them oppressed, and having freed all the coast of the Northern world from their servitude, had sent me to free them also, and withall to defend the countrey of Guiana from their invasion and conquest. (2010: 45-46)

It is for the sake of this dream, of being received among the Indians “as a liberator” (2010: 53) that Raleigh starts on the Orinoco journey. The vision of empire requests sacrifices, and Raleigh is wont to comply. Naipaul supplies the full inventory of the victims left behind by Raleigh's dream:

Guanaguanare in chains in St. Joseph, ‘those poore souldiers’ at the Port of Spain landing place who had been ‘many yeeres without wine’, Berrio ‘stricken into a great melancholy’, those bodies among the prickly pear-plants at Cumana, the rotting men in the ships. The sixteen year old boy Raleigh had left behind in the jungle had already died; his English clothes, the Indians said, had astonished and maddened a tiger. And the Indians of St. Joseph; roused but unprotected, were presently to be repacified. (2010: 52-53)

Repacified: a word with the same sinister implications as the phrase “resettlement to the East”. It took some time, Naipaul writes in the introduction, for the fate of the Indians to be decided, because imperial correspondence was slow, and “it could take two years for a letter from Trinidad to be read in Madrid” (xvii). It happened in 1625, eight years after Raleigh's Guiana expedition, presumably after only four letters had been exchanged between the imperial centre and one of its most remote outposts. The stretch of eight years that was granted to the Indians because of the slow-grinding imperial bureaucracy seems almost Kafkaesque. In his letter, the King writes to the governor of Trinidad about “a certain nation of Indians called Chaguanes [...] of such bad disposition that it was they who led the English when they captured the town” (xviii), giving him free rein to punish them. Soon, Naipaul writes “no one would know that there was once a people called

Chaguanes”. What is even more appalling than the massacre is the loss of memory related to their existence. The one letter mentioning the Chaguanes was discovered in the Spanish archives in 1897, more than two centuries after they had been “repacified”.

Thus, the colony starts with a dream that turns fantasy into reality. This dream operates a transfer from the creative chaos of the mind into everyday life, and thus it creates de-regulation. De-regulation culminates in a massacre and a loss/erasure of memory. The land is purged of its former inhabitants, ready for conquest. But the conquistadores too will fall prey to the deregulation instituted by fantasy. This is the first moment when Trinidad, as Naipaul remarks, is ‘touched’ by history. The second moment recapitulates the first, although from a different perspective.

3. The second moment: the torture of Louisa Calderon

The story of Luisa Calderon begins with the last Spanish governor of Trinidad, Jose Maria Chacon, and the French Revolution. To the already existing imperial, racial, and cultural divisions in and around an island of colonists like Trinidad, the French Revolution added that of the friction between the republicans and the royalists. Many royalist French planters from the neighbouring islands relocated to Trinidad with their slaves. With the increasing French-speaking population, white, mulatto, and black, royalist and republican, Naipaul writes, “a composite French colony had been assembled in Trinidad, and it was a colony in a state of insurrection and anarchy” (2010: 119). Spain was at war with France, for the empire was adverse to the idea of revolution, while the French, although “divided among themselves”, put on a united front when it came to confronting the Spanish or the British. And the enemy kept changing: “The enemy was authority. Authority was England, the government in France, the French slave-owner, the white slave-owner. The enemy was rebellion, the dangerous Negro, the assertive free mulatto, the proselytising republican” (ibid.). Naipaul's dislike of revolutionaries comes to the surface in his characterisation of Victor Hugues:

In the Caribbean now was Victor Hugues, Robespierre's emissary of revolution, enemy of the English, a west Indian mulatto, but also a Frenchman, a man dramatically right for the role of anarchist and avenger: of poor family, a failed hairdresser, failed innkeeper, failed ship's master (2010: 120).

Naipaul analyses the effects of the French revolution as part of “the French absurdity: the slave revolt was not wholly a slave revolt, the race war was not wholly a race war”, because “all the local hatreds were entangled with the revolutionary politics of France” (2010: 123). His dislike of revolutions and revolutionaries springs from a disillusionment with ideology and ideologically-tainted discourses: “Paris supplied each side with the same simple vocabulary of revolution” (ibid.). Ideologies are simple, since they are reductive: the same word or concept can be used by conflicting parties to refer to opposite things. Writing about one of the failed South American revolutions, Naipaul notes that it was a prefiguration of all the revolutions to come: “borrowed words that never matched the society, the private theatre of disguises and false names that ended in blood and the heads spiked in public places” (164).

When Chacon surrendered Trinidad to the invading British troops led by Abercromby, the implication is that, due to the proliferating social, national and political divisions among its inhabitants, the island had become ungovernable. Indeed, the presence of the British soldiers “kept the French and everyone still; for the first time for years Chacon felt secure in Trinidad” (132). This is why Thomas Picton, the next governor, will rule with an iron fist, intending to crush all disobedience. In fact, as Naipaul notes, the first time Picton summoned the Port of Spain *cabildo*, he told them that “at the first sign of trouble he would hang them all” (142). The “system of impartial terror” by which Picton sought to maintain order, consisted mostly of hangings: hanging the German mercenaries who had deserted because they had not been paid, the runaway slaves, even a white soldier who had raped a free woman of colour.

But Picton was caught between the anvil and the hammer, between Britain's dream of turning Trinidad into a colony of free settlers, a base for South American trade, and the reality of the slave island. He turned into another slave owner on the island plantation of Trinidad. As administering a plantation and maintaining order among the slave population was not what he was trained to do, Picton resorted to the advice offered by Begorrat, a French plantation owner appointed Chief Magistrate in difficult times: the poisoning of black slaves by other black slaves. While revolts against whites seem understandable, the poisonings require a clarification which is not given in Naipaul's account. They appear unnatural, and so do the punishments administered by the whites to the black murderers. Naipaul describes a kind of modern, bureaucratic terror. Not an unleashing of passion, an enjoyment of gore, but consciously instilled fear, used to maintain or regain control. In light of this new understanding of terror, we can also attempt to understand the motives behind the poisonings: on the one hand, the desire to rob the white men of their most precious possessions (land was cheap in Trinidad, but slave labor was expensive); on the other, an attempt to conquer the most natural fear in man, the fear of death. Thisbe, one of the black poisoners, will gladly suffer the most atrocious pains during torture and endure a humiliating death, yet she will never betray her husband.

From a site of chaos that ends in terror (the genocide of the Chaguane), the colony changed into a site of terror which attempts to re-instate order. After a long period of being “exempt from history” (110), history seems to take revenge by producing monsters. This is in fact the condition of the colony: not just periphery, not only the site of profound historical sleep, but a locus of extremes: coma followed by hyperactivity. The Industrial Revolution which changed Europe also affected Trinidad. Terror, the heritage of a feudal military aristocracy, turns into a terrible machine on account of the lawlessness, or rather the overdetermination of legality – nobody knows for sure if the laws valid in Trinidad are Spanish or British, while most administration is carried out in the spirit of the French laws from the other slave islands in the Caribbean. One would almost think that Kafka wrote the chilling “In the Penal Colony” after reading Naipaul's account of the different kinds of torture inflicted on the criminals in Trinidad. First, just to be jailed could turn into a torture: “The heat was one of the punishments in the jail, where there were [...] cells known as *cachots brulants*. The temperature in these [...] rooms was never less than 100 degrees; prisoners there, chained flat on boards, quickly wasted away and became demented” (172).

Naipaul begins his account of Louisa Calderon's torture with what he calls “a joke” for the slave society:

The Negro cook-girl burnt the Sunday callaloo, a slimy vegetable dish. Her French mistress ordered a professional whipping a quatre piquettes; it was the 'four-poster' method favoured by the French. The cook-girl was stripped, spreadeagled face down on the ground, her wrists and ankles tied to four stakes. Her mistress stood by, smoking a cigar. At every lash the girl cried out, 'Aie, aie, madame! Ca ka brule dos moue! That burn my back!' 'Eh, bien, ma fille,' her mistress replied, 'pour chi ou brule calalou moue? What for you burn my callaloo?' (2010: 178)

The disparity between the mildness of the offence and the cruelty of the punishment increases the horror. But this is part of the terror machine: like in Kafka, the punishment is not designed to fit the offence, it becomes a thing of its own, whose function is to keep the machine going by emphasising its beauty. A beauty revealed only to those who operate the machine. William Fullarton, sent as First Commissioner to Trinidad when rumours about Pictor's reign of terror reach London, receives a written complaint from a disgruntled executioner. Naipaul reproduces it: from the methodical enumeration of the executioner's unpaid commissions, we get a glimpse at how the terror machine was working: one prisoner was hanged, burned and had his head cut off (we don't know in what order), a dozen or so men had their ears clipped off, either publicly in the market or in the jail-yard, while others were only flogged (2010: 212). There is something eerie about the list; it is not just the horror of the punishments, but also the horror of the familiar which starts haunting the reader. Firstly, there is torture as writing on the body, and then it is the re-inscription of torture on paper as historical testimony, physical torture turning into mental torture for Fullarton.

Taking place roughly during the slave poisoning trials and executions, the torture of Louisa Calderon is a by-product of the authorities' exacerbated vigilance, an involuntary excess that will eventually destroy the terror machine. An adolescent girl, Louisa was accused of conspiring with her lover to steal the money of the man she had been serving for several years and whose wife she was to become shortly. At Picton's trial in London, several years later, there was little doubt that the accusation had been caused by jealousy, yet, in Trinidad, once the terror machine had been set in motion, innocence or guilt were superfluous concepts. Again, like in Kafka, justice is neither punitive, nor restorative; in the age of modern bureaucracy, justice turns into a machine which engages with and traffics desire, appropriates impulses, and generates emotional means of control. The only difference between Kafka's imagined machine and Naipaul's colonial terror machine lies in their respective complexity and simplicity. While Kafka imagines a kind of writing machine literally inscribing the punishment on the body – and killing the prisoner –, the torture instrument in Trinidad is, as Naipaul writes, "simple": "A pulley was fixed to the ceiling. Over the pulley passed a length of rope with a small noose at one end. Set in the floor directly below the pulley was a tapering wooden stake six inches high" (188). This instrument, the piquet, was "a military antiquity", which Picton, as the governor of colonial Trinidad, had revived: "the trussed soldier, suspended by his wrists from a rope, was hoisted up on a pulley and then lowered from time to time to rest the tip of his big toe, not more, on a blunt stake" (168).

Louisa's torture on the piquet, inflicted by Vallot, the jailer, lasts for almost an hour. Naipaul notes that "The eighteenth-century military punishment, from which this torture was derived, was never inflicted for more than fifteen minutes; it had lamed and ruptured many men" (190). The details of the repeated torture

include Luisa being left hanging by the left wrist, and then by her right, until she loses consciousness. For Vallot, this is merely a job being done. He tortures Luisa at Begorrat's request, but he also treats her with coffee in the morning, and an occasional cigar, as he was paid by her accuser to take care of her. This demonstrates distance and objectivity: Vallot does his job thoroughly and, at the same time, he notices Luisa's courage. He approves of her valour, but again from afar: he never asks why she had been sentenced to torture. He is just another cog in the machine.

What may appear surprising to the readers is Naipaul's seemingly ambiguous positioning. On the one hand, his simple and precise language, used to cover the horrendous details of Luisa's torture, and the gruesome punishments inflicted on the black slaves by the poisoning commission make the inhumanity of the colonial terror machine stand out. On the other, he describes the reaction of the English radicals, Picton's opponents, with a certain amount of ironical detachment. Naipaul's factual description of the punishments contrasts sharply with the humanitarian rhetoric of Picton's opponents. Here is how Naipaul presents the situation:

The heads of Thisbe and La Fortune were cut off and the bodies burned on a pile that had been prepared. The next day, Saturday, Thisbe's head was taken to Begorrat's estate at Diego Martin, just to the west of the city, and spiked on a pole. La Fortune's head was displayed at Luzette's estate in St. Anne's, just to the north. (2010: 193)

The sparse descriptions are, however, much more pictorial and effective than the effusive rhetoric used by an English lawyer to garner support for the Picton opposition:

Sanguinary Punishments corrupts mankind. The Effect of Cruel Spectacles exhibited to the populace is the destruction of all tender emotions, it more frequently excites Disgust than terror. It creates Indifference rather than Dread. It operates on the lower orders as an Incentive to practices of Torture, etc., for the purpose of revenge (2010: 193, emphasis in the original)

The sentiment may be right, but the concept and the language are all wrong. A terror machine is about to be fought off with the rhetoric of melodrama. Consequently, Naipaul regards Fullarton and all his efforts to expose and condemn Picton as ineffectual and ridiculous. He will succeed only because Picton, as Naipaul remarks, "had done the wrong job" in establishing order:

London didn't want another West Indian slave colony. They wanted Trinidad to be a colony of free settlers [...] Trinidad was of value as a British colony only because it was going to be the centre of British trade with South America. [...] Trade didn't need Negroes. It needed the independence of Spanish America. And independence required that revolution which Picton had given up. (2010: 199)

Therein lies the paradox of the modern terror machine: it is so well-organised that it defeats its purpose. In Kafka, the beauty of the machine exceeds its purpose: guilt is always beyond doubt, and the condemned man will only find out his sentence in the final minute before death, when the harrow has finished inscribing it on the body. Once the case against Picton is complete and Fullarton escapes with the

documents, it is all over: Picton himself turns into the former commander, whose ghost, melting under the chaos-generating sun of the tropics, is not sufficient to keep the machine going.

4. Metahistory

Many critics have noted that *The Loss of El Dorado* is a history of the colonised, written exclusively by using material provided by colonists (Nixon 1995: 125). While this observation is factually true, it is nevertheless unjust, as it fails to take into account the circumstances surrounding the writing of this history, and Naipaul's subtle and complex use of irony. Naipaul belonged to a generation who had been raised as colonials. The efforts of this generation were aimed at finding ways to resist the colonisation of the mind: in his fiction as well as non-fiction, Naipaul uses introspection as a method for detecting the colonial fine-tuning, which lies at the basis of most of the failures of the colonised.

Naipaul's preoccupation was above all with investigating faulty patterns of thinking and acting, delving into and uncovering the hidden histories of colonisation, rather than with envisaging the post-colony. His deep pessimism sprung from his engagement with a past that consisted of mistakes, confusion, genocide, and terror. On the other hand, when engaging with the material provided by the colonists, Naipaul was never, as he was repeatedly accused, uncritical towards it. On the contrary: in chapter 6 of *A Way in the World*, the surgeon, Raleigh's main critic, makes a demonstration of textual analysis: going over Raleigh's account of his Guiana adventures, the surgeon explains what had made him suspect the underlying reasons for Raleigh's actions. We can read his careful textual analysis as Naipaul's own strategy of getting to the bottom of historical truth in *The Loss of El Dorado*. First, Naipaul's preference for working with written documents (Dhondy 2006: 20) is justified by the surgeon as follows: "I always prefer to work with a written statement. Unless you write things down, you miss a lot. Certain things that people say can reveal their meaning only if you can read them again and again. The words physically have to be in front of your eyes. It's the only way you can discover things" (Naipaul 2011: 165). He ends his justification with the injunction, quite natural for a surgeon, "Dissect them." This is exactly Naipaul's strategy of reaching the truth: thorough dissection of words and discourses. Careful analysis will show the surgeon all the gaps and ambiguities in Raleigh's narrative, and lead him to discover where Raleigh has strayed from reality into fantasy:

I have to read your book again and again. It's a slippery piece of work, if I can use that word. You slip about, you lose your footing. It's nice and easy and clear and brilliant for a number of pages, and then suddenly you feel you've not been paying attention. You feel you've missed something. So you go back. You've missed nothing. It's just that something's gone wrong with the writing. [...] So even if you're a careful reader you lose the drift of the narrative. It's not easy, noticing first of all that the writing has changed and then finding exactly where. But those are precisely the places you have to identify. Because those are the places where the writer decides to add things or to hide things. (Naipaul 2011: 165-6)

To add things or to hide things, that is the question. While history is made either by adding or by hiding things, the task of the historiographer is to carefully

remove the additions and find out the truth. It may sound like an impossible mission for somebody who has studied at the school of post-structuralism, yet Naipaul is what one might call an old-fashioned writer. No approach to his fiction or non-fiction, which disregards his lifelong commitment to what he saw as the truth, will manage to illuminate how it works. Naipaul himself stated repeatedly that he aimed at writing truthfully, and, in his memoir *Sir Vidia's Shadow: A Friendship across Five Continents*, Paul Theroux (1998: 17) quotes Naipaul as giving him the following advice on writing: "Don't prettify it", "The greatest writing is a disturbing vision offered from a position of strength – aspire to that", and "Tell the truth".

This is the key to interpreting *The Loss of El Dorado*: a careful, circumspect reading of historical documents, followed by the identification of the precise spots where the insertion of ideology alters the writing, where fact slips into fantasy. These places are marked by the sign of excess: as the surgeon confesses to Raleigh, what made him suspicious in the first place was the fact that he "gave too many names". One can almost imagine Naipaul in the archives of the British Library, poring over historical documents, making notes, going back to the text over and over again.

In the preface to the 2010 edition of his book, Naipaul is more specific about the circumstances surrounding the writing of *The Loss of El Dorado*. First, he confesses that the book should have never been written, as it had caused him "untold grief, and at the end there was no adequate recompense" (v). Having met with the publisher "in a kind of mutual misunderstanding", the author describes every stage of the research, writing, and publication of the book as an unexpected link in a chain of mysteries, discoveries, and confusion. Naipaul's sense of "the colonial absurdity" came, in fact, from confronting his colonial education with the results of his feverish – and tiresome – research:

It was comedy to attempt in the history class to write about a day in the life of an aboriginal village; and it was comedy because so little was known. The text books merely said that the aboriginal people 'sickened and died'. And that abstract idea had to suffice for us. The aborigines sickening and dying, slavery not leaving a great mark – this was how I thought I would deal with the absence of history. And as soon as I went to the documents this colonial absurdity fell to the ground. Slavery had been very real here. The jail [...] had been the site of matter-of-fact torture and floggings. (2010: v-vi)

"Sickened and died" was the real-life textual spot which covered a historical gap. In a way, the whole of *The Loss of El Dorado* is an inquiry into how the idea of natural death was rendered capable, by the workings of colonial ideology, of standing in for an unnatural one: the genocide of the Chaguanes, or the torture and the killing of the slaves. In real-life terms, the loss of El Dorado stands for the loss of colonial innocence, the moment of post-colonial awareness.

5. Conclusion

What *The Loss of El Dorado* makes visible is the paradox of how a colony was created in the New World by the failure to create a colony. By showing how the colony was created rather from slips of the tongue, dreams, fantasy, and a terror machine fuelled by desire and fear, Naipaul subverts the image of the white

coloniser acting as a model for the colonial. It is rather the colonial's own fears, emphasised by the disorder he has been forced to live in, which project the image of the white coloniser as an ideal. Colonisation is first and foremost of the mind: in the colony, both colonised and colonisers suffer from the same disease and fall prey either to their deregulated fantasy, or to the terror machine. For Naipaul, ideologists attempting to repair historical injustice solely by supporting an anti-colonisation discourse are no more than misguided romantics. One can only resist complicated historical creations – which act like machines, involving complex networks of social and political actors, the past, the present, landscape, geography, etc. – by analysing and revealing how they work. Or, as the surgeon puts it, by dissecting them.

The only serious critique that can be brought against Naipaul is perhaps his conceptualisation of Trinidad, and of the colony, as periphery. The centre-periphery binomial is just as flexible as the coloniser-colonised relation. The terms are interchangeable: for colonials, Europe was the centre. Yet, for the French historian Jules Michelet, who wrote an obscure natural history like *The Sea (La Mer)*, the Caribbean was one of the two geometrical centres of the world. Commenting on *The Sea*, Serres (1982: 32) notes that Michelet, using astronomic and geographical observation, identified the “two centres of the world, apexes at either side of it”, firstly, “at a certain point of the Caribbean, between Cuba and Florida”, and secondly, near Java. This is a fine paradox, almost Naipaulian in character: the colonial imagining Europe as the centre, and the European “scientifically” ascribing the centre to two exotic points on the equator. It is all a game of Self and Other, in the end.

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**BETWEEN PERFORMANCE AND PERFORMATIVITY:
PERFORMING FEMALE IDENTITIES
IN ZADIE SMITH'S *WHITE TEETH* (2000)**

HANAN ALAWNA

University of Szeged

Abstract: Zadie Smith's *White Teeth* (2000) represents a multicultural novel of a dual function in connection with Judith Butler's theory of performativity. In some scenes in the novel, the female characters act within the gender norms created by their society. In this sense, their performative role is repetitive and stands for acceptance. In other scenes, the same female characters challenge the established gender norms. Thus, their performative role becomes subversive and indicates rebellion. This paper claims that their shift from repetitive acts to subversive acts is purposeful for their journey of locating their heterogeneous identities in the English society.

Keywords: gender roles, identity crisis, in-betweenness, post-colonialism

1. Introduction. Discordant concepts in the post-colonial era

The twenty first century is best described as a melting pot in which people all over the world could influence and be influenced by each other simultaneously. However, globalisation and the world becoming a small village result in two opposing poles. On the one hand, there is multiculturalism, which means the preservation of various cultures within the same society. On the other hand, there is interculturalism, which indicates the blending of one culture into another, which, in turn, could result in an identity crisis, fragmentation, and instability. In many post-colonial novels, the reader encounters countless terms related to the 'metaphor of roots', such as *roots*, *routes*, *rootedness*, *rootlessness*, during the characters' quest for concordance between their familial roots (history), their new culture and their life journey (Vančura 2015). In most cases, this journey ends in a confrontation between the colonised, most of the time an Oriental figure, and the coloniser, an Occidental figure. In an interview, Salman Rushdie comments on the importance of the concept of roots and routes and its significance for the majority of immigrants, stating that:

The roots of self are the place that you know, the community that you come from, the language that you speak and the cultural assumptions within which you grow up. Those are the four great roots of the self and very, very often what happens to migrants is that they lose all four—they're in a different place, speaking an alien language, amongst people who don't know them and the cultural assumptions are very different. You can see that's something traumatic. (Rushdie 2012)

It is clear that one of the problematic issues in the post-colonial era which stems from the immigration movement between the Orient and the Occident is the proper definition of the word *home*. This echoes Thompson (2005:133), who asserts that: “the notion of home as having a fixed and singular origin for anyone in a multicultural world is...shown to be illusory”. Therefore, during the individual’s quest for identity, s/he is trapped between two identities, or what post-colonial critics call a “double identity issue”. The individual comes to realise that s/he has to negotiate his/her identity within a mixture of cultures, which Hall describes in the following way:

Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a ‘production’, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation. (Hall 1990: 222)

Post-colonial critics have resorted to various concepts to describe this phenomenon. For example, Edward Said (2002: 173), in his essay “Reflections on Exile”, uses the word *exile*. He affirms that exile “is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted”. In addition, Homi Bhabha (1994), in his book *The Location of Culture*, refers to this state of uncertainty where the individual is located, a state of “in-between” or “in the middle”, further using the notion of ‘the third space’. Consequently, the offspring of the migrant, according to Homi Bhabha, will find themselves inhabiting this neutral space. The uncertainty which usually comes with conflicting societal influences ends up paradoxically in experiencing both states: “a lack of belonging as well as an excess of belonging. This so called excess ... is a consequence of belonging to and living in too many places at once” (Thompson 2005: 123).

2. Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth*: A model for a multicultural novel

The present article aims at investigating the way individuals, women in particular, navigate and shape their identity within a multicultural community. Zadie Smith’s novel *White Teeth* serves as the raw material for the research for the following reasons: first of all, examining some biographical aspects about the novelist, it is clear that there is a resemblance between her personal life and the complex identity of her female characters in the novel, since Smith was born in 1975 in north-west London to a Jamaican mother (Yvonne Bailey) and an English father (Harvey Smith). By analogy, *White Teeth* contains characters that, even though born in London, are still attached to their non-British roots. This echoes Dominic Head’s argument that *White Teeth* reflects Smith’s belief that “we are all hybrid post-colonials, biologically as well as culturally and the pursuit of pure ethnic origins is a pointless objective”. (Head 2003: 114) Smith is speaking as an insider who embarked on the journey of shaping a healthy self and not as an outsider. Such background information about the author enables the research to treat the novel partly as a biographical text. This provides the research with fruitful insights about her feminist vision of how a woman’s identity could be established and constructed in a hybrid world. Secondly, the article attempts to analyse the reaction of female characters, in particular, Smith’s efforts in giving voice to women and liberating them from the shadow of their male counterparts. Thus, the

following sections of the article will be devoted to the analysis of the feminist perspective revealed in *White Teeth*.

3. The theoretical framework

The article draws on Judith Butler's theory of performativity to analyse the routes female characters undertake to establish their gendered identity in a multicultural society. However, before applying this theoretical framework to the novel in question, it is important to explain the way performativity functions in literary studies. Originally, performativity is associated with linguistic studies, in particular, with declarative statements. This means that performativity starts by dealing with language itself. However, with the advancement of research on this concept, other disciplines, including psychology and literary studies, have borrowed this term and have employed it according to their own agenda. For example, in literature, Butler's theory of performativity tackles the behavioural aspects of the characters in a given text. Thus, the present research draws on the theory devised by Judith Butler to demonstrate its manifestations in Zadie Smith's *White Teeth*. However, when discussing performativity, it is important to understand the way the performative behaviour is enacted. In this regard, Butler states that:

The performance of a gender is also compelled by norms that I do not choose. I work within the norms that constitute me. I do something with them. Those norms are the condition of my agency, and they also limit my agency... gender performativity is not just drawing on the norms that constitute, limit, and condition me; it's also delivering a performance within a context of reception, and I cannot fully anticipate what will happen. (Butler 2004b: 345)

Judith Butler's theory resembles Simone de Beauvoir's (1961: 249) assertion that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman". This claim emphasises the identity of the body as a "historical construct" rather than a "natural species". Butler (2004b) claims that to be a subject is to be born into a world in which norms are already acting on you from the very beginning. This includes one's gender, name, race, etc. In this sense, gender becomes performative, since one's identity is shaped and determined by the societal scripts and constraints that the individual is forced to adhere to. Thus, gender is not something a person chooses to perform, but rather something performed on a person. In other words, gender is performative since the individual is playing the role of the actor whose duty is to perform the assigned role, according to the cultural scripts at hand. These scripts represent the norms which are agreed upon by the society. In this case, the society stands for the stage where the normative behavioural act takes place. However, when the individual refuses to act out or put on the expected gender roles as they are dictated by the cultural scripts or even challenges them, the performative behaviour shifts from being simply a repetitive act to being a subversive one. This subversive act functions as a means of refusal to adhere to what is called "repetitive acts". At this point, the individual moves from the state of being passive to the state of being active. Such a shift may be problematic in the journey of fashioning the individual's identity: on the one hand, the individual's identity is always negotiated and in a changeable state, there is no fixed, homogeneous identity, because "post-colonial identity is properly conceived as process rather than arrival" (Head 2003:

107); on the other hand, the shift of the gender performative role from being a repetitive act to being a subversive one could be accompanied by ironic outcomes, dangerous massive cultural misunderstandings and misinterpretations of meanings that can breach what Butler refers to as “social sanction and taboo”. (1988: 520)

Accordingly, the present article analyses the females’ behaviour in Zadie Smith’s multicultural novel *White Teeth*, in particular, Irie Ambrosia Jones’. The article traces the concept of performativity including the repetitive and subversive gender acts manifested in Irie’s bodily behaviour during her attempts to build her identity within a hybrid society. To do so, it is important to understand the familial atmosphere which Irie was born into in order to draw on the challenges she encounters and the way she reacts to such obstacles during her own attempts of shaping her personality. The article highlights both the repetitive acts and the subversive acts Irie shifts between and evaluates her decision to fashion her heterogeneous self in a multicultural world as a contemporary woman and as an immigrant.

4. Irie’s journey in a multicultural world

Irie Ambrosia Jones is one of the main characters in *White Teeth*. Some researchers, including Medlock (2018: 5), refer to Irie “as an author surrogate for Smith. Both are the offsprings of a Jamaican mother and an English father”. Irie was born in London to an English father, Archie Jones and a Jamaican immigrant mother, Clara Bowden. Irie looks like a Jamaican girl even though she has never been to Jamaica. Apparently, her visual representations indicate that she does not belong to England. Irie is what Homi Bhabha refers to as the offspring of an immigrant, or the second-generation immigrants. However, being biracial creates a dilemma for Irie, since she is trapped between two cultures, each with its own standards. The paradox is that Irie’s first name means “everything OK, cool, peaceful” (idem: 64), while in fact, because of her mixed race, Irie has a lot of trouble with her gender roles in the multicultural space of London.

To highlight Irie’s journey in multicultural London, which serves as the stage where the actions take place, in light of Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, it is important to elaborate on the norms prevalent in the society where Irie grew up, in particular, the norms related to body constitution. Butler (2004a: 91) links those norms to gender, stating that “gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance or substance, of a natural sort of being”. For example, the feminine beauty in the Occident could be summed up in three main traits: thinness, whiteness, and delicacy. Dina Yerima (2017: 642), a post-colonial researcher, resumes the discussion of these standards, stating that women must have “nonkinky hair that might be either straight or wavy, slim physique, and fair complexion as opposed to bigger, fuller physiques and darker complexions”. Moreover, Fanon (1986: xiii) writes, from a colonial hegemonic perspective, that whiteness is a “symbol of purity, of Justice, Truth, Virginity,” whereas blackness “stands for ugliness, sin, darkness, immorality”. Lost between these beauty standards, Irie performs several experiments on her physical appearance, in particular, her hair and teeth. Her choice of these parts is purposeful, since many scholars emphasise the idea that those body constituents are connected to the idea of rootedness. For example, Nick Bentley (2008: 55) states that: “teeth are markers of history, genealogy and also they show individual’s journey through

their lives". Czech scholar Jakub Vančura (2015: 13) paraphrases the same idea asserting that: "We all are born with a set of teeth, but it is the way of life we choose, the accidental events that happen and the class we belong to, that affect how our teeth look like". In the same vein, Thompson (2005: 124) believes that: "the subjects of genetics and horticulture, as well as teeth and hair ... are, of course, associated with 'roots' in one way or another".

Irie starts the performative act in multicultural London with an advert which says "lose weight to earn money" (Smith 2000: 265). This ad serves as a shifting moment for her to recognise her body wrongness. In other words, Irie's physical appearance indicates that she does not belong to London since she "was big, and she was landed instead with ... Jamaican frame, loaded with pineapples, mangos and guavas; the girl had weight; big tits, big butt, big hips, big thighs, big teeth" (ibid.). Irie betrays the assumptions of the English standards of gender that link beauty to the characteristics of an English Rose, one that is "a slender, delicate thing not made for the hot suns, a surfboard rippled the wave" (idem: 267). Being the opposite of this rose, Irie appears as a freak when *White Teeth* describes her situation as "a stranger in a stranger land" (266). Moreover, Irie disappoints the expectations of her father, Archie, who is expecting a daughter with blue eyes. Her gender norms are imposed on her even before she was born: "the eyes Archie had been so excited about lasted two weeks only. She had been born with them, yes, but one day Clara looked again and there were brown eyes staring up at her" (268). All these incidents drive Irie to rethink her performative look in multicultural London. The English gender norms become like ghosts that haunt her in "Nightmares and daydreams, on the bus, in the bath, in class" (266).

At this point, Irie adopts a repetitive act. She accepts the English gender norms and she takes steps to modify her appearance according to the gender norms embraced by the British gaze. *White Teeth* describes the scene as "There was England, a gigantic mirror, and there was Irie, without reflection" (ibid.). This repetitive act allows Irie to start trying to establish her identity by imitating the British standards as much as she can. In other words, the character decides to fight her genes that prevent her from becoming a modern English woman by changing both her style of dressing and her haircut. Firstly, Irie starts wearing corsetry which makes her look thinner, torturing her body in order to look like an English woman. But she does not feel comfortable with her clothes, making her mother wonder "What in the Lord's name are you wearing? How can you breathe?" (ibid.). Irie is recreating the gender norms imposed on her by the traditions of the English society. In other words, the society imposes certain characteristics on women as part of their feminine beauty and Irie, in turn, is imposing those characteristics on her own body, even though her body tries to reject them, making it difficult for her to breathe in her corsetry.

Secondly, Irie decides to change her hair style. She wants to look like an English woman, she insists on having a "Straight hair. Straight straight long black sleek flickable tossable shakeable touchable finger through-able wind-blowable hair" (273). Again, Irie is torturing her body by imposing on it something that does not fit it. She asks the hairdresser, Andrea, whether the process of transforming her hair into straight hair is painful or not and the hairdresser replies, "Life hurts, ... beauty hurts" (278). The process is painful for two reasons: on the one hand, it is a transformation of her hair from one state into another, a procedure that is against her family's cultural expectations, and, on the other hand, it is a procedure performed on a kind of black hair that requires a lot of effort to be transformed, a

process that is not easy; this is why physical pain is part of the process. The whole transformation process proves that, for black women, feminine beauty in multicultural England is a double burden not only in physical terms, but in financial ones as well. Zadie Smith summarises this reality as: “black women spend five times as much as white women on beauty products and nine times as much on their hair” (idem: 278). The hair salon serves as the stage where the performance of white femaleness show takes place. The choice of the hair salon in *White Teeth* is functional, since it is full of mirrors in which women can see their reflection. However, things unfortunately go against Irie’s wish, as the product they put on her hair makes it look ugly, and her attempts end in ironic outcomes. Irie has to buy a wig to solve the problem; hence, the hairdresser seizes the chance to use lies to advertise her fake product stating: “Stupid girl. It is not fake. It is real. And when it’s on your head it’ll be your real hair. Go!” (279).

Irie is making changes in her looks mainly to attract the attention of her boyfriend, Millat, who is neglecting her because she does not rise to the beauty standards appreciated by the white males. However, the moment which triggers Irie to rethink her performative gender role within her multicultural community is captured by her own reaction to her new haircut. Irie is trying to avoid her reflection in the mirror when her hair is spoiled by the hairdresser. “Blubbing like a baby, Irie shuffled out of P.K.’s and down the high road, trying to avoid her reflection in the shop windows” (ibid.). At this moment, the woman becomes a cyborg with her fake hair. By changing her appearance, Irie betrays her Jamaican roots and appears like a freak. Moreover, after the caricatural outcome of her hair transformation, her friends insist that she should re-educate herself. For example, Maxine says: “Realize your value, stop the slavish devotion, and get a life, Irie. Get a girl, get a guy, but get a life” (285). These pieces of advice highlight the failure of English gender normative acts on Irie’s side and put an end to it.

After this moment, Irie adopts a subversive position which will lead her to a state of in-betweenness that enables her to select the things she likes to do both from the British society and from her Jamaican roots. She decides to go against the expected Jamaican norms of behaviour when, for example, she starts smoking, which is an English practice that is completely against the cultural expectations of her family. It is something she learns from her surrounding society and she decides to do it in order to blend in. In addition, Irie accepts her current hair as it is and decides to stop the battle with her genes. She is totally satisfied with her physical appearance, which is a mixture of her Jamaican roots and her failed attempts to become more English, and stops any attempt that involves alterations or assimilations following the “English Rose” model; thus, she looks “taller, wide, with breasts and no hair and slippers just visible underneath a long duffle coat” (381). Irie does not want to be a copy of the “English Rose” anymore and grows more satisfied with the neutral place she establishes for herself: a state of in-betweenness. Moreover, she decides to become a dentist, but she wants to take a year off before she joins the university, being eager to learn about her Jamaican roots. However, she has to argue with her mother about this delay “Irie was about to become the first Bowden or Jones ... to enter a university ... She wanted to study dentistry ... but she also wanted to take a ‘year off’ ... which led to three months of open warfare between her and Clara” (376). Thus, the order of Irie’s transformation between “Englishifying herself” and replanting herself in multicultural London starts with a repetitive act and then moves to a subversive one. This process sums up Butler’s (1988: 528) assertion that “Performing one’s

gender wrong initiates a set of punishments both obvious and indirect, and performing it well provides the reassurance that there is an essentialism of gender identity". Moreover, the transformation of one's behaviour reflects the situation in a multicultural world where identity becomes something fragmented and unstable. This echoes Head (2003: 107), who states that "post-colonial identity is properly conceived as a process than arrival". Identity becomes something that is continuously negotiated with the surrounding context. Drawing on both her roots and her current multicultural community and adapting what she chooses from both cultures, Irie becomes a "great reinventor of herself. A great make-doer" (Smith 2000: 368). She learns a lesson from the disastrous effects of performing British gender roles, and then she uses these effects as a starting point to declare her performative identity as a mixed in-between subject. Such a process is not easy at all, as Butler explains:

Agency was indeed possible, although not in the simplistic sense of one being able to choose one's gender a la carte... Thus, we are not free to opt out of gender altogether or take a perspective on it from the outside; nevertheless, gender's cultural construction makes it vulnerable to subversion and disruption, for example, through parodic practices such as drag. (1990: 142-49)

White Teeth stands as a successful example of the feminine voice in contemporary London. Zadie Smith's text represents an attempt to subvert the male account of the current situation in London, since Smith decides to challenge the authorial norms that usually talk about "longing for the roots, frozen image of the mother land as an ideal place of living/ culture, identity, alienation, assimilation, discrimination, segregation, exploitation and stereotyping" (Jaya, Jyothirmai 2018: 84). Smith refuses to embrace the normative approach in literature and decides to incorporate all the gender themes to draw on the obstacles that female immigrants encounter during their search for identity in a multicultural country. It is important to mention that *White Teeth* does not portray the female protagonist in a heroic manner, nor does it indicate that she aspires to that position. For example, in an interview with O'Grady (2002: 107), Smith comments on Irie being the main character in the novel saying that: "the reason Irie gets to the centre of the book is not really about Irie, but about a certain idea of indeterminacy which is in a lot of writing of my generation of my peers, about the centre always being slightly displaced". Smith does not mean that Irie becomes a role model, since this would confine her to the cultural expectations of how a role model should behave; that would be a repetitive role again. Smith says that "role models are another crock and something which limits you. They don't set you free" (idem: 108). This makes *White Teeth* stand as a non-normative text.

Moreover, the text apparently discusses a political issue, namely the identity of the first and second-generation immigrants in London, the obstacles they encounter in their new home, as well as the black/white cultural expectations. In fact, *White Teeth* is not a book on politics solely, nor does Smith put on a politician's role to communicate her voice as a female of mixed background, half Jamaican, half English. In the interview with O'Grady (idem: 107), Smith asserts that "I didn't want the community in *White Teeth* to be representative of immigrants in England, that's not my job really, I'm not a politician". Smith does not include political institutions in her plot; instead, she enacts institutions, such as the school, as she believes that, at school: "there is a person of every different

colour standing next to you. It is the most multicultural place I can think of - more than the city - the school is so phenomenal” (idem: 106). In addition, Smith presents her ideas at the family level. This is why it can be said that *White Teeth* belongs to the category of social novels that “take the family as the nucleus of society and topicalise social, racial, religious, cultural, and gender politics at a grass roots level” (Nicklas 2013: 125). All these characteristics mark *White Teeth* as a story about performativity that brings together gender issues and racial and multicultural identities.

5. Conclusion

The article has elaborated on Judith Butler’s theory of performativity as manifested in the case of the female protagonist of *White Teeth*, Irie Jones. It concludes that the female character starts her quest for identity by sticking to repetitive acts, as she adheres to the expected gender norms of London and she performs them willingly. However, during her interaction with the surrounding community, such as her family or the school, she starts to be less convinced by the gender norms imposed on her, so she decides to revolt against the cultural expectations of her society. Thus, she switches to subversive acts, which sometimes end in ironic outcomes. Such a leap enables her to enter a state of in-betweenness involving her English and Jamaican roots. From Zadie Smith’s feminist perspective, this neutral state is not a bad thing and it could be used as a means to subvert any centralized subject or culture. However, such gender acts are not easily performed, since the female character in *White Teeth* is a hybrid post-colonial subject. In other words, she carries the burden of being both of mixed origin on the one hand, and living in a multicultural place that expects her to perform according to the standards of the whites, who make up the controlling group in her current environment, on the other hand. By choosing what suits her and ignoring the things that make her life harder, Irie Jones offers examples of attempts at negotiating and altering identity according to one’s surroundings. This process of negotiation best describes what identity looks like in a post-colonial, multicultural era: an identity that is always in the process of shifting from one state to another, an identity that is best described as being a slippery, finite, but endless quest for finding the self.

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THE HEROINE'S JOURNEY: THE CASE OF MORGANA FROM BBC'S *MERLIN*

EIRINI DIMITRA BOURONTZI

University of Bucharest

Abstract: *This article applies the concept of the 'heroine's journey' defined by Maureen Murdock in her book The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness (1990) to the interpretation of Morgana, the character of the BBC's series Merlin (2008-2012). The article follows Morgana's quest for reconciliation with her feminine nature and concurrently how it was shaped by the Arthurian society and culture in this digital remediation.*

Keywords: *Arthurian legend, heroine's journey, TV adaptation*

1. Introduction

Maureen Murdock, in her highly influential book *The Heroine's Journey: Woman's Quest for Wholeness* (1990), details the stages that a woman has to complete so as to become a whole and balanced individual. Murdock's theory, based on psychology and the examination of culture and society, proposes that today's purpose is for women to look within themselves and heal the split between the male and female attributes of their character, thus achieving the unification of the "Man with Heart" and "Woman of Wisdom" (Murdock 2013: 183). She suggests that we look beyond duality and reach a holy union of body, mind, and soul.

The article analyses the notions Murdock proposed in this book, such as the mother and father archetypes, the allies that come along the way, the trials and obstacles one must face along the journey in order to ultimately reach the level of completion. All these ideas are applied to the interpretation of Morgana Pendragon, the character in the TV series produced by the BBC, *Merlin* (2008-2012).

In the five seasons span, Morgana played a very important role in representing the female gender, acting as the half-sister to Prince Arthur, the illegitimate daughter of King Uther, but, most importantly, as the villain to Merlin's magical purpose of saving the kingdom of Albion. Morgana acts as a warning for Merlin, about the potential for turning to the dark side of magic, and, as her character develops, I investigate how and whether she follows the heroine's journey as designed by Murdock, which steps she completes and which she does not, and ultimately how her character unravels towards a spiral of madness and revenge, never reaching the union with herself.

I also look at Morgana from a feminist standpoint, discussing how she exhibits her subversiveness through her magic which goes against the patriarchal system, her social position of superiority as a white woman and a princess, and how she interacts with other women, while attempting to create a feminine community.

2. BBC *Merlin* and the portrayal of female characters

The TV series *Merlin* (2008-2012) has received ambiguous criticism in relation to its position about feminist issues and the representation of its female characters. I will briefly mention some of the praise and criticism that the series has received so as to offer a holistic view of the issue.

First and foremost, it must be said that feminism and female empowerment are issues that have divided many people, especially in the context of the diversity that makes the very idea of empowerment contradictory. The creators of *Merlin* chose to adapt the Arthurian legends in order to appeal to contemporary viewers and their needs and, when it comes to the issue of female representation, *Merlin* has “also chosen to plot feminist arcs for these characters, espousing ideals such as equality, female power, and feminine community.” (Edwards 2015: 3)

Throughout the series, we see characters such as Morgana and Gwen, who are the female leads, as well as secondary female characters, such as Isolde and Morgause, getting involved in politics, chivalrous adventures, and even fights, displaying skills equal to the male protagonists. Morgana is given the leading role as the king’s ward and as a witch who aims to take the throne of Camelot. She devises several plots and makes several allies, and “Each time she makes an alliance, she interacts with the male leaders in a similar fashion, using her quick tongue and her magic to establish the fear and power she needs to command. Her sexuality is never brought into the equation as a bargaining tool” (Wente 2013: 65). Some critics, like Sarah Wente, approve of the fact that Morgana never used her sexuality to manipulate her male allies, even if this seemed to be the quickest and easiest solution; others, such as Sarah Trammell, claim that “To be an empowered woman can become synonymous with being a sexual woman, and witch-media contributes to that idea” (Trammell 2020: 8). We could say that the TV series had a family demographic in mind, so overt sexuality was never an option, but, more importantly, the lack of sexual experiences might be an indicator of Morgana’s deeper psychological traumas which will be explored in the following pages.

Finally, we have to acknowledge that Morgana is also the main villain of the series and “When witches are made into villains, they become a warning against powerful women and the damage they can do to people and society” (ibid.). Some consider it commendable that women joined the fight against the injustice that King Uther enforced upon the people, while others claim that it is not politically correct for women to be represented as villains. Jennifer Edwards (2015: 69) believes that “in *Merlin*, women who take action, who are bold and aggressive, must be punished in order to be accepted, or else they are marked as evil and dangerous”. We could say that villains, no matter their gender, always end up being punished in the Manichean battle of good versus evil, and maybe it is empowering for women to reach the position of the main antagonist, regardless of their fate in the end. We should nevertheless acknowledge that Morgana was a powerful villainess throughout the series, and the next part of this article will focus on the steps she took to accomplish her status.

3. Morgana Pendragon: from fairy princess to villain

Lady Morgana is one of the four protagonists of the series, along with Merlin, Arthur, and Guinevere. Her story starts with her as the ward of King Uther, enjoying the life of a privileged princess in the castle, attending feasts and looking

pretty. Gradually, her character evolves, as she observes the cruelty King Uther shows to all the users of magic, which he outlawed in the kingdom. Morgana shows compassion for the victims Uther executed, and then her feelings towards her guardian turn from adoration to hatred.

As the series unfolds, we learn that her father and Uther's friend, Gorlois, and her mother Vivienne are out of the picture, so the burden of raising her falls on King Uther's shoulders and on Guinevere, who, in this version, is Morgana's maid. Prince Arthur and Merlin are her friends and allies, up to the point when she realizes that her new magical powers set her apart from the rest of the characters, as she fears for her life under Uther's ban on magic.

In the first episodes, Morgana is described as a compassionate and strong-willed character, though, in secret, she is afraid of her newly awakened magical abilities which she does not understand, as can be seen later in *The Nightmare Begins* (BBC, season 2, episode 3). (Van Beek 2016: 18) Morgana becomes afraid of her magical powers when King Uther bans magic in his kingdom, under penalty of death, but "From a feminist perspective, the fact that the witch has always been significantly presented as a woman 'with a *different* power than the average woman' (2007: 3) provides her with a highly subversive potential power" (Alonso 2020: 25). Morgana has always been vocal about the injustices that she sees in the kingdom and her magical skills add to her independence and fierceness.

The series takes a feminist twist in several instances, as a way to keep up with society's demand for equal representation, and Morgana and Guinevere act as the main representatives of the female gender "espousing ideals such as equality, female power, and feminine community." (Edwards 2015: 57) Slowly and gradually, Morgana realizes the extent of her power, both in terms of magical abilities and in terms of her will power, so she sets out of the boundaries of the castle and King Uther's restriction in order to discover herself and her destiny. "While still living at Camelot, she is adamant about helping Arthur on his various quests, at one point bluntly telling him, 'Why let the boys have all the fun?'" ("Poisoned Chalice"). (Wente 2013: 65)

During the third season, Morgana becomes a full-blown villain under the tutelage of her half-sister and evil witch Morgause, and "she slowly turns against Uther, seeing how magic can be good, while he refuses to see that (BBC, season 2, episode 8)" (Van Beek 2016: 18). After this moment, her road towards revenge has no return and her descent towards darkness and bitterness is inescapable.

In the following pages, I analyse Morgana's life's journey along Murdock's theory and then reach a conclusion as to what extent the TV character embodies this feminist discussion about how society and our relationships with each other shape our character and destiny. At the same time, I identify and explain the points where Morgana diverges from the theory and how this contributes to her inability to achieve a complete self.

In the first chapter of her book, "Separation from the Feminine", Maureen Murdock states that

The degree to which a woman's mother represents the status quo, the restrictive context of sexual roles, and the deep-seated sense of female inferiority within a patriarchal society determines the degree to which a woman will seek to separate herself from her mother. (Murdock 2013: 30)

Morgana's mother Vivienne was the wife of Gorlois, King Uther's friend and ally, but her fate remains unaddressed. Morgana often speaks fondly of her memories with her supposed father Gorlois, but never mentions Vivienne, either because she died when Morgana was quite young or because she had to flee the 'Great Purge', to hide the fact that she had magical powers. The absence of a mother or a mother figure leads Morgana to attach herself to her servant Guinevere, a woman of her own age, but their initially healthy relationship becomes corrupt and is terminated when Morgana prophesises that Guinevere would become the queen of Camelot upon marrying Arthur, the position that Morgana was coveting for herself.

4. Playing for team masculine

"If a woman feels alienated or rejected by her mother she may first reject the feminine and search for recognition by the father and the patriarchal culture" (Murdock 2013: 42). As stated before, Morgana did not know her mother, therefore she turned to King Uther, her guardian, for emotional and societal support. "Our heroine looks for role models who can show her the steps along the way. These male allies may take the form of a father, boyfriend, teacher, manager, or coach..." (idem: 50). Following Uther's wishes, Morgana turns into a skilled swordswoman and attends royal feasts and tournaments. Her version of femininity is shaped by Uther, as is her ideology. Although the king does care for her, their relationship fails when it turns out it was based on a lie, Uther hiding the fact that he is her biological father. Her shock and devastation at this news contributes to her quest for revenge.

"When he died and I took you into my care, you fought me from the beginning. Your will is as strong as my own." (Uther on Morgana, *TV Tropes* n.d.) As a young girl, Morgana was quite attached to Uther, attending banquets and sharing conversations, but her maturation brings about the realization that King Uther is vicious and vindictive towards all users of magic, a category which included her, now showing prophetic skills through her dreams. Fearing for her life in the castle, Morgana decides to take action against her caretaker.

Famous author and Arthurian researcher Geraldine Heng, in the chapter "Enchanted Ground: The Feminine Subtext in Malory", claims that magic is "a woman's equivalent of a knight's skill at arms, and a means of accomplishing a purpose by her own efforts" (Heng 1996: 112). It would be justified for men and knights more specifically, as they are the protectors of the kingdom, to fear witches as it "is entirely possible for magic to overpower sword, shield, and armor" (Chandler 2018: 196-197) From a feminist viewpoint, we can assess that, even during the medieval period, the Arthurian legends became popular and the figure of Morgan Le Fay was established as the female antagonist to King Arthur, magic was portrayed as a threat to the patriarchy.

Murdock (2013: 51) claims that "Lack of genuine involvement or negative involvement on the part of the father, stepfather, uncle, or grandfather deeply wounds a woman's sense of herself". King Uther is indeed involved in Morgana's life and education, theoretically in a positive manner, but the discovery that he was her biological father and the deception he used to keep the secret crush her. "Morgana discovers in the third season that Uther had an adulterous relationship with her mother and that she is therefore his illegitimate daughter". (Chandler 2015: 11) "Morgana's initial disagreements with Uther become bitter hatred as the

series progresses, marking her change from a passionate proponent of others' rights to a tyrant in her quest for vengeance". (Howey 2015: 5) It is ironic to observe that Morgana started as a sweet, innocent woman who only wanted to help and defend the weak, but, after the revelation of her true paternity, she becomes a vengeful and determined witch, set on taking her throne. What she doesn't realise is that her violent actions are the very strategies that King Uther employs.

According to Murdock (2013: 51) the father figure does not have to be necessarily the one the heroine relies on, another masculine figure can take over. Morgana's path is crossed by a variety of male counterparts. In this case, even if Arthur and Morgana were raised together, when they reach adulthood their visions of the world clash – Arthur stands for justice and defending the rights of the majority, while Morgana, enraged by Uther's deception and his witch hunts, sets out to take control of the kingdom in a most violent manner. Merlin was Morgana's ally until she starts plotting to destroy the kingdom, and Gaius, the court physician, seemingly treating Morgana for her nightmares, turns out to use his skills only to gaslight her out of her magical abilities for prophecy.

Morgana gradually realizes that she cannot rely on the men she formerly believed to be her friends, like Merlin and Arthur, or the father figures she saw in King Uther or Gaius the physician, and her loneliness and need for connection drive her out of the castle and into the mysterious forest. This initiates her quest towards finding her identity and purpose in life.

This quest takes the form of adventure in the BBC series. In fiction, simply going out of one's house has been associated with the beginning of adventure, literal and metaphorical, and Morgana, as Murdock claims:

crosses the threshold, leaves the safety of her parents' home, and goes in search of herself. Along the way she meets ogres who trick her into going down dead ends, adversaries who challenge her cunning and resolve, and obstacles which she must avoid, circumscribe, or overcome. (Murdock 2013: 58)

The true identity of a person is revealed in times of crisis and with no safety net to fall upon, and this also includes the protection and guidance of the people loving and surrounding us. Once Morgana realizes that she is a witch and her father Uther would have her executed for this, she decides to take action and stop him and his murderous crusade against magic. She sets out to find allies in her maternal sister Morgause, a fellow witch with a similar desire to overthrow Uther. What Morgana doesn't realize is that her allies have their own agendas as well, so she ends up acting as a pawn in their schemes to overthrow the king.

Morgana's gradual change in character and spiral towards evil is also symbolized by her personal style. At the beginning of the series she wears bright and happy colours, suggesting her innocence and naïvety, but "Morgana's transference to a black horse and attire, which reflects the shift in her character from feminine to masculine, from passive to active, augmented by her relationship with Morgause". (Brennan 2015: 49)

As Morgana sets out on her quest, she must find her purpose in life, which, for her, is to become the Queen of Camelot, with the help of her half-sister Morgause.

To destroy the myth of inferiority a woman needs to carry her own sword of truth, sharpening her blade on the stone of discernment. Because so much of women's truth has been obscured by patriarchal myths, new forms, new styles, and a new

language must be developed by women to express their knowledge. A woman must find her own voice. (Murdock 2013: 67)

Despite finding her purpose in life, to take the throne, Morgana fails to come up with a plan for ruling the land justly and for all citizens, those who embrace magic, as well as those who don't. Instead of eliminating her father King Uther's segregating mentality, she opts for the same strategy of violence, but with the additional magic ingredient.

This is even pointed out in the show, by Queen Annis, whom Morgana tries to goad into going to war against Camelot. "You came to me in the name of Gorlois," Annis says when Morgana berates her for being weak. "But I fear you're more like Uther than you realise" ("His Father's Son"). (Nygård 2013: 26)

Morgana's purpose to become the queen is tainted since its inception because that is a power move that King Uther himself taught her. It might have been more fitting, in accordance with literary and cultural tropes of female interception, for a successful feminine quest to end with the protagonist becoming a priestess of a female deity, and, in this capacity, aim to help users of magic positively, instead of dismantling Uther's tactics with his own tools. This behaviour fits the pattern of a vicious circle, a repetition of a toxic behaviour until either Morgana or Uther die at the hands of one another.

When Morgana does become the high priestess of the Triple Goddess, as well as Queen of Camelot, her new position gives her courage and resources, but, as Murdock believes

When the unconscious masculine takes over, a woman may feel that no matter what she does or how she does it, it is never enough. She never feels satisfied with completing a task because he always urges her to pursue another. (Murdock 2013: 77)

Morgana never fully detaches herself from her ego, encapsulated in her desire to rule and prove her father, King Uther, wrong. Her quest seems to come to an end when she becomes queen, but she fails to realize that ruling a kingdom is a hard and continuous job. Moreover, she fails to keep the land safe for the old religion and for people with magic powers. Instead of her father as King, she crowns herself a Queen, but she is equally violent, twisted, and full of revenge. Morgana seizes the throne without reconciling with her feminine side, even if she performs functions of female intercession, being the High Priestess of the Triple Goddess, or even if she has the support of other female characters, such as her sister Morgause. Morgana's actions can be labelled masculine in the way they propagate the kind of violence that King Uther had initiated. Therefore, Morgana never realizes that in order to accomplish her personal quest she must depart from the patriarchal models that she has been unconsciously following. "Thus the heroine chooses not to be victim of forces beyond her control but to take her life into her own hands". (Murdock 2013: 85) From this step forward Morgana only partially follows the Heroine's Journey and never accomplishes self-fulfilment.

5. Into the belly of the whale

The descent, as a literary trope, can be presented as a journey to the underworld, the dark night of the soul, the belly of the whale, the meeting of the

dark goddess, or simply a state of depression. Murdock asserts that “This journey to the underworld is filled with confusion and grief, alienation and disillusion, rage and despair. A woman may feel naked and exposed, dry and brittle, or raw and turned inside-out”. (Murdock 2013: 96)

In season 5 Episode 8 “The Hollow Queen”, Morgana is imprisoned and held captive at the bottom of a well for two years. Physically this symbolizes a trip to the underworld after Morgana is fatally wounded, but metaphorically this is presented as a great opportunity for her to evaluate her life, her goals, and her relationship with her family. During her captivity, she shares her ‘cell’ with a baby dragon named Aithusa. The two bond and act as each other’s companions, but, after their release, we realize that Aithusa hasn’t grown properly and is dependent on Morgana, even though she could have already become a magnificent and powerful dragon. The pair is symbolic of Morgana’s journey, with her great potential, but the character’s life at this stage is presented in opposition with this potential. This crisis is something she brings upon herself, as she has been unable to overcome her past trauma. Instead of acknowledging her inner darkness and stepping towards the light, Morgana remains in the dark, unaware of herself, her powers, or her destiny. She is eternally bound to the vengeful quest King Uther had laid out for her.

Murdock writes that when a woman realises her patriarchy-enforced life trajectory is not beneficial, she feels “an urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine, whether that be the Goddess, the Mother, or her little girl within”. (Murdock 2013: 117) In the spirit of this observation, it can be argued that Morgana’s quest follows the Heroine’s Journey to the stage where she yearns to reconnect with her feminine side, “her body, her emotions, her spirit, her creative wisdom”. (Murdock 2013: 117) Unfortunately, in the absence of a positive female model in her life, Morgana is unable to make this transition. Her mother is absent from the narrative, her sister Morgause is as incomplete as Morgana herself, and her maid Guinevere chooses to be on the side of the male hero.

Initially in the series, Morgana is close with Guinevere and, on several occasions, they defend each other, emotionally and physically, a female bond symbolized by the sword fight scenes in which they secure each other’s backs. Gradually Morgana starts showing cracks in her friendly façade so Guinevere loses her trust. At the same time, Morgana realizes that Guinevere no longer shares her mentality and values. Therefore, Morgana chooses another ally, her half-sister Morgause, who is also a fellow witch and, most importantly, a woman determined to exterminate King Uther. Though the sisters became close and Morgause even sacrifices herself, in season four in the episode ‘The Darkest Hour’ (Merlin Fandom 2012), the glue that brought them together in the first place was their shared hatred and lust for revenge, rather than sisterly love.

From a feminist standpoint, it is disheartening that the feminine community and friendship that existed between Morgana and Guinevere, on the one hand, and between Morgana and her half-sister Morgause, on the other, came to a tragic end as both these relationships were based on ulterior motives. Morgana appears to be lonely and without any female support on multiple occasions. When these women cooperated peacefully, they succeeded in their plans, but each of them fails without the support of their friends. Therefore, I would like to argue that *Merlin* proposes the idea that women are stronger when they are working together towards a common goal. When Morgana takes on the role of the villainess of the

series, she is separated from her former female partners, losing the support, loyalty and friendship that could help her in her personal journey towards betterment. Instead, Morgana chooses the road towards revenge, which proves to be a lonely and treacherous one

Once again, Morgana fails to connect with the other characters, whether her maid and friend Guinevere or her half-sister Morgause. Morgana allows herself to be carried away by her revenge plan and neglects herself and her mental and psychological needs. As a tragic result, she never manages to reconnect with her feminine side.

6. Mother and daughter reunited

Murdock further comments on the heroine's journey and argues that the next step "involves healing...the split from one's feminine nature". (Murdock 2013: 136) Morgana's attempt to heal herself, her feminine and masculine side, is signalled by her alliance with Mordred. Mordred's story starts as a druid child in desperate need of protection, and Morgana gladly assists him and exhibits motherly behaviour. The two reunite when Mordred is an adult, heartbroken over the death of his girlfriend, and hell-bent on revenge against Arthur. However, Morgana's and Mordred's alliance is superficial with the common goal of revenge, yet again.

Repeatedly Morgana falls into the trap (and trope) of revenge, instead of choosing to heal herself and her feminine and masculine side. Mordred acts as a lost opportunity for connection between Morgana and the motherly side she could have exhibited. It is disheartening to realize that the trauma of not being raised by her mother is repeated once again, as her feelings towards Mordred have an ulterior motive.

For Murdock, "The masculine is an archetypal force; it is not a gender. When it becomes unbalanced and unrelated to life it becomes combative, critical, and destructive". (Murdock 2013: 158) If transferred to Morgana's journey, this perspective indicates that Morgana has lost her positive masculine traits, and only recreates the negative ones that her father taught her, like violence, vindictiveness, and hatred. Prince Arthur and Merlin try on several occasions to positively influence Morgana and help her grow as a person, but she remains stuck in a vicious cycle, repeating the acts of King Uther, and never moving forward.

The final step of the journey is the merging between the masculine and feminine sides of the heroine, coming to the true realization that, in order for a person to be complete, one must grasp and nurture one's two natures. On this topic Murdock believes that the heroine

must develop a positive relationship with her inner Man with Heart and find the voice of her Woman of Wisdom to heal her estrangement from the sacred feminine. As she honours her body and soul as well as her mind, she heals the split within herself and the culture. (Murdock 2013: 183)

In the TV series *Merlin*, the four main characters are symmetrical toward each other. For example, both Merlin and Morgana have magical powers, but their practice is different. Merlin defends the kingdom, and the innocent, while Morgana wishes to destroy everything that King Uther created. On the other hand, Prince Arthur and Guinevere act as a successful power couple, who think tactically, but always with compassion.

Though the Great Dragon described Morgana to Merlin as "... the darkness to your light, the hatred to your love" (*Merlin*: "The Tears of Uther Pendragon"), it is not Merlin who is Morgana's true opposite: Guinevere is. They start out as lady and lady's maid, one high and one low, only to switch when Guinevere becomes Queen while Morgana becomes a hunted outcast. (Nygård 2013: 30)

Morgana is presented in the TV series as a woman who is imperfect but who sets out to find her destiny and purpose in life, getting lost in the way. She did not face her demons, in this case, her father King Uther, the lack of a mother figure and its failed replacement with Guinevere, or the fact that her supposed friends Merlin and Arthur went against her in the end. Her refusal to accept her problems and fears led her to believe that she has none, therefore she continued her life's quest, but her unresolved psychological traumas caught up with her in each step of her quest. Ultimately, her life's journey may be regarded as a warning for the audience to bring our mental and psychological issues to the forefront of our lives, if we want to achieve mental, physical, and psychological wholeness.

7. Conclusion

Morgana never achieves her quest. On a realistic level, she does not manage to help the followers of the old religion and magic or her allies, on the contrary, most of them die assisting her in her futile quest, and, symbolically speaking, Morgana sadly never manages to heal and to merge her masculine and feminine sides.

Her growth as Arthur's antagonist is crucial for the narrative and develops in a highly sophisticated manner. Through Morgana, the audience are acquainted with a realistic character, with feelings, traumas, and insecurities. In our inclusive age, 'flawed' characters contribute to a both more balanced and more realistic representation of society. From the beginning of the story, we know that Morgana is bound to fail, because of the predictability of her journey, familiar to us from the Arthurian legends, which always described her as Arthur's enemy. This TV series, though, chooses to give Morgana a full life and representation in order to show that there are more aspects to her character than just being Arthur's antagonist. In an entertaining manner, we are encouraged to acknowledge the importance of the feminine and masculine sides of a character, the power and influence the mother as well as the father have on children, or the importance of mother/father figures, and, last but not least, the importance of allies, or friends, who can make or break someone.

When it comes to the issue of female representation and emancipation, Morgana is received with mixed feelings. On the one hand, she gradually becomes more independent and free thinking, but, on the other hand, she is too single-minded, set on revenge and not caring what she had to sacrifice in order to achieve it Morgana wants to become the queen of Camelot as she was the firstborn child of King Uther, but her determination to get the throne comes from a selfish desire to rule instead of her brother, not because she really wants to make a difference for herself or the other women who were wronged. She uses her magical skills as a way to empower herself, but she does not make any effort for the empowerment of other women as well. This may justify her portrayal as lonely and isolated from the female community around her. Morgana shows how her magic can be subversive and used against Merlin's male magic, or even against the knights and their

strength. Some critics claim that the series and its portrayal of Morgana are not sensitive enough to feminist issues since she is shown dying, without having achieved her goal to become the queen of Camelot. Technically, this fact is the absolute truth, but is it really success that defines the value of a character, or the effort and persistence of the quest? Morgana starts off in the series as a vain, beautiful, and spoiled princess living in a castle, but by the end, she gains enough strength, determination, influence, and to fight for her beliefs, even if those beliefs are not beneficial for her or the people of the kingdom.

The TV series *Merlin* manages to reverse the notion of the ‘witch hunt’ to the ‘witch hunting’ of those who wronged the witches them, as in the case of Morgana who set out to take her revenge on King Uther who banned the use of magic in the kingdom and persecuted all practitioners of magic. Though violence and revenge are never considered the right way to correct any problem, we have to acknowledge the fact that Morgana is ready to reject the psychological abuse inflicted upon her by her father King Uther and to stand up to him. Finally, the series portrays Morgana as a woman who ends up in the position of the villainess of the story due to the hardships and abandonment issues that she had to face her entire life, while demonstrating unequivocally that she is not inherently evil, as the tendency is in most Arthurian film adaptations. This point acts as the connection to the theory of the ‘heroine’s journey’ which has been analysed in this article as it adds shades to an otherwise negative portrayal, arguing that our past traumas follow us indefinitely if we do not seek to heal them. Ultimately, Morgana escapes the stereotypical representation of the witch either as an old ‘hag’ or as a seductress and carries herself as an educated woman, who uses her magical skills, her social position, and her wits for justified (or justifiable) political and social purposes.

The TV adaptation *Merlin* (2008-2012) brings the Arthurian legend back to life in a modern context, relevant for the contemporary audience, with characters easily identifiable, thus giving a new life to this old story.

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***ADVOCATING HUMANISM
IN THE POST-HUMAN AGE***

**HAWTHORNE’S HUMANIST PROMETHEUS
IN *YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN*
AND *THE MINISTER’S BLACK VEIL***

XIAORUI DU

West University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** In this essay, I examine Nathaniel Hawthorne’s humanism in *Young Goodman Brown* and *The Minister’s Black Veil*. I argue that Hawthorne promotes a humanist world that prizes the intrinsic value of man above religious zeal or political ideology. In each of the two stories, the humanist world was inaugurated by its protagonist, whom I will analyse through invoking Prometheus, who was known for giving fire to humanity and being punished for it.*

***Keywords:** Hawthorne, humanism, Prometheus, puritan, *The Minister’s Black Veil*, *Young Goodman Brown**

1. Introduction: Hawthorne, humanism, and Prometheus

It is no secret that Nathaniel Hawthorne is critical of his Puritan ancestors – notably William Hawthorne and his son John. The former was the original Puritan immigrant from England in Hawthorne’s lineage. According to Hawthorne’s autobiographical account in “The Custom-House” (1892a), the introductory chapter of *The Scarlet Letter* (1892), William was culpable for the mistreatment of a Quaker woman; John, inheriting his father’s “persecuting spirit”, presided over the prosecution of the alleged witches of Salem (1892a: 14). The anecdote that Nathaniel changed his family name from “Hathorne” to “Hawthorne” to cut ties with such cold-hearted – if not also cold-blooded – figures is convincing proof of his critical attitude towards them. In many of his other stories about the Puritan life in early New England, such as “The May-Pole of Merry Mount” and “The Gentle Boy”, this attitude is also manifest. The Puritans are portrayed as a bigoted and intolerant group of villains that were sadistically obsessed with imposing their own will on others, and, in doing so, had no issues with using violence.

Yet, is that all to Hawthorne’s view of the Puritans? A more meticulous read of Hawthorne’s Puritan fiction suggests otherwise. A more nuanced attitude is revealed in Hawthorne’s depiction of William Hathorne in “The Custom-House”, who is said to have come to New England “with his Bible and his sword, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace” (1892a: 14). His character was typical of a Puritan in Hawthorne’s eyes, because he had “all the Puritanic traits, both good and evil” (ibid.).

The Puritan character, therefore, was more complex than it is popularly believed. After all, according to Hawthorne himself, the popular mind is apt to

forget their “better deeds, although these were many” (ibid.). In *Grandfather’s Chair* (1841: 20), Hawthorne even claims that they were “the best men and women of their day”, and that it was “a blessing and honour [...] for New England to have such settlers”. Their characteristic intolerance, along with the frequency of the persecutions they inflicted, does not suggest a state of moral failure worse than Hawthorne’s own time: “Let not the reader argue from any of these evidences of iniquity that the times of the Puritans were more vicious than our own” (Hawthorne 2009a: 223). The Puritans were morally flawed, but nonetheless a highly illustrious group who would easily stand out from their contemporaries. Why the resolute renouncement of his ancestral heritage, then?

In my view, what Hawthorne considers fundamentally problematic in his ancestors is less the fact that they were flawed than the powerful influence they wield on their progeny, primarily Hawthorne himself, who feared that he, as a writer, would be harshly judged by his demanding ancestors. He imagines their harshness in appraising him as follows: “A writer of story-books! What kind of business in life, – what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind is his day and generation, – may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow might as well have been a fiddler!” (1892a: 16).

Hawthorne is no doubt resistant to such judgment. In fact, underlying his entire Puritan fiction, from *The Scarlet Letter* to *The House of Seven Gables*, is the same message of resistance against their fanatic pursuit of moral perfection and their intolerance of those not on board with them in such a pursuit, be it their depraved contemporaries or their degenerate offspring. This is also noted by Alfred S. Reid (1966: 343), who, in his essay on the humanism reflected in “The Birthmark”, writes that “Hawthorne is less concerned with developing the philosophical idealism of Platonism than he is with sounding the tragic depth of human fallibility”.

Despite their constant moral failures, the Puritans were not unworthy of the reverence they enjoyed, but in Hawthorne’s eyes, they should not rule the lives of others by their own godly, religious principles and deprive them of their human agency. By advancing such an idea in his fiction, Hawthorne proves himself a humanist. To elaborate on his humanism, I now proceed to analyse two of his short stories – “Young Goodman Brown” and “The Minister’s Black Veil”. The analysis will be approached within a theoretical framework that covers all three aspects of Edward Quinn’s (2006: 201-202) definition of the word “humanism”: the emphasis on the value of the individual, the prioritisation of secular life, and the interest in the cultural heritage of ancient Greece and Rome.

The two short stories were originally published one year apart from each other, in 1835 and 1836, and were later collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1876) and *Twice Told Tales* (2009), respectively. In both stories, Hawthorne’s rejection of the Puritan rule by religious decree and his advocacy of humanism are conspicuous. In line with the Renaissance humanist tradition of invoking ancient Greece and Rome, I argue that the protagonists in these stories, Young Goodman Brown and Reverend Mr Hooper, are modelled after Prometheus, the titan in Greek mythology. Known for stealing fire in the service of humankind, and therefore being punished by Zeus, Prometheus, whose stories are recounted by Hesiod and Aeschylus, may aptly be called the original humanist. Similarly, the two of Hawthorne’s stories also contain a shared plot that sees the protagonist steal “the fire” (standing for human interests), which has previously been hidden from man by “Zeus” (standing for rule by godly principles), and receive punishment for such a deed.

There is no evidence suggesting Hawthorne's conscious use of Prometheus as the prototype for his Goodman Brown and Mr Hooper. It is only in his later writings that Hawthorne reveals his fascination with Prometheus. In the prose piece "Fire Worship", also collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse* (1876a), for example, Hawthorne vividly depicts the fire as "that brilliant guest, that quick and subtle spirit, whom Prometheus lured from heaven to civilise mankind and cheer them in their wintry desolation" (161). In "P.'s Correspondence", another piece of prose in the same collection (1876b), he shows himself to be well-versed in Percy Shelley's lyrical drama *Prometheus Unbound*, which, along with other "productions of his maturity", he considers "warmer with human love" (152).

Therefore, while it is impossible to ascertain that Hawthorne had Prometheus in mind when writing "Young Goodman Brown" and "The Minister's Black Veil", he would not consider the association of Prometheus and the fire with humanist ideas unfounded. In fact, the mythological nature of Prometheus' stories makes him an archetype, which is defined by Carl Gustav Jung (1971: 81) as "a figure – be it a daemon, a human being, or a process – that constantly recurs in the course of history and appears wherever creative fantasy is freely expressed" (). "Essentially, therefore, it is a mythological figure" (ibid.), Jung adds. As a writer of fiction and therefore a creative artist, Hawthorne did not need to have Prometheus in mind when creating his own renderings of Prometheus. Jung (1974: 86) also has a fascination with Prometheus, and contends that the mythological figure, whose name means "fore-thought", represents a social transition, since fore-thought denotes a severance of "all connection with the present in order to create [...] a distant future". The notion of a transition from a godly world to a human one, through the effort of a Prometheus, is the very idea I seek to elaborate in this article.

Depicting Hawthorne as a champion of humanism is not a new practice in Hawthorne studies. Existing studies, notably the aforementioned one by Alfred S. Reid, have explored this motif. However, this article uniquely makes Hawthorne interact with humanism in the multiple senses of the concept that are interlinked with one another. In doing so, it seeks to give a full account of Hawthorne's humanism. While Reid's study focuses on "The Birthmark", this article analyses two of his Puritan stories, which are more typical of Hawthorne's fictional corpus. Such a selection can presumably make my exposition of Hawthorne's humanism more compelling. The invocation of Jung's theory of archetypes in characterizing Hawthorne's protagonists as Prometheus not only helps with the understanding of the writer's humanism, but, given the recurrent nature of archetypes, lends perpetual relevance to Hawthorne's fiction by letting it transcend its Puritan and historical character and become reflective of the humanity's wide and constant struggles to assert itself.

2. The godly, yet dehumanising world

As mentioned above, Hawthorne's fictional Puritan world, despite its many moral failures, is not an unsalvageable one. What defines it is a predominant godly facade that shows no regard for what is characteristically human. The Puritan world's godly facade resulted from the Puritan immigrants' zealous goal to build a community based purely on Biblical principles in the New World. In Hawthorne's (1892a: 79) own words, his ancestors sought to build a "Utopia of human virtue and happiness". The godly facade did not only define the collective character of the

Puritan community, but also the individual character of its figures of authority. The companion of Goodman Brown in his nightly journey, as the spirit of his forefathers, had such a godly facade. He is depicted as belonging to “the governor’s dinner table or in King William’s court” (1876c: 89), because of his air of authority. Such an air could only be fortified through the staff, a symbol of authority, which he carried.

However, the staff was unusual, because of its resemblance to “a living serpent” (*ibid.*). The serpent, as a cunning animal, obviously complicates the moral composition of Goodman Brown’s forefathers. On the one hand, Goodman Brown professed that his family lineage was “a race of honest men and good Christians” (*idem*: 90). Yet, on the other hand, as revealed by his companion, they also “lashed the Quaker woman” and “set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip’s war” (*ibid.*). The complicated moral composition makes Goodman Brown’s forefathers resemble Zeus in Greek mythology, who was both the king of gods and an erratic perpetrator of injustice. The snake, while popularly known as the force of evil, also suggests the fuller human experience, or, according to Jung (2009: 247), “the earthly essence of man of which he is not conscious”. Therefore, the outward look of the spirit of Goodman Brown’s forefathers, comprehensively considered, betrays the concealment of humanity under a godly facade.

Hawthorne’s description of Goodman Brown’s wife can also attest to such a concealment. She was “aptly” called “Faith” (Hawthorne 1876c: 87), as though she was a singular, allegorical figure, instead of a full human. Her confession of being “afear’d [afraid] of herself” (*ibid.*) reflects an internalised denial of the full human experience. Her state of innocence, indicated by her “pink ribbons” and her likeness to a “blessed angel” (*idem*: 88), evokes that of Eve in the Garden of Eden before the Fall. Yet, her fear of herself recalls Adam and Eve’s realisation of their nakedness after eating the forbidden fruit, which prompted them to clothe themselves with fig leaves (Gn 3: 6-7 NIV). The Puritan world was, therefore, essentially a fallen, human world, disguised with a godly facade, but both Goodman Brown and Faith had been made ignorant of the fact. Therefore, the mission of the former, as Hawthorne’s Prometheus, was to help the human world ditch its godly facade and come to terms with its true state of existence.

In the other story, Mr Hooper was tasked with the same mission. Inexplicably to his parishioners, he put on a black veil over his face. According to Hawthorne (2009b: 22), this change took place when Hooper was “of about thirty”, evoking Jesus, who was also “about thirty years old” when beginning his ministry (Luke 3: 23), thus having a missionary nature. When Hooper prayed to God and read the Scriptures, the perplexity of the black veil to his parishioners was particularly heightened. Hawthorne (2009b: 23) hints that he could be hiding his face “from the dread Being whom he was addressing”. This is plausible because, supposedly having realised the human nature of his world, Mr Hooper believed that only a black veil, as a filter that could darken everything in sight, could help him see it for what it really was. All its outward look of divinity, epitomised by the Scriptures, the meeting house, the devout parishioners, and “the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes” (*idem*: 21), was but a suffocating constraint on the full human experience.

What was the outcome of the outwardly godly world that could not reconcile itself to its human essence? To Hawthorne, it was the fact that, blindly preoccupied with their worship of God and following godly principles, the humans could not form spontaneous communities. They were informed by their mutual empathy and

shared human experience, but were divided into the godly and the ungodly, in accordance with their external image, thus making what Hawthorne (1892a: 66) calls “the united effort of mankind” impossible. The godly was often justifiably entitled to oppress and harm the latter, hence the bloody oppression of the Quakers and the Indians suffered at the hands of Goodman Brown’s family lineage, who ironically was known as “a people of prayer” (Hawthorne 1876c: 91). Moreover, the Puritan world shows to be one where human authenticity was discouraged, if not forbidden. Therefore, Reverend Mr Hooper insisted that his black veil would no longer be necessary when “the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend, the lover to his best-beloved; [...and] man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin” (2009b: 33).

What made Goodman Brown and Minister Hooper the designated Prometheus, expected to bring people the knowledge of their earthly nature, was their intermediary existence. They each occupied a social position that allowed them to realise the falsity of the godly facade. Goodman Brown, like Hawthorne himself, came from a prominent family of Puritans. Mr Hooper was a priest. Therefore, both were involved in sustaining the godly facade of their communities.

However, Goodman Brown was also characterised by an aptitude for forethought, as denoted in the name Prometheus. This is revealed early in the story, when Goodman Brown struggled to decide whether to go on the nightly journey and leave his wife behind, before coming up with a future arrangement:

“Poor little Faith!” thought he, for his heart smote him. “What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; ‘t would kill her to think it. Well, she’s a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I’ll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven.” (1876c: 88)

Carl Jung (1974: 166) describes Prometheus as “a man introverted to his inner world, true to his ‘soul’”. My view is that it is through this introspective and inquisitive tendency that Goodman Brown was able to go on such a journey and explore a world hidden from the view of the ordinary man.

Hooper’s intermediary existence is more obvious. He was “a good preacher”, who “strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences” (Hawthorne 2009b: 23). By hiding his own face behind the black veil, he symbolically removed the godly facade of the community from the view of his parishioners. This impelled his parishioners to examine their own souls. The effect of the sermon that he preached, as a result, was enhanced, as if it was “the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor’s lips” (*ibid.*), making Mr Hooper “a very efficient clergyman” (*idem*: 31). However, this does not mean that the godly facade was thus dissolved. The people’s conscious attitude about Hooper’s message was that of resistance. Complaints of and even protests against his perplexing new look became commonplace, making the congregation “pale-faced” and “fearful” in his presence (*idem*: 23). Prometheus was in for a long battle against the godly power of Zeus.

3. The humanist fire

Underlying the prose piece “Fire Worship” is Hawthorne’s belief in the civilising power of the fire, which was true not only during the primordial stage of human evolution, but also in a perpetual sense. Therefore, he considers “the

fireside” the touchstone of a civilised man: “While a man was true to the fireside, so long would he be true to country and law, to the God whom his fathers worshipped, to the wife of his youth, and to all things else which instinct or religion has taught us to consider sacred” (Hawthorne 1876a: 163).

Truthfulness in the face of the human condition is also a central element in Hawthorne’s humanism. The main moral message of “Young Goodman Brown” is to accept the universal sinfulness of humanity, which is a presupposition of Hawthorne’s humanism: “Evil is the nature of mankind” (1876c: 103). It suggests the fallibility of all men and rejects such sanctity as accorded to Goodman Brown’s forefathers and “the church members of Salem village” (100), all of whom were present in the devil-worshipping assembly that Goodman Brown was led to. Their inauthentic existence was made known at the assembly: “Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my [the devil’s] worshipping assembly” (102).

However, the universal sinfulness of man was no reason for despair to Hawthorne. Unlike his Puritan forefathers, he was not a whole-hearted Calvinist believing in God’s sole sovereignty in the dispensation of Saving Grace, which would predestine some “to salvation, others to destruction (Calvin 2006: 921). Rather, he trusts man’s capacity for good. Thus, the last moment of Goodman Brown’s nightly journey saw him urging his wife, whom he unexpectedly met at the ceremony, to “look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one” (Hawthorne 1876c: 103). This call is akin to Prometheus’ charitable act of gifting man with fire, which the latter could use to free himself from subsisting passively on nature and proactively improve his conditions.

Such a call also constitutes a rewriting of Eve’s succumbing to the devil’s seduction in Genesis 3. Its aim, however, is not to retain the original innocence, which to Hawthorne was out of the question in a human world, but to be the authentic maker of one’s moral decisions. Perhaps to Hawthorne’s liking, it was such a call that took Goodman Brown away from both the assembly and the nightly journey into the “calm night and solitude”, with “the roar of the wind” dying “heavily away through the forest” (Hawthorne 1876c: 103-104). In his new life following such a night, the defining characteristic of his conduct was also resistance. We learned that he “shrank” from the local minister, “snatched away” a little girl from false catechism, and “turned away” from his wife (1876c: 104-105). He exemplified how a man who had benefited from the fire of authenticity resolutely rejects the false godly facade of his community.

The fire of humanism brought by Mr Hooper manifested itself in his enhanced emotionality, which ironically came through covering the face. The covering can be likened to the Puritans’ historical effort to abolish idolatrous practices in the English Church, including “liturgies and ceremonies from their churches”, and replace “images, inevitably seen as idols, with scripture and prayer” (Coale 1993: 81), both with the aim of purifying society. Through covering his face, Hooper, now a preacher of humanism, directed people’s reverential attention away from his saintly persona to his sermon and his conduct. We learn that the increased efficiency of his sermon was because it was infused with “the gentle gloom of Mr Hooper’s temperament” (Hawthorne 2009b: 23). “An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe” (ibid.). When Elizabeth, his fiancée, left him after a failed attempt to make him unveil his face, Hooper’s response shows how the veil had amplified his emotionality: “Oh, you know not how lonely I am, and

how frightened to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity for ever” (29).

No other emotions could so fully express Hooper’s inner world as his persistent smile. It was seen immediately after he put on the veil until his death, when he turned into “a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips” (34). Exposing only his mouth and chin to the outside world, he let his smile become his defining expression. It is “that same sad smile which always appeared like a faint glimmering” (29), an unmistakably human smile, blending sorrow and hope. Along with the rich emotions Hooper displayed, the smile also marks the defiance against the stern and rigid looks that were typical of Hawthorne’s Puritans.

Like his smile, Hooper’s love is deliberately described as a mixture of sadness and bliss. Despite his refusal to unveil his face to Elizabeth, she did not abandon him. Instead, her “calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish even at the dying-hour” (32). Elizabeth’s enduring affection for Hooper is also a manifestation of Hawthorne’s humanism. The female character is presented as both a spiritual follower and an emotional supporter of Hooper, in the same way that the Biblical Mary Magdalene “followed Jesus and financially supported him during his itinerant ministry of preaching and healing” (Ehrman 2008: 195).

Elizabeth is identified as a “nurse” when attending the dying Hooper (Hawthorne 2009b: 32), a profession that would enable the flourishing of the humanist vision that Hooper preached in his lifetime. Elizabeth once again is reminiscent of Mary Magdalene, who witnessed both the crucifixion of Jesus (John 19: 25) and his resurrection (John 20: 1). While Hooper could not see his humanist teaching widely accepted while alive, he prophesied the continuation of his cause, which is why he called the veil a “type” (Hawthorne 2009b: 28), meaning “a person or thing (as in the Old Testament) believed to foreshadow another (as in the New Testament)” (“Type” 2022).

4. The continued struggle amid punishment

Despite accounts of resolute action and of hope of success that mark the last episodes of the two stories, they do not have unambiguously happy endings. They are rather defined by a poignant sense of continuous suffering. After his nightly journey, Young Goodman Brown became a “stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man” (Hawthorne 1876c: 104-105). With his consistently introverted self, his suffering was distinctively internal. As a messenger of humanism, he refused to join his family in talking to God through prayers (105). In essence, his inner suffering – characterised by an unspeakable boundness – is not so different from that of Prometheus, who was chained by Zeus on Mount Caucasus for stealing the fire: “With painful fetters he bound shifty-planning Prometheus, with distressful bonds, driving them through the middle of a pillar; and he set upon him a long-winged eagle which ate his immortal liver” (Hesiod 2006: 45).

Hawthorne himself is also cognizant of the eagle as a metaphor of divine punishment on humanity. In “The Custom-House”, the American eagle is depicted as a dehumanising menace:

With the customary infirmity of temper that characterises this unhappy fowl, she appears, by the fierceness of her beak and eye and the general truculency of her

attitude, to threaten mischief to the inoffensive community; and especially to warn all citizens, careful of their safety, against intruding on the premises which she overshadows with her wings. (Hawthorne 1892a: 5-6)

The liver that Zeus' eagle devoured is not a random organ, but a metaphor for human conscience itself. It is also the mark of the human defiance against the rule of the gods. Despite the recurring setbacks, man's defiance against the gods continues, just as the liver of Prometheus "grew again on all sides at night just as much as the long-winged bird would eat during the whole day" (Hesiod: 2006: 45).

The notion of regeneration also marks Goodman Brown's late life. Despite his continuous suffering, his struggle could not be annihilated. According to Hawthorne (1876c: 105), not only did Goodman Brown himself put on a long struggle, he also gained many followers, including a large posterity, who embodied his 'regeneration': "And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbours not a few".

Like Goodman Brown, Mr Hooper also "spent a long life" (Hawthorne 2009b: 31). His struggle to free the community of its godly facade was also a lonesome one, evoking the bound state of Prometheus. His messages of emotionality would constantly fall on deaf ears, just as he himself was often denied love: "kind and loving, though unloved and dimly feared; a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy" (2009b: 31). Yet, when bad things happened to his parishioners, as they would do in a human world, he would be "ever summoned to their aid" (ibid.). In his final moment, he put on a final battle against the false godliness by rejecting the request of Reverend Mr Clark, "a young and zealous divine" who threatened to undo Hooper's effort, by asking him to take off his black veil (32-33). This incident highlights the perpetual nature of the humanist cause.

Resolutely rejecting such a request in his last moment, Mr Hooper wore his black veil into his tomb: "Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial-stone is moss-grown, and good Mr Hooper's face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the black veil" (2009b: 34). Gloomy as it sounds, such a scenario is not hopeless. While the black veil did not immediately usher in a new epoch, its continued existence wielded an enduring persuasive power, making it similar to Hester Prynne's scarlet letter, which she opted to wear permanently in her later life: "the scarlet letter ceased to be a stigma which attracted the world's scorn and bitterness, and became a type of something to be sorrowed over, and looked upon with awe, yet with reverence too" (Hawthorne 1892: 466). Thus, Hawthorne's humanism precludes utopianism, whereby virtue could be universally practised and happiness could be attained once and for all.

5. Conclusion

The article discusses Hawthorne's humanism embedded in his two short stories, *Young Goodman Brown* and *The Minister's Black Veil*, by drawing a comparison between their plots and the archetypal story of Prometheus. Each of Hawthorne's protagonists in these stories essentially enacted a heroic, continuous struggle against the Puritan morals, which demanded a moral perfection that was not only impossible, but also uncondusive to the formation of a good community.

However, as evidenced in Hawthorne's critique of the American eagle in the autobiographical account of "The Custom-House", Hawthorne's humanism is not simply anti-Puritan, but an ethic that opposes all lofty social principles and values that do not give due consideration to human reality or put the human being's interests and needs first. Therefore, the humanist cause, as suggested in Prometheus' archetypal story and in Hawthorne's short stories, is a never-ending battle.

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“THE PRAIRIE-GRASS DIVIDING” AND “LOCATIONS AND TIMES”: WHITMAN’S OLFACTION-CENTERED THINKING IN HIS POETICS AND EPISTEMOLOGY

KIYOTAKA SUEYOSHI

University of Szeged

***Abstract:** Although various critics have noted Whitman’s interest in the five senses in his poetry, the role olfaction plays has not been fully explored. I examine “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and “Locations and Times” – the only two poems which explicitly bear the term “correspond”, and the term “odor.” Throughout the investigation, this essay aims to show that olfaction is at the center of Whitman’s poetics – which consists of a dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme – and of his epistemology – based on the olfaction-mediated correspondence between the material and the spiritual.*

***Keywords:** poetics, epistemology, correspondence, dilation, respiration, olfaction*

1. Introduction

This essay investigates Whitman’s thinking – his poetics and epistemology – through the study of two poems, “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and “Locations and Times”, the only poems in the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which explicitly bear the terms “correspond”, and “odor”. While it has been noted that, in Whitman’s poems, the five senses play an “important role in comprehending or achieving the spiritual” (Miller 1957: 77), this essay specifically focuses on the roles olfaction plays in his poetics and epistemology. I argue that Whitman’s poetics consists of a dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme, which I illustrate in the second and third section, and that his epistemology centers around the term “correspondence”, an overarching term that also bears various implications in his poetics, which I illustrate in the fourth section. Thus, I aim to reveal Whitman’s olfaction-centered thinking.

2. Whitman’s poetics: dilation, respiration, olfaction

Let us start with Richard A. Law’s essay “The respiration motif in *Song of Myself*”. Law (1964: 92) maintains that the respiration motif plays the key role in Whitman’s “twofold lifework of personally assimilating and diffusing all existence”. He states:

To articulate the ‘mystical interpenetration of the Self with all life and experience,’ Whitman represents the human organism in its continuous physiological and psychological processes constantly stimulated by and responding to its environment.

It is appropriate that the first image pattern in ‘Song of Myself’ is that of respiration, because among the life processes of an organism respiration is primary. [...] Respiration intimately unites the organism and its environment in their continuous exchange of gases. In the human being the critical center of exchange is the lungs, [...] These principles of respiration underlie the imagery in sections 1 and 2 of ‘Song of Myself’ and are image referents in other sections of the poem. (idem: 92-93)

Law considers that there are two types of respiration motifs. One, which is explicated in the above quote, is the interpenetration between Whitman and his surroundings, where lungs serve as a critical center in the connection process. Apart from this, Law also calls attention to another type of respiration motif. He remarks the line “I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up” as one of the examples of “the poet’s mystical service [...] of nourishing or sustaining mankind with all that he ultimately absorbs” (idem: 93)

I would like to add that Law deals solely with “Song of Myself”, and in my essay, I aim to expand the respiration framework to make it applicable to other poems as well. First, I intend to make a distinction within the respiration motif between the interpenetration within an individual consciousness – Law’s first type – and the communal intersubjectivity – Law’s second type. For instance, Whitman’s (1855a: 18) phrase:

My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and air through my lungs

is about the interpenetration within an individual consciousness, whereas

I dilate you with tremendous breath I buoy you up (47)

is about communal intersubjectivity. The direct object “you” shows that there is an interrelation between Whitman and “you” and that they both have their own subjectivity. (In a broader sense, Whitman seeks to attain communal intersubjectivity through his poetry. From my point of view, communal intersubjectivity has a narrower sense in this line, which is in contrast with the interpenetration within an individual consciousness.)

In this respect, Matt Miller’s study on Whitman’s concept of “dilation” is - another helpful instrument. Miller (2010: 131) defines dilation as “reference for spiritual expansiveness” as well as “a concept crucial to his [Whitman’s] spirituality, in both spiritual and physiological terms.” Law’s wording of “personally assimilating and diffusing all existence” (Law 1964: 92) signifies the same thing as Miller’s wording of “spiritual expansiveness” (Miller 2010: 131).

In his reasoning, Miller makes a distinction between the poet’s personal dilation – the interpenetration within an individual consciousness – and interpersonal dilation – the communal intersubjectivity:

“Song of Myself” begins with the assumption that the speaker has already experienced the kind of complete inclusion and becoming that the soul requires, and the work the poem would achieve is to help its audience become and include that which it names (or, put another way, to “assume” what the poet “assumes”, beginning with the poet himself). (Miller 2010: 143)

Dilation signifies “the kind of complete inclusion and becoming that the soul requires”. Miller differentiates the poet’s personal dilation from the interpersonal dilation between the poet and his readers. Together with the phrase “I dilate you with tremendous breath I buoy you up”, he (idem: 131, 147) quotes from the Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, published in 1855:

The greatest poet hardly knows pettiness or triviality. If he breathes into any thing that was before thought small it dilates with the grandeur and life of the universe. (Whitman 1855a: 7)

In these quotes, Miller illustrates the centrality of the concept of dilation in Whitman’s poetics. He points out the key role which breath plays in the context of physiological and spiritual dilation, yet does not touch on breath per se. From my standpoint, both Miller and Law explore the similar notion of personal and interpersonal spiritual expansion in Whitman’s poetics on different levels: Miller explores the level of concept, whereas Law explores the level of physiology. I would also like to argue that both Miller and Law miss another dimension: the level of sense. Olfaction is the sense most closely related to respiration. In his self-review, Whitman (1855b: 8-9) notes that “he makes audacious and native use of his own body and soul. He must re-create poetry with the elements always at hand”. Sensuous experiences are “the elements always at hand”, and Whitman’s frequent employment of corporeal metaphors indicates that the experience of dilation is universal, not limited to some chosen people. This is the key tenet of Whitman’s poetics, and thus the inclusion of the level of sense – olfaction – in the appreciation of the levels of concept and physiology is indispensable. Strengthening my position is Whitman’s own inclination related to the five senses: Whitman is said to have had a keen sense of smell (Bailey 1926: 211). Whitman (1882: 159) states:

there is a scent to everything, even the snow, if you can only detect it – no two places, hardly any two hours, anywhere, exactly alike. How different the odor of noon from midnight, or winter from summer, or a windy spell from a still one.

Whitman’s sensitivity to smell is such that olfaction can be said to be an integral part of “the elements always at hand”. The mediation of these three levels – concept (dilation), physiology (respiration), and sense (olfaction) – shows the interplay of similar ideas at different levels; for instance, “interpenetration” corresponds to “personal dilation,” and “communal subjectivity” to “interpersonal dilation”.

Moreover, olfaction is the sense of temporal and perceptual liminality and inter-subjectivity, these characteristics being crucial to the concept of both personal and interpersonal dilation. As regards olfaction’s temporal and perceptual liminality, Alfred Gell (1977: 28), in “Magic, Perfume, Dream”, notes that:

The smell of something cooking or the tang of an aperitif mark a transition from concept, expectation, to fact – a notional meal to the actual one – and conversely the standard and familiar postprandial aromatics, nuts, cheeses, coffee and cigars set a seal of finality on the dematerialisation of a meal, now only an insubstantial trace. A mere aroma, in its very lack of substance is more like a concept than it is like a “thing” in the usual sense, and it is really quite appropriate that the olfactory sense should play its greatest role at junctures when it is precisely this attribute of a meal (meal-concept or meal-fact) which is in the balance.

David Howes (1991: 131-132), in “Olfaction and Transition,” agrees that:

As Gell’s analysis suggests, the sense of smell is the liminal sense par excellence, constitutive of and at the same time operative across all of the boundaries we draw between different realms and categories of experience.

Indeed, olfaction’s liminality can be said to be the pillar of the concept of personal dilation or interpenetration. Among the five senses, the sense of smell is the best to portray expansive spirituality. In respect to interpersonal dilation or inter-subjectivity, olfaction has played a vital role in human history, especially, in mystical service. Howes (idem: 133-134) asserts that:

it will be recalled that de Montaigne saw the purpose behind the use of incense and perfume in churches as being to ‘fit us for contemplation,’ presumably of God. [...] the burning of incense creates an ‘intersubjective we-feeling’ among the participants in a rite as each is forced to introject particles of the odour. One cannot not participate in the effervescence (or fellow-feeling) of the situation, because it participates in you. What is more, the use of incense ‘provides for the senses a symbolic representation of the invisible action (communion) that is taking place’...

Incense and perfume in churches are indispensable in the creation of the “intersubjective we-feeling”. Likewise, in the poetics of Whitman, the sense of smell is the mainstay to actualize communal intersubjectivity or interpersonal dilation. For instance, this feature of olfaction is the undertone in the phrase “The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing”, which signifies interpersonal dilation (as well as personal dilation). Through “the elements always at hand”, Whitman (1855b) seeks to create intersubjective we-feeling different from that experienced in church. Whitman (1855a: 15) notes that “there will soon be no more priests. Their work is done”; instead, “a new order shall arise and they shall be the priests of man, and every man shall be his own priest”. It is through the employment of commonplace olfactory metaphors that Whitman demonstrates the universality of the experience of personal and interpersonal dilation.

As Miller suggests, personal dilation and interpersonal dilation go hand in hand. Both in “Song of Myself” and “The Prairie-Grass Dividing”, Whitman first experiences his own dilation and then brings about interpersonal dilation. The difference is that “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” bears “the Prairie’s special odor”, which is more specific and more suggestive of the concept of dilation rather than the symbolic “open air” in “Song of Myself”. The next section analyses the poem “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” in detail.

3. “The Prairie-Grass Dividing”: “Song of Myself” transplanted on the West

In “The Prairie-Grass Dividing”, communal intersubjectivity or interpersonal dilation is at the forefront. The fact that Whitman uses the verb “demand” in it three times shows that the focal point is not within Whitman’s own subjectivity. The theme of the poem is the attainment of an interpersonal dilation or intersubjectivity between Whitman and “Those of inland America” through the rite of “breathing the prairie-grass’s special odor”. Whitman (1882-83: 283) later states that the American character “shall be revitalized by [...] the strong air of prairie”. (The term “revitalize” suggests that the American character’s vitality had been lost in the meantime. Of the three versions of the poem – 1860 manuscript (1955: 106), 1860 the first published version (1860-61: 368), and 1867, the final version (1980: 23) –, I have chosen the last one:

The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing,
 I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,
 Demand the most copious and close companionship of men,
 Demand the blades to rise of words, acts, beings,
 Those of the open atmosphere, coarse, sunlit, fresh, nutritious,
 Those that go their own gait, erect, stepping with freedom and
 command, leading not following,
 Those with a never-quell'd audacity, those with sweet and lusty
 flesh clear of taint,
 Those that look carelessly in the faces of Presidents and governors,
 as to say Who are you?
 Those of earth-born passion, simple, never constrain'd, never
 obedient,
 Those of inland America.

The first line poses a question: “what does “The prairie-grass” divide?” Although the overall tone of the poem suggests that the term “divide” signifies “expansion” – *dividing* and multiplying –, I argue that the comparison of the three different versions of the poem reveals something different. Indeed, there are three stages in the development of the poem, namely, (1) the manuscript lacks the first line; (2) the first published version has the first line, but the phrasing is a little different – the term “own” is used instead of “special”; and (3) the final version has the term “special” in the first line. A closer look provides us with the key to the meaning of “dividing”.

Firstly, Fredson Bowers’ manuscript of “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” in *Whitman’s Manuscripts: Leaves of Grass (1860)* shows that there are two crucial differences between the final form of the poem and the manuscript. The first difference concerns the title of the poem; the title of the manuscript is *Prairie-Grass* – without the term “dividing”. The other is that the manuscript starts with the second line of the final version of the poem; the manuscript starts with the phrase “I demand the spiritual / that corresponds with it” (1955: 106). This comparison between the final form and the manuscript goes a long way toward the understanding of the role the line “The prairie-grass dividing, *its special odor breathing*” plays. Whereas Whitman refers specifically to *Prairie-Grass* area in the manuscript, in the final form, he makes a distinction between the *Prairie-Grass* area and other areas. This is the answer to what “The Prairie-Grass” does divide.

Secondly, the comparison between the first version (1860) and the final version corroborates this line of thought. There are two differences, and the first is in the title. The poem is in the Calamus cluster, in *Leaves of Grass 1860*, so it is titled “Calamus 25.” The other difference regards wording and is more significant. Although Whitman added the first line, the phrasing is slightly different from that of the final version: “The prairie-grass dividing, its *own* odor breathing” (1860-61: 368).” The difference between the terms “own” and “special” gives us a clue. I argue that these two wordings relate to the distinction Whitman seeks to make between the *Prairie-Grass* area and other areas I have mentioned. While the term “own” suggests that the emphasis is on the Prairie itself, “special” emphasizes the comparison between the Prairie and other areas. In other words, the term “special” creates a binary pair between “own” and what is distinctive, different. Furthermore, it is noticeable that in the three-stage development of the poem, Whitman came to make the distinction between the “special” Prairie area and other areas.

To conclude, Whitman added the term “dividing” so that he could highlight the Prairie’s specialness, which consists of its odor. In this distinction, the touchstone is whether such “special odor” exists or not. The double roles of the olfactory metaphor – the symbol of something essential and the basis of a comparison – are not limited to this poem, but can also be seen in other poems. For instance, in section 2 of “Song of Myself”, Whitman (1855a: 18) writes:

Houses and rooms are full of perfumes ... the shelves are crowded with perfumes,
I breathe the fragrance myself, and know it and like it,
The distillation would intoxicate me also, but I shall not let it.

Here, Whitman prefers fragrance to perfumes, since perfumes signify the Old World, and fragrance – Whitman’s own odour, inherent to him – the New World (Kiyotaka 2022: 95-96). The same logic runs in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and section 2 of “Song of Myself”.

“The Prairie-Grass Dividing” was first published in *Leaves of Grass* in 1860, when Whitman came to be more of a poet of the West than of all the U.S regions. Henry Nash Smith (1950: 44-45), in “Walt Whitman and Manifest Destiny”, holds that during the period between 1856 and 1860, the subject matter of *Leaves of Grass* moved from the overall U.S. to the West. He (ibid.) states that:

Whitman originally set out to sing the whole continent, East and West, North and South; [...] But the Atlantic seaboard after all represented the past, the shadow of Europe, cities, sophistication, a derivative and conventional life and literature. Beyond, occupying the overwhelming geographical mass of the continent, lay the West, a realm where nature loomed larger than civilization and where feudalism had never been established. There, evidently, would grow up the truly American society of the future. By 1860 Whitman had become aware that his original assumptions logically implied the Western orientation inherent in the cult of manifest destiny.

Whitman’s gradual attraction to the West is also detailed by Folsom’s “Walt Whitman’s Prairie Paradise”. Whitman became a cult of the Prairie. Folsom (1999: 47-48) points out that Whitman went so far as to say that his Western experiences are the core to all his life work.

Thus, it is appropriate to suppose that there is an incentive for Whitman to bring the key motif in the original “Song of Myself” (1855a) – the concept of dilation or the respiration motif – onto the West he was newly attracted to. As I have mentioned, Whitman gradually came to make an increasing distinction between the Prairie area and other areas. In line with this, he (1980: 230) wrote another short poem titled “Others may praise what they like”, which contains both the respiration motif and the West.

Others may praise what they like;
But I, from the banks of the running Missouri, praise nothing in art or aught else,
Till it has well inhaled the atmosphere of this river, also the western prairie-scent,
And exudes it all again.

Although the subject matter of the poem is limited to “art or aught else”, this upfront of respiration motif in this poem as well as in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” is that of “Song of Myself” in redux. Of course, art here signifies more than merely an art form, it is seen as an ideal American manifestation of the future; art here is a

future or an ideal of America. For Whitman (1882-83: 142), the American Prairie is “the home both of what I would call America’s distinctive ideas and distinctive realities”, and art needs to reflect those. The respiration of “the atmosphere of this river, also the western prairie-scent” (ibid.) becomes the flesh and blood of art.

Interestingly, insisting on the respiration motif in “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and “Others May Praise What They Like”, Whitman is in line with the conventional wisdom of the time. There are two points to consider. The first is the difficulty in grasping the Prairie visually (Kinsey, Roberts and Sayre 1999: 62-63), and the flip side of it – the Prairie as the symbol of Great Leveler (idem: 63), and the other is the association of the Prairie with the lung of the continent (idem: 28). As far as the first point is concerned – the difficulty in visual perception – Kinsey, Roberts and Sayre (1999: 62-63) state that:

Prairies had long been considered both artistically and physically barren by Euro-American travelers and artists – the prairies were difficult to “read” using conventional understandings of the uses and artistic values of landscapes. Because of the seeming absence of prospects or viewpoints provided by mountains, forests, houses, and cultivated fields, the prairie could seem like a sea made of grasses; with no points of reference and no signs of agricultural promise, one could easily get lost.

In spite of the image of a panoramic view of the Prairie – enabled nowadays by our spatial perception with the help of technology –, in the nineteenth century, people were at pains to perceive it visually. Nevertheless, the artistic difficulty in visualizing the Prairie has a silver lining. The limitless expansion of the flat surface was the “Great Leveler”. Jane E. Simonsen (1999: 63) suggests that:

The prairie’s level plane became the “Great Leveler,” a region where American citizens would stand on equal footing with one another, united in their purpose and struggle to create fertile farmland out of the ocean of prairie grass. Natural features reinforced this democratic vision: grand vistas of sky and grassland and gently rolling hills symbolized grand purpose. The prairie’s prospect was a level one in which national democratic goals were echoed and legitimated by the very landscape on which those dreams were built.

The expansive levelness of the Prairie evokes an image of egalitarianism and democracy, which Whitman (1855a) sings in the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* 5. This feature of the Prairie is enough to encourage the poet to overcome the difficulty in the visual portrayal of the Prairie and seek an alternative modality – olfaction – so that he can poetize the Prairie.

The second point – more important and direct in the explanation of Whitman’s use of respiration motif in describing the Prairie – is that the prairie was viewed as the lung of the continent. Kinsey, Roberts and Sayre (1999: 28) point out that:

“The prairies of the West are the lungs of the continent, and upon reaching them men take a long breath, which makes them more largely human than they ever were before.” Prairie-as-lung saves the writer from describing prairie-as-prairie, while also promoting the connection between prairie and person. Prairie-as-lung becomes enlarged human lung; enlarged lung becomes expanded, “more largely human” person; and person embodies prairie.

The phrase “take a long breath, which makes them more largely human than they ever were before” rings a bell; this is the process of dilation I mentioned in the

second section. In “The Prairie-Grass Dividing”, Whitman’s phrase “I dilate you with tremendous breath, I buoy you up” in “Song of Myself” (1855a) is united with the distinct air of the Prairie. The “tremendous breath” of the Prairie, not Whitman, “dilates you” and “buoys you up” to renewed vigour. The Prairie air is native to the U.S.; it is a soul, an emanation from the soil (Folsom 1999: 50).

In the next section, I investigate “Locations and Times”. In the metaphysical poem “Locations and Times”, Whitman seeks to do his soul-searching without the special odour of the Prairie which helps Whitman to dilate personally and interpersonally. Still, in “Locations and Times”, Whitman appeals to olfaction by adding “odors” to the property of a thing; he seeks to go beyond *locations and times*.

4. Whitman’s epistemology in “Locations and Times”

As Lawrence Buell (1974: 52, 149) points out, American Transcendentalists valued the notion of correspondence; he (1974: 149) states that “The basis of Transcendentalist thinking as to the role of nature in art is the idea of a metaphysical correspondence between nature and spirit, as expressed chiefly by Emerson”. Emerson (1939: 435) declares:

(I am a poet) in the sense of a perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those.

It is easy to see the influence of the Transcendentalist notion of correspondence on Whitman (1980: 41), which is represented, for example, by the line “I will make the poems of materials, for I think they are to be the most spiritual poems” in “Starting from Paumanok.” Yet, oddly enough, *Leaves of Grass* has only three poems which explicitly contain the term “correspond” (including its variants); the first is “The Prairie-Grass Dividing”, the next “Locations and Times”, and the last one “By Blue Ontario’s Shore” (1980: 123, 230, 275). Given that “By Blue Ontario’s Shore” is the preface to the 1855 *Leaves of Grass* turned into a poem (Gruesz 1998: 91), there are only two poems where the term “correspond” appears, which were written as poetry from the beginning.

Even more interestingly, both “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” and “Locations and Times” have olfactory metaphors; “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” – “The prairie-grass dividing, its special odor breathing, I demand of it the spiritual corresponding,” and “Locations and Times” – “Forms, colors, densities, odors – what is it in me that corresponds with them?” (1980: 230). This singularity may be just a coincidence, but I argue that it warrants a closer examination; it seems likely that these two poems are quintessential in representing the two strands of Whitman’s poetics. “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” embodies interpersonal dilation or communal intersubjectivity, and “Locations and Times”, personal dilation or the individual interpenetration. “Locations and Times” is a short poem, so insignificant that the *Walt Whitman: An Encyclopedia* (1998) omits mentioning it.

Locations and times – what is it in me that meets them all,
whenever and wherever, and makes me at home?
Forms, colors, densities, odors – what is it in me that corresponds with them?
(Whitman 1980: 230)

I argue that the usage of the term “odors” in the poem reveals much of Whitman’s epistemology; its seeming extraneity to the subject matter – odour is not a good indicator of space and time; it is hard to pinpoint these aspects of an odorant (Batty 2010: 531, 533) – suggests that Whitman seeks to grasp more than purely materialistic “Locations and Times”, and that odour plays a special role in his doing so. Examining Whitman’s epistemology helps. Marion Harris (1963: 85) states that in Whitman’s epistemology, there are two levels of experiences which lead to understanding: sensory experience – leading to “the physical conscience” (Whitman 1871: 64) – and affective experience – “the moral and spiritual conscience”, which is the final goal of Whitman’s epistemology. In the process, there is a correspondence between the two experiences: the sensory experience leads to the affective one (Harris 1963: 85). Harris (1963: 85-86) refers to the importance of the five senses in Whitman’s poems, but he does not specify which sense plays a particular role.

In order to better investigate the poem, it is worthwhile to draw a comparison between “Locations and Times” and another poem titled “Of the Terrible Doubt of Appearance”, which was written in the same period (between 1856 and 1860) and contains the phrase “colors, densities, forms may-be these are (as doubtless they are) only apparitions, and the real something has yet to be known” (Whitman 1980: 117). It is noticeable that between the two poems, there is a slight difference in the enumeration of the properties of a thing. Whereas “colors, densities, forms” are picked up in “Of the terrible doubt of Appearance” – the result being that “the real something has yet to be known”, in “Locations and Times”, “Forms, colors, densities, odors” are chosen so that Whitman can contemplate “what is it in me that corresponds with them?” The comparison of the two poems reveals that Whitman demands more than “temporal appearance”, and that the insertion of the term “odors” in “Locations and Times” provides the poem with a spiritual correspondence, which is spaceless and timeless; Whitman writes here that “what is it in me that meets them all, / *whenever* and *wherever*, and makes me at home?” (emphasis mine). The usage of “odors” in “Locations and Times” illustrates the role odor plays in the shift from sensory experience to affective one. The sense of smell – a sense of emotion rather than cognition (Engen 1982: 3) – serves as a bridge between the two types of experiences. This interpretation is borne out by the general notion that the term “odors” in “Locations and Times” – by its nature, as I have mentioned – is not suitable as the supplement for “Forms, colors, densities”. In other words, the use of odor here is meant solely to express the elevation from sensory experience to affective one; it is a process of sublimation of a lower consciousness to a higher one. It is through olfaction that the correspondence between sensory experience and Whitman’s innermost mind is reached.

In this case, revisiting the dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme is revealing. The elevation from the sensory experience to the affective one is similar to the concept of dilation – spiritual expansiveness – or interpenetration within an individual consciousness. It is interesting to see that olfaction plays various roles by serving as a hub in Whitman’s thinking. The use of “odor” in “Locations and Times” is also explained by the olfaction’s characteristic temporal and perceptual liminality in the context of dilation. The comparison of the poem with “The Prairie-Grass Dividing” also helps. On the one hand, the prairie grass itself provides an odorant – its special smell –, which enables personal and interpersonal dilation. On the other hand, in “Times and Locations”, without any specific odorant given, seeking after personal dilation or interpenetration necessitates an (artificial) appeal to odour.

5. Conclusion

In this essay, I have investigated Whitman's poems: "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" – one of his canonical works – and "Locations and Times" – a minor one. "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" and "Locations and Times" are the only two poems in the deathbed edition of *Leaves of Grass*, which explicitly contain the term "correspond", and which also happen to contain the term "odor".

Through the investigation of the two poems, I showed Whitman's olfaction-centered thinking in his poetics and epistemology. "The Prairie-Grass Dividing" concerns communal intersubjectivity or interpersonal dilation, representing the poetics of dilation-respiration-olfaction scheme. "Locations and Times" focuses on individual interpenetration or personal dilation, illustrating Whitman's epistemology. What connects the two poems is the key overarching terms "correspond" and "odor." Serving as a hub, olfaction plays the central role in Whitman's thinking.

I have also shown that the respiration motif runs from "Song of Myself" to "The Prairie-Grass Dividing", while "the open air" in "Song of Myself" takes the more specific form of "air of Prairie" in "The Prairie-Grass Dividing". In the analysis of "Locations and Times", I have illustrated the special role odour plays in the sublimation of a lower consciousness to a higher one. It is through olfaction that the correspondence between sensory experience and Whitman's innermost mind is reached.

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**FOREGROUNDING POVERTY THROUGH THE
HETERODIEGETIC NARRATOR
IN O. HENRY'S *THE GIFT OF THE MAGI***

MERVE PEKOZ, H. SEZGI SARAC DURGUN, ARDA ARIKAN

Ordu University

Akdeniz University

Akdeniz University

***Abstract:** This article analyses the contribution and effect of the heterodiegetic narrative style employed by O. Henry, as exemplified in his famous short story titled The Gift of the Magi. In it, while the significant conceptual conflict is created by juxtaposing poverty and generosity, the stylistic analysis highlights the importance of the devices used in the short story, such as capitalisation, situational irony, and repetition. It is concluded that the stylistic devices employed by O. Henry foreground the willingness and commitment of the impoverished family to maintain the tradition of exchanging gifts during Christmas.*

***Keywords:** heterodiegetic narrator, short story, situational irony, stylistics*

1. Introduction

Traditionally, style was seen as a tool for convincing readers rather than a separate textual component used to examine a text (Burke 2014). Hence, it has been considered that style indicates how language is utilised “in a given context, by a given person, for a given reason, and so on” (Leech and Short 1981: 9). Apart from the discussion of style in general terms, the history of literary criticism shows that literary stylistics is “a form of structuralism that interprets a text on the basis of its style, that is diction, figurative language, syntax, vocabulary, sentence structure, and others” (Bressler 2007: 363). Literary stylistics has become an approach to literary texts in which meaning-making is investigated through a linguistic theoretical framework that prioritises understanding how meaning is constructed using the authors’ employment of specific literary and stylistic devices. According to Wales (1990: 400), stylistics aims to study the formal aspects of the text “to show their functional significance for the interpretation of the text; or in order to relate literary effects or themes to linguistic ‘triggers’ where these are felt to be relevant.”

A variety of approaches and methodologies have been employed in literary stylistics. Similar to the view that indicates “both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm” (Guba and Lincoln 1988: 195), literary stylisticians have employed both statistical and verbal analytical techniques to achieve their research-based aims. Unlike mathematical problems, such as equations, literary texts are almost always exclusive of numbers and formulae, but that does not mean that the textual elements cannot be studied in numerical terms. Just as quantitative methods gather numerical data to make

comparisons or to describe the data, they can be employed in the analysis of verbal texts to show the text's particularities in numerical terms. However, qualitative methods "require additional interpretive work from the researcher" (Gibbons and Whiteley 2018: 285). It must be, therefore, accepted a priori that all textual analyses, including literary stylistics, are qualitative endeavours by default. Accordingly, one or both of these methods might be employed for an in-depth analysis of a literary text, although literary stylisticians have tended to describe their textual data quantitatively, while interpreting the overall properties of the text studied qualitatively. Thus, literary stylistics has offered new possibilities to researchers, who can experiment with texts by assigning various meanings to their linguistic properties.

Stylistics is in close contact with different fields of inquiry, including narratology, "the science of narrative" whose "overriding concern is the narrative structure of the text" (Bressler 2007: 113). At the same time, narratologists have paid close attention to interrogating "how a story's meaning develops from its overall structure, its language, rather than from each individual story's isolated theme" (ibid.); they have been especially interested in the narrative voice, including the point of view, which speculates "who is accountable for narrating the content to the reader" (Diasamidze 2014: 160). Hence, narratologists and linguists have tried to understand the textual mechanism of particular texts in which linguistic properties are used to identify "the 'speaking' narrator or the 'perceiving' characters" (Zeman 2020: 6-7).

The narrator's identity has been a significant concern in many theoretical schools. Thus, various approaches have tried to highlight the relationship between the narrator and the whole text. For instance, Walsh (1997: 2) focuses on the distinction between the hierarchical structures of heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrators as set by Genette and concludes that a difference must be made "between first and third-person narrators", which points to their "exact contrast between involvement and noninvolvement in the story." Although different types of narrators have been discussed in the related literature, the heterodiegetic narrator is the focus of this present article. However, such a narrator is not one of the characters in the text. As the "prefix 'hetero-' alludes to the 'different nature' of the narrator's world as compared to the world of the action" (Jahn 2021: 30), studying the presence of the narrator who does not appear in action is believed to reveal the relationship between the components of the text that is stripped from a narrator whose voice cannot affect the action that governs the text as a whole. Hence, while examining the narrative voice articulates the nature of the perspective withheld by the one who narrates the story, unearthing the features of the non-involved narrator is believed to reveal how the text is structured by a persona who does not appear in the narrative at all.

To understand the narrative voice in a text, a closer look at the opinions generated by the Russian formalists is beneficial. Such critics argue that the purpose of art and literature is to defamiliarize, that is, to make the familiar look or sound original and anew. To do that, the author makes it stand out from the norm so that it becomes foregrounded. Several pertinent issues emerge from such a perspective. In his "Art as Technique," Shklovsky (2017) exemplifies various defamiliarisations used in literary texts, by hypothesising their impact on the reader. Among them, foregrounding devices are of utmost importance, because authors benefit from them to draw the readers' attention to a text's particularities.

The notion of foregrounding stems from the Prague structuralists, such as Havránek and Mukařovský, for whom the goal of foregrounding was the use of language “against the ‘background’ of ‘standard’ usage” (Scott 2014: 430). Therefore, foregrounding “comes in two main guises: foregrounding as deviation from a norm and foregrounding as more of the same” (Simpson 2004: 50). According to McIntyre (2003: 2), “the important point here is that anything that is foregrounded is highly interpretable and arguably more memorable.” From the perspective of literary stylistics, foregrounding receives utmost importance in text design, and stylistic tools enable the selected features to stand out. It is highlighted that “foregrounded elements are systematically related to each other, their impact will be powerful enough to seriously constrain the number and kinds of interpretations” (Van Peer 1986: 15). Because literary language is different from daily language, “unlike everyday conversation or language, literary language shouts” (Bressler 2007: 342). Thus, the difference between the two can be seen in how particular authors “shout” in their texts, that is, how they use language to make it sound different (louder) from the one used in daily speech.

O. Henry’s short story “The Gift of the Magi” is about an underprivileged couple who sacrifices their most valuable possessions to afford the gifts to exchange on Christmas Day. In the story, O. Henry clearly experimented with the form by making use of terseness, a stylistic narrative choice that aims to increase the effect of the style and the content on the reader. By using brevity as the norm and by trying to find the right language to write about a poor couple struggling to make ends meet during the Christmas season, O. Henry foregrounds his protagonists’ psychology through stylistic devices, such as capitalisation, irony, metaphor, and other devices which stress the poverty and devotion of two people, who try to exchange gifts, thus practicing a Christian ritual. Despite these stylistic devices, one particular aspect of O. Henry’s style is the heterodiegetic narrative.

O. Henry’s short story is simple in plot structure. As a poor couple, Jim and Della live in a rented room, and they hardly have any money left. In these inconvenient conditions, Della wants to buy a chain for Jim’s gold watch as a Christmas present, since his watch is the only thing of which he is proud. However, Della does not have enough money for that present, so she sells her hair to afford the chain. Jim looks shocked when he sees Della’s short hair, as he has bought her a set of beautiful combs for her hair, which she had seen in a shop before, but could not afford. Then, Della gives Jim the gold chain and asks him to put it on his watch; Jim explains that he has sold the watch to buy her the combs. This short story ends with an epilogue evocation of “the Magi” who are the wise men presenting valuable gifts to “the Babe in the manger” (O. Henry 1905: 9).

When discussing the nature of O. Henry’s art, critics tend to concentrate on the effect created by O. Henry through brevity in writing, which is completed by a surprise ending. However, O. Henry’s treatment of his characters and the depth of the symbolic content of his stories are rarely discussed in the related literature. And yet, a closer look at the representation of ideas and concepts through which O. Henry prepares his readers for the explosive surprise ending demonstrates that his language is purposefully artful and symbolically rich. In this article, the literariness of O. Henry’s writing is interrogated through a stylistic reading of the ideas and concepts presented in the short story. Hence, while providing readers with a stylistic analysis of the story, this paper focuses on O. Henry’s heterodiegetic narrative style, to discuss the contradiction between a Christian couple’s poverty and the Christian tradition of exchanging gifts.

2. Foregrounding poverty

In the “Gift of the Magi,” stylistic devices are used to foreground the main points the author argues. The narrator focuses on exchanging gifts during Christmas through a dedicated couple who tries to continue the religious tradition and display their love and compassion towards each other. Various stylistic devices strengthen the messages hidden in the narrative, including capitalisation, metaphors, metonymies, and allusions that foreground the economic situation of the characters by juxtaposing various realities set by the heterodiegetic narrator.

Capitalisation and carefully constructed metaphors are the major stylistic devices foregrounding poverty, so that the couple’s financial situation can be convincingly presented as a permanent condition. Jim’s watch and Della’s hair are pointed out via capitalisation as “The Watch,” and “The Combs”, to emphasise the importance of these items in the plot, although they are often read thematically. Capitalisation is also used to indicate the impact of poverty on the characters. The story begins with “ONE” to stress how poor Della is: “ONE dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all” (O. Henry 1905: 1). It continues with a metaphor to portray Della’s situation better: “Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one’s cheeks burned with the silent imputation of parsimony that such close dealing implied” (O. Henry 1905: 3). The repetition of the word “one”, apart from the metaphor demonstrating the deteriorated financial situation of the couple, foregrounds singularity in a way to contradict the multiplicity of entities associated with richness.

Metonymy, while giving details on the letterbox, also clarifies the extent of the couple’s poverty: “Also appertaining thereunto was a card bearing the name ‘Mr. James Dillingham Young.’ “The ‘Dillingham’ had been flung to the breeze during a former period of prosperity when its possessor was being paid \$30 per week” (ibid.). The use of metonymy is noticed when the surname “Dillingham” substitutes the word “card with the surname” and makes readers remember the couple’s poverty again. The narrator comments that “Now, when the income was shrunk to \$20, the letters of ‘Dillingham’ looked blurred, as though they were thinking seriously of contracting to a modest and unassuming D” (ibid.). Thus, the progression of the narrative shows that the heterodiegetic narrator’s reductionist attitude in moving the name “Dillingham” to the letter “D.” signifies their impoverished living conditions alluded to by the mentioned figures: the salary being reduced from 30 to 20 dollars.

Stylistic devices also reflect the characters’ moods. The heterodiegetic narrator’s numerous repetitions serve as a stylistic device foregrounding the emotional situation of the characters. For example, the narrator repeats certain colours in one single sentence to illustrate Della’s mood: “She stood by the window and looked out dully at a grey cat walking a grey fence in a grey backyard. Tomorrow would-be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a present” (O. Henry 1905: 4). The adjective “grey” is repeated without any functional need only to illustrate how hopeless her situation is. The adjectival phrase that describes the gift is another repetition that signifies Della’s increasing tension and anxiety: “You don’t know what a nice - what a beautiful, nice gift I’ve got for you” (ibid.). Here, the repetition of the word “nice” fortifies Della’s increasing tension, since she cannot read Jim’s mind from his enigmatic look. She tries to convince him that her gift was worth cutting her hair. Additionally, a polysyndeton constructed by the narrator also reflects Della’s mood, as the

conjunction “nor” is repeated: “It was not anger, nor surprise, nor disapproval, nor horror, nor any of the sentiments that she had been prepared for” (idem: 7). Such repetitions foreground Della’s anxiety as she tries to understand how Jim feels about her short hair from the peculiar look on his face.

Certain repetitive actions mentioned by the heterodiegetic narrator foreground the thematic construction of poverty, as can be seen in calculating what is overtly and repetitively mentioned. The numbers or phrases involving calculations are inverted. It is all about doing maths to meet the ends and to afford a gift which embodies the couple’s sincere love and affection. The reader is repeatedly exposed to various numbers and different amounts of money. Worse, numbers are scattered throughout the statements, illustrating the characters’ continuous mental involvement with fiscal matters, making them stuck between loving generosity and agonising poverty. Readers are informed about the exact amount of money available: “(O)ne dollar and eighty-seven cents. That was all. And sixty cents of it was in pennies ... Three times Della counted it. One dollar and eighty-seven cents” (O. Henry 1905: 1). Similarly, the furnished flat in which the characters live costs 8 dollars per week under the circumstances presented above, of the recently reduced income.

The numbers appear in the text so frequently that, even though the amount is repeated as a phrase twice, the same amount recurs twice again, with different graphology, represented in numbers - “\$1.87” (4). The recurrent references to numbers, which suggest that the lack of money is a constant worry for the character, are foregrounded in different syntactic structures, which also contribute to the semantic aspects of the narrative. The use of particular verbs also strengthens the emphasis on computation. Della explains her feelings through the verbs “to number” and “to count”: “Maybe the hairs of my head were numbered... but nobody could ever count my love for you” (7). This diction implies how money and its calculation burden these characters’ thoughts.

The descriptions of Della’s hair and Jim’s watch have a thematic function, since the heterodiegetic narrator employs them to make the reader sympathise with the characters. Della’s hair is crucial in emphasising her devotion and determination to sacrifice one’s valuable possessions while offering gifts. The narrator observes: “Della’s beautiful hair fell about her, rippling and shining like a cascade of brown waters” (3). This simile increases the reader’s sensitivity to Della’s sacrifice. Moreover, the narrator uses biblical references to emphasise the significance of these two objects to the characters. The narrator explains how Della’s hair would trivialise the treasures of the Queen of Sheba, Makeda, who went to “Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones” (King James Bible, 1 Kings 10.2). For Jim’s watch, the narrator continues with a connected biblical allusion, stating that the watch would make the wealthy King Solomon jealous. These allusions highlight the subjective value of the two objects in the couple’s possession. More than the characters’ devotion to religious practices, they highlight their devotion to each other and their readiness to make a substantial sacrifice.

The situational irony that escalates the effect of the climax appears when Jim presents the set of combs to Della; the readers already have the information about her hair being cut. Jim is also appalled by Della’s gift, as he no longer has his watch. The situational irony highlights the couple’s poverty, while also stimulating the readers’ pity and admiration for their effort to maintain the Christian ritual of Christmas Day, despite their poverty. The narrator makes the reader think of the hardships Della and Jim face in order to be able to continue the tradition initiated

by the Magi. Besides, at one point, before presenting the situational irony to the reader, the narrator states: “The Magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. This dark assertion will be illuminated later on” (O. Henry 1905: 8). By doing so, the narrator uses narrative ellipsis to arouse the readers’ interest and attention. In the end, he presents his embedded story of the Magi to juxtapose the gifts exchanged by the poor couple.

Allusion is a fundamental stylistic device used by the heterodiegetic narrator in the story. “The Magi” are the wise men from the East who brought valuable gifts to baby Jesus, as described in the Bible: “When they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh” (King James Bible, Matthew 2.11). The prosperity is evident in the biblical context; in contrast, O. Henry’s couple contradicts the bountiful appearance of the Magi. Their extreme attempts to show their love and affection indicate how unwise and impulsive their behaviour is, while they also hint at the motif of sacrificial love.

The narrator ends by calling the story of Jim and Della “the uneventful chronicle of two foolish children in a flat who most unwisely sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house” (O. Henry 1905: 9). This is contrasted with the evocation of the biblical ritual of the magi: “The magi brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them” (idem: 7-8). As Della and Jim are compared to the Magi by the narrator in a jocular manner, the gifts of the poor couple are at odds with the valuable gifts of the Magi. What Della and Jim feel for each other is beyond material possession and earthly prosperity, but they cannot grasp how invaluable their devotion is. Besides, as Della and Jim are compared to the Magi, their impractical gifts are in opposition to the valuable gifts of the Magi, which shows how the religious tradition does not match reality. By juxtaposing the biblical narrative of richness with the daily reality of two Christians struck by poverty during Christmas, O. Henry’s heterodiegetic narrator points at the unmatching nature of their beliefs, characterised by the season’s joy that is in stark contrast with their financial situation.

3. The role of the heterodiegetic narrator

The narrator explains the importance of giving a gift at Christmas through the story of a dedicated couple. At the same time, the heterodiegetic narrator focuses on the characters’ sense of despair who perform a ritual that does not overlap with their reality. He also allows creating a contradiction between a couple who tries to continue the tradition of exchanging gifts at Christmas and their present economic state. The heterodiegetic narrator further dramatizes the story by placing the biblical episode of the magi in the background, as an example of precious gifts offered to the baby Christ, which contradicts the low-priced offerings of the couple and their commitment to buy these gifts.

The heterodiegetic narrator first presents Della’s state and mood in the bargaining scene. She does not have enough money to buy a gift for her husband, so she negotiates a discount. The dominance of the external narrator can be observed here. Instead of Della’s probable sentence, “You are charging too much. Please offer a discount,” her line becomes “Pennies saved one and two at a time by bulldozing the grocer and the vegetable man and the butcher until one’s cheeks burned” (O. Henry 1905: 1). While the diction stresses the characters’ status with the help of idioms, metaphors, and emotive words, the narrative is interrupted by a direct address to the readers, to introduce them to the atmosphere, as Della is making an effort to prepare dinner for her husband: “dear friends” (idem: 6). The

achieved effect is that the narrator manipulates the narratee's perspective more efficiently.

The heterodiegetic narrator places himself at the same level as the characters. Sometimes, it is hard to distinguish between the narrator's and the character's point of view: "The door opened, and Jim stepped in and closed it. He looked thin and very serious. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two" (ibid.: 6). The sympathetic comment may equally belong to Della or the narrator. However, "poor fellow" is reminiscent of the narrator's already known idiosyncrasies, related to his effort to persuade his readers of Della and Jim's poverty. These reminders are reiterated throughout the story. Emotive language is also employed to enhance the readers' perception of the couple's financial situation, such as the exclamation "alas!" (8). The heterodiegetic narrator sometimes interrupts the narration to describe the setting or the characters. When Della crashes down on the couch to cry, the narrator exclaims: "While the mistress of the home is gradually subsiding from the first stage to the second, take a look at the home" (3). Here, it is not through the character's, but through the narrator's eyes that the readers look at the couple's apartment. In theory, such interruptions are generally provided by characters who have time and a reason to look at an object (Bal 1997: 37). Here, it can be argued that the narrator is closer to the narrated when he describes the house as if he were inside that specific setting.

Interestingly, the narrator's location is presented in a scenic narrative rather than a panoramic one. It becomes a close-up standpoint when he zooms to the name on the card from the vestibule, to the letterbox, and lastly, to the card. These details foreground the lonely misery of the couple, which the heterodiegetic narrator summarises: "No letter would go, and an electric button from which no mortal finger could coax a ring" (O. Henry 1905: 3). However, it must also be noted that, because heterodiegetic narrators are not always reliable (Zipfel 2011: 117), such possibility of misreporting may affect the tension that brings readers the surprise ending O. Henry set for them.

4. Conclusion

As the stylistic analysis of O. Henry's story shows, the narrator is primarily heterodiegetic, perceptible, and overt. In that sense, the heterodiegetic narration has a combination of features stemming from the omniscient narration that has access to the characters' thoughts and inner struggles. Such a narrator can explain the characters' anxieties, despairs, and astonishments, while juxtaposing the everyday reality of the couple's poverty and the biblical re-narrativisation of the Magi's prosperity.

As Della and Jim are compared to the Magi by the heterodiegetic narrator, the poor couple's gifts contradict the Magi's valuable gifts. This juxtaposition shows how the truly Christian reality, as reflected in the Bible, does not match the characters' everyday reality. Similarly, the stylistic devices used by O. Henry through the heterodiegetic narrator enable him to stress poverty, which contrasts the festive mood of Christmas.

The heterodiegetic narrator of "The Gift of the Magi" tells his story overtly. The narrator's way of explaining the story reflects the situation of the impoverished and devoted couple, who tries to apply well-known rituals, while showing how the expectations of exchanging gifts do not match their reality. The heterodiegetic narrator always remains between the lines, using the story of the Magi as an embedded narrative to create a contrast in the plot. Although Della and Jim are

named “Magi” by the author, the gifts of the poor couple are at odds with the valuable gifts of the biblical Magi. Their attitudes imply that their religious tradition contradicts their reality, but they still want to display extravagance to express their feelings for each other.

According to Kafalenos (2011: 254), heterodiegetic narrators in fiction have “authority” simply because “the fictional world is what the heterodiegetic narrator says it is.” Thus, by using a heterodiegetic narrator who becomes an intruder, moving in and out of the plot structure and giving information whenever he wishes, O. Henry’s narrator becomes an essential stylistic feature of the story without which the climax cannot be reached.

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**EPISTOLARY MYTHOLOGIES:
THE SYLVIA PLATH / TED HUGHES MARRIAGE
IN THE AMERICAN WRITER'S CORRESPONDENCE**

GABRIELA GLĂVAN

West University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** The public fascination with Sylvia Plath's marriage to Ted Hughes is an integral part of the American writer's legacy, one that is constantly reinterpreted by new generations of critics. The publication, in 2018, of Sylvia Plath's previously unknown correspondence revealed new aspects of one of her most influential relationships – her marriage to English poet Ted Hughes. My aim is to explore the articulation of this biographical element as an essential part of the mythology surrounding her life and work.*

***Keywords:** marriage in literature, correspondence, mental illness, autobiography, maternal relationships*

1. Introduction

A consistent part of Sylvia Plath's correspondence was published in 2018, a significant addition to the already published *Letters Home* (1975), creating new opportunities for relevant scholarship on her complex biography and fictional work. Moreover, the fourteen previously unpublished letters Plath wrote to her psychiatrist, dr. Ruth Beuscher, revealed new aspects of one of her most influential relationships – her marriage to English poet Ted Hughes. My aim is to explore the articulation of this biographical element as an essential part of the mythology surrounding her life and work. I shall specifically focus on her correspondence with Dr. Beuscher and her own mother, Aurelia Schober Plath. The two women stand out as the essential female presences in Plath's life – the former as mother-figure and the latter as maternal presence in a direct sense. Despite the apparent linearity and predictability of such an endeavour – to explore Plath's understanding of her marriage as revealed by her correspondence to Aurelia Plath and Ruth Beuscher – it is, in fact, a complex task, since the letters often give partial or minimal context to the events narrated by their author. Moreover, readers and critics do not have access to the other “narrator” (Plath's interlocutor), whose replies remain mysterious and unknown. Another challenge is to avoid a certain degree of contamination between scholarly academic investigation and the fiction-prone tonalities of the many Plath biographies available at the moment.

Sylvia Plath's suicide at the age of 30 gave rise to one of contemporary literature's most enduring myths, reloaded, in the six decades since her death, on many voices and in various discursive patterns, like a perpetually fascinating

riddle. The largely autobiographical nature of her writings, her massive body of correspondence with family, friends, editors, etc. and the overwhelming number of Plath biographies and works inspired by her life and activity (Hughes' *Birthday Letters* (1998) included) consistently contributed to the Romantic myth of the young American writer's untimely death. Moreover, Sylvia Plath became an emblematic figure for postwar generations of women, who struggled for validation in a contradictory cultural context – one that apparently valued academically bright young women, while at the same time suggested that their supreme accomplishment would be marriage, children, and domesticity (Gill 2008: 26).

Plath's early life was not without adversity, as her father died when she was eight, paving the way for an ambivalent relationship with her mother. Both parents had been academics, and Plath's constant effort for intellectual excellence can be understood as an echo of this familial context. All these elements would gain new meaning and relevance once she embarked on a passionate but troubled marriage to English Poet Laureate Ted Hughes. Despite the centrality of the mother-daughter relationship in Plath's biography (it has been read as “the backbone of the narrative” unfolded in her correspondence (Steinberg, Kukil 2018: 23), it is her marriage to Hughes that shaped her adult life and literary affirmation, greatly influencing posthumous readership as well. The 1956-1962 period was the interval in which she matured into her own literary style and published her most relevant work, but the period also coincides with the articulation and demise of a fundamental personal relationship – her marriage. The close intellectual bond she had with Hughes left a unique mark on her writing, yet the collapse of their emotional ties probably influenced her state of mind in the final months before her death. Her marriage is the founding story of the Sylvia Plath mythology, one that gained new meaning after the letters she sent her psychiatrist were included in the 2018 edition of her correspondence.

Besides their confessional value, they also surfaced controversial details of possible physical and emotional abuse – Plath directly accused Hughes of violent behaviour in the final year of their marriage, as she began to suspect infidelity on his part. Her long-debated mental illness appears clear and incontestable – her violent mood swings, concealing a severe form of depression, as it generally happens with bipolar disorder, become textually visible. According to Brian Cooper, a researcher and psychiatrist interested in Plath's literary and psychiatric case, her most significant pathological symptoms were “recurrent severe disorders of mood (depressive and/or manic)” (Cooper 2003: 296). The specters of her clinical pathology were “apparently spontaneous in onset, the depressive phase being accompanied by psychomotor retardation, feelings of guilt and unworthiness, early-morning waking and somatic changes” (ibid.). As Cooper later declared in interviews, her London GP, Dr. John Horder, whom she mentions on her cryptic suicide note (“Call Dr. Horder”) remembered that Plath's mental health was clearly poor: “I believe, indeed it was repeatedly obvious to me, that she was deeply depressed, “ill”, “out of her mind”, and that any explanations of a psychological sort are inadequate...” (Horder in Cooper 2003: 296).

2. The mythologies of a marriage

Letter writing is an essential part of Plath's oeuvre, however debatable its literary essence may be. It greatly influenced her style and thematic range, often recurring as a stylistic strategy that problematized the conflict between her real self

and the various versions that she deemed to be her acceptable, social facades (Ellis 2011). J. Ellis (2011:16) considers that “Plath’s letter-writing self is equally in control and just as staged”. She was a prolific writer in this particular niche, as her published correspondence consists of over 1200 pages. It details the complex background of her literary oeuvre and it significantly challenges critical notions concerning the relevance of the biographical context in literary creativity. Correspondence has long been a reliable instrument for documenting the role of biography in shaping a writer’s vision and work. Private writing is difficult to integrate in a critical approach to Plath’s works, despite the often revelatory nature of certain details illuminating a deeper meaning of her literature. The fluid limits between a private audience and a larger, public one become evident once the correspondence is published. Plath wrote extensively about domestic and emotional aspects, but, upon closer inspection, it becomes evident that these details contribute to the articulation of a vaster perspective, adding nuances and depth to the fictional corpus. Correspondence has been tackled theoretically as a distinct literary genre, presenting particular challenges to analysis and conceptualization. Plath’s letters have often been read in light of her mental illness and premature death and such readings tend to omit the relevance of the fundamental element of her life – her diverse and sophisticated relationships, constantly changing under the massive pressure of her creative metamorphoses, her vitality and constant drive to excel, her friendships with fellow writers and critics, and, no less significantly, her ambivalent attitude towards treating her recurrent mental crises and depressive episodes.

Sylvia Plath’s marriage to Ted Hughes has been a point of constant reference in the rather numerous biographies detailing the major elements of her life. It has been sensationalized to such an extent that, in 1989, Hughes broke his apparent vow to refrain from comments on his shared life with Plath and glacially replied to an article published in *The Independent* about this sensitive issue. His “Letter to the Editor” was published on April 20, 1989, two weeks after an inflammatory article written by two Plath scholars – Julia Parnaby, of the University of Lancaster, and Rachel Wingfield, of the University of Cambridge, and roughly seven months before his death. Over the years, he had firmly defended his decision to comment solely on his former wife’s literary work. In this case, though, the English poet felt that a line had been crossed – the two critics deplored the fact that Plath’s headstone was missing from her grave, leaving it unmarked, and that she and Hughes had, in fact, signed divorce papers before her death on February 11, 1963. Hughes felt compelled to reject this mystification, firmly stating that there were no divorce plans and they were still married when Plath died. He also refuted the “Fantasia” created around Plath’s life and death, a narrative spun around the various ideologies interfering with uncertain biographical facts.

However trivialized by various commentators who chose to ignore the necessary balance in biographical readings of confessional literature, the six-year interval during which they were married is of cardinal importance to a comprehensive perspective on Plath’s confirmation as a writer. A transformative experience for both parties involved, the symbiosis of marriage became her absolute project of personal and artistic validation. Most of the numerous Plath biographies, published in the half century since her death, emphasized the role her marriage to a fellow poet had in her intellectual and artistic becoming, yet they tended to circumscribe it solely to the biographical perimeter. My aim is to argue in favour of this element as a consistent, emblematic narrative, having the force and

significance of a myth, an archetypal paradigm that shaped the American poet's oeuvre and life trajectory.

Besides an imperatively necessary mapping of the marriage story in Plath's *Letters Home*, I shall also focus on the manner in which this essential relationship appears in the new epistolary material published in the second volume of *The Letters of Sylvia Plath* in 2018, and I shall seek to identify the contrasts and transformations in tone and perspective in a comparative analysis of the same issue explored by the writer in her letters to her mother. The new body of correspondence consists of fourteen letters Plath sent to Dr. Ruth Beuscher between February 18, 1960 and February 4, 1963. Dr. Beuscher treated Sylvia Plath at the Boston mental hospital, where she was taken to after her suicide attempt at the age of twenty, in 1953, ten years before her death. As Dan Chiasson (2018) argued, "the study of these new documents make the object of a case study in Plath's legacy".

A critical observation of the manner in which Plath wrote privately about her marriage to Hughes must take into account three different types of discourse: her letters to her mother from 1956-1960, which projected an idyllic, sometimes hyperbolized experience of married life; her letters to her mother from 1962, when Plath gave her mother scarce details of her marital troubles; and her letters to Dr. Beuscher from 1961-1963, when Plath often performed thorough and in-depth analyses of her marriage. These three bodies of correspondence project a complex image of the protean relationship between the two writers. Besides exploring the new details of the marriage mythology in these letters, my intention is also to question their value as literature, that is as a distinctive part of Plath's work, worthy of academic attention that goes farther than the mundane aspects of her marital and existential troubles.

3. Letters home, the Beuscher letters and the Plath/Hughes conundrum

In her *Preface* to the 2018 edition of Plath's correspondence, Frieda Hughes, the daughter of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, shared her thoughts regarding her decision to agree to the publication of her mother's private writings: "I decided to let people make up their own minds and, hopefully, find the kind of understanding that my mother was working towards near the end, despite the return of the 'madness' that took her anyway" (Hughes 2018: 7). She goes on by detailing that

those fourteen letters were snapshots of my parents' passionate relationship and subsequent marriage; the finding of a city home, the birth of children, their move to the country and the adoption of what would be an unsustainable idyll, followed by my mother's suspicion of my father's affair, the confirmation of that suspicion, her decision to separate, the strengthening of that resolution, the apparent realization that they had been living in what I think of as a hermetically sealed bubble in which they ran out of oxygen, then the decision (following Ruth Beuscher's written advice) that divorce was the best option, and finally, the letter I feared most, the letter in which my mother's madness returns just before she kills herself. (Hughes 2018: 7)

She confessed: "I simply wept over the contents" (idem: 3).

A critical approach to private literature is a particularly difficult task. David Young, a prolific Plath critic, warned of the pitfalls of reading the writer's work through a biographical lens:

...before one has read much of her work, one has tumbled into the gossip, into the tabloid flattening of her artistic accomplishment, and the poems have begun to line up as lurid illustrations, vivid diary entries, exhibits for the defense or the prosecution if she or her former husband, her mother and father, or anyone else, happens to be on trial.” (Young 1998: 18)

Such excesses can be avoided, especially when the hyper-sensitive issue of the Plath-Hughes marriage is discussed, by a careful handling of facts and a balanced perspective on the influence of biography on writing and literature.

A careful reading of Plath’s correspondence with her mother promptly reveals the daughter’s intention to conceal the negative aspects in her life and filter them through a more optimistic lens. Plath’s interest in domestic issues – from child rearing to cooking and household management – seems overpowering and, at some point, far-fetched. A cruel irony arranged that Aurelia Plath be present in the Hughes’ residence in Devon, at Court Green, in the summer of 1962, when her daughter discovered her husband’s affair with Assia Wevill. The details surrounding the collapse of Plath’s marriage to Hughes are absent from the mother-daughter correspondence for the simple reason that Aurelia Plath was a witness to the events that took place at the time. It was a dramatic moment that made visible the magnitude of the cracks in her daughter’s idyllic narratives of domestic bliss and marital success. Marjorie Perloff (1979: 156) argues that this was a pivotal moment, one that made Plath decide to renounce the saccharine nickname “Sivvy”, which she had used to sign her letters to her mother and go for the mature form of her own name, Sylvia. Critics noted a radical change in her creative regimen as well: “The truly dramatic changes between those college-era poems, like ‘Circus in Three Rings’ and ‘Two Lovers and a Beachcomber by the Real Sea’, and such late poems as ‘Applicant’, ‘Purdah’, and ‘Lady Lazarus’ were both shocking and inexplicable” (Wagner-Martin 2007:198). Following this argument, Harold Fromm (1990: 251) states that Plath’s trademark was her inability “to forge a coherent self from the multiple and warring fragments of her psyche”, most clearly visible in her private writings: “Her journals and letters home are blatant documents of this phenomenon, which is the most pervasive characteristic of all her writings.” (ibid.)

As revealed by her letters to Aurelia Plath, Sylvia Plath’s relationship with Ted Hughes seems the sole focus of her emotional life, a dramatic storm of events and feeling that possibly nourished her final literary awakening – the unprecedented outburst of creativity that led to the writing of the *Ariel* volume of poetry. Written in the autumn of 1962, as her marriage was dissolving and separation seemed unavoidable, the *Ariel* poems are the cornerstone of Sylvia Plath’s canonization as a major modernist poet. However bitter its end, in the initial stages of their relationship, Plath’s writing about her marriage bears the signs of the immense pressure she felt to inhabit her ideal projection of emotional and erotic fulfillment. The ecstatic tone of her letters to Aurelia Plath, detailing her adoration for her beloved, recurs tirelessly, with the sheer force of religious devotion: “The most shattering thing is that in the last two months I have fallen terribly in love” she wrote to Aurelia Plath on April 17, 1956, “which can only lead to great hurt. I met the strongest man in the world, ex-Cambridge, brilliant poet whose work I loved before I met him, a large, hulking, healthy Adam, half French half Irish, with a voice like the thunder of God – a singer, story-teller, lion and world-wanderer, a vagabond who will never stop” (Plath 2010: 229). There is a perceptible aesthetic preoccupation in Plath’s tone, as if the encounter with Hughes and their subsequent

falling in love and marriage was a moment that had to be written about with a full display of mannerisms and elevation in style, similar to a significant event worthy of becoming literature. Later that year, as they had got married in June, Plath's emphatic accents grow even further, and the result is not far from an oversimplified narrative of early marital bliss:

If only you knew how happy I am with Ted. I have been with him every minute for over four months, and every day I love him more and more. We ... never run out of growing conversation. We talked the whole day on our bus trip to London, and it is so exciting, both of us writing, producing something new every day, criticizing, dreaming, encouraging, mulling over common experiences. I am walking on air; I love him more than the world and would do anything for him ... We want to work and work ... success will never spoil either of us. (Plath 2010: 267)

After secretly getting married, despite Plath's fears that the Fulbright commission would terminate her scholarship on grounds of her new status, the couple lived apart for two weeks, while Hughes pursued a teaching position in Spain and Plath remained in England. The separation proved unbearable for both. Sylvia's account of the short interval they lived apart is described in hyperbolic terms of biblical proportions, as proof of the incontestable truth of the myth describing the divine creation of Eve from Adam's rib:

... Have been back here exactly a week and am going through the most terrible state, but stoically, and will somehow manage. It is the longest I have ever been away from Ted and somehow, in the course of this working and vital summer, we have mystically become one. I can appreciate the legend of Eve coming from Adam's rib as I never did before; the damn story's true! That's where I belong. Away from Ted, I feel as if I were living with one eyelash of myself only. It is really agony". (Plath 2010: 267)

Weeks later, looking back at their unbearable ordeal, Plath declares with equal emphasis: "Both of us have been literally sick to death being apart, wasting all our time and force trying to cope with the huge, fierce sense of absence" (Plath 2010: 267)

Plath's need to hyperbolize her emotional overcharge involves a need for exceptionalism, as she declares the uniqueness of their bond. There is a clear struggle to validate their emotional connection in the same terms their literary and artistic minds connected – in an original manner that separates them from the ways in which ordinary couples function:

We are different from most couples; for we share ourselves perhaps more intensely at every moment. Everything I do with and for Ted has a celestial radiance, be it only ironing and cooking, and this increases with custom, instead of growing less ... Perhaps, most important, our writing is founded in the inspiration of the other and grows by the proper, inimitable criticism of the other, and publications are made with joy of the other. What wife shares her husband's dearest career as I do? ... Actually, I never could stand Ted to have a nine to five job, because I love being with him and working in his presence so much...." (Plath 2010: 272-273)

Aurelia Plath's relationship with her daughter seems to have imposed a certain canon of communication, a rather inflexible paradigm in which her

daughter felt compelled to perpetually excel and impress. Her marriage is “written” like one more success story, a complete immersion into an intellectual euphoria in which the two partners support each other unconditionally. Plath’s account of their mutual respect for a strict work schedule and their perfectly sealed symbiosis, unaffected by external factors, often sounds like the narrative of an ingenue amazed at the plenitude of feeling she experiences:

We have such lovely hours together ... We read, discuss poems we discover, talk, analyze – we continually fascinate each other. It is heaven to have someone like Ted who is so kind and honest and brilliant – always stimulating me to study, think, draw and write. He is better than any teacher, even fills somehow that huge, sad hole I felt in having no father. I feel every day how wonderful he is and love him more and more. My whole life has suddenly a purpose... (Plath 2010: 281)

Newlywed bliss, however overwhelming and satisfactory, is not without its first signs of instability and conflict. The young couple start to have verbal clashes, and Sylvia’s need to alleviate her first symptoms of suffering at the realization that her marriage may be different from what she had imagined become visible in her tireless odes to her beloved:

Ted and I sometimes have violent disagreements, to be sure, but we are so very joyous together and have such identical aims and expectations of our lives that we never have conflict over any serious issues. I really don’t know how I existed before I met Ted.... (Plath 2010: 281)

Almost a year later, her thirst for endless descriptions of her husband’s qualities and phenomenal talent seems unquenched: “He combines intellect and grace of complex form, with lyrical music, male vigor and vitality, and moral commitment and love and awe of the world. O, he has everything.” (Plath 2010: 291)

In February 1961, Plath suffered a miscarriage. The unfortunate event coincided with a severe form of appendicitis, and she had to undergo surgery. She does not miss the occasion to praise Ted’s unabated availability and devotion: “I’m staying in bed and Ted is taking wonderful care of me. He is the most blessed, kind person in the world” (idem: 400). In September 1962, after Hughes left for London to continue his affair with Assia Wevill, Plath remembered the same period in a radically different light: “Ted beat me up physically a couple of days before my miscarriage: the baby I lost was due to be born on his birthday” (Plath 2018: 765). All controversy aside, the factual truth of the events will probably elude critics and readers, as it is not the purpose of solid criticism or thorough reading to unearth painful details in a tragic life story. It is, however, obvious that Plath often resorted to various strategies that helped her accept and overcome difficult details about her marriage, and it is the rule rather than the exception that she chose to overstate the situation in her letters to her mother. These details remain problematic, though. In her preface to *Plath’s Letters of 2018*, Frieda Hughes (2018: 13) questions “what [...] would qualify as a physical beating? A push? A shove? A swipe?”; she reinforces her opinion that, given the “vital” context that Plath’s marriage was collapsing, she was more inclined to hyperbolize its shortcomings.

There are many layers in the scholarship about the literary reflection of the Plath-Hughes marriage, and they have been outlined in earlier publications in the

1960's and the 1970's. Feminist critics like Marjorie Perloff (1979) and Jeannine Dobbs (1977: 23-24) highlight the political value of Plath's work as criticism of the 1950's American society, observing that the violent imagination of her *Ariel* poems are targeted towards her departing husband. He is the patriarchal oppressor who buried Plath in housework and child rearing, while he enjoyed public attention and the company of various other women. Others, like Harold Fromm, underline the relevance of her mental illness (Fromm 1990: 251). From this perspective, the breakdown of her marriage was the unavoidable consequence of her mental health issues, which ruined their relationship, not necessarily Hughes' extramarital affairs and emotional abandonment of his wife. In fact, upon reading these private texts, one can notice Plath's oscillation between an accusatory tone and a conciliatory one – she remarks that it is impossible to have a passionate marital relationship for six years, trying to normalize the cooling period they were experiencing in the summer of 1962.

The letters written to dr. Ruth Beuscher, published after decades of speculations regarding the volatile nature of the Plath-Hughes marriage, confirm that Sylvia Plath perceived some of her husband's acts as violence and abuse. Frieda Hughes was concerned that her parents' past would be exposed to public scrutiny, continuing a tradition of controversy that accompanied her mother's name like a bad spell. Since Plath trusted her psychiatrist with her most intimate thoughts, it is only reasonable to integrate her marital struggle within this paradigm of confessional exclusivity. As she declared in interviews after her patient's suicide, Beuscher destroyed some of Plath's letters, as she felt she needed to ease the burden of the immense guilt she felt after Plath's death. As it was later revealed, it was Beuscher who plainly advised Plath to divorce Hughes, encouraging her to extract herself from the malignancy of a relationship weakened by betrayal and abandonment.

In the final letter Plath wrote to Beuscher, on February 4, 1963, there were clear signs that she was willing to accept the demise of her marriage to Hughes. In a scholarly exercise meant to rationalize her irrational fixation with Hughes, Plath had read Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving*, and identified her "idolâtrous love" for Hughes. However convulsive the final part, the marriage between the two writers was a significant catalyst, a transformative intellectual partnership that shaped both their careers and destinies as writers. Their divergent paths became evident once the pressure to publish, earn money, write, and manage a house, while raising two small children, started to put a strain on their relationship. Their apparently indestructible union started to falter and ultimately collapsed when Hughes openly pursued an affair with Wevill. Plath's desire for erotic exclusivity, complete devotion, and unabated support in their careers as writers was irreversibly damaged by Hughes' decision to follow the overpowering need to "experience everything and everybody" (Fromm 1990: 731). This much-debated document seems to warn of the impending fatal moment that would happen barely a week later. Plath wrote Beuscher that she felt the same way she did when she first attempted suicide, a decade earlier: "What appalls me is the return of my madness, my paralysis, my fear and vision of the worst – cowardly withdrawal, a mental hospital, lobotomies" (Plath 2018: 882). Eight years after the fateful events of February 11, 1963, Al Alvarez, a London literary critic and friend of the Hugheses, wrote that Plath's death was an unfortunate cry for help gone bad (Alvarez 1971: 36) A close reading of the impact her marital breakdown had on her mental state proves this claim might be disputable.

In the most relevant letters for the issue, written to Beuscher in the summer of 1962, Plath recreates an anatomy of her marriage that bears little resemblance to the picture painted in her letters to her mother. It is uncanny, though, that, in 1961, Plath described her domestic life in terms similar to those present in her letters to Aurelia Plath. The same fantasy of domestic happiness emerges, recurring like a fundamental need that must be fulfilled: “We want a town house, a Cornwall seaside house, a car & piles of children & books & have saved about \$8 thousand simply out of our writing in the past five years toward these dreams & feel in the next five years we may nearly approximate them.” (Plath 2018: 541)

Plath’s third letter, dated March 27, 1962, reloads the same scenario of idealized family life. The purchase of an old manor in dire need for restoration, but surrounded by luxurious vegetation, seems like another step towards the culmination of their dream to write, work, and raise their children in the proximity of nature. The simple life at Green Court, after the birth of their son, Nicholas in January 1962, is described like made up of essential events in Plath’s longed-for pastoral: “I have never felt the power of land before. I love owning bulbs & trees & all the happiness of my 17th summer on a farm comes back when I dig & prune & potter, very amateur” (Plath 2018: 695). She mentions the loss of a child suddenly, as if it were a foreseeable occurrence: “I had lost the baby that was supposed to be born on Ted’s birthday this summer at 4 months, which would have been more traumatic than it was, if I hadn’t had Frieda to console & reassure me. No apparent reason to miscarry, but I had my appendix out 3 weeks after, so tend to relate the two” (Plath 2018: 695). The event would be recounted in different terms in the autumn of 1962, when she mentioned Hughes’ violent outburst that may have led to the pregnancy loss.

Plath’s marital and mental struggle seems to evolve together in a toxic, dangerous connection, described in vitriolizing terms in her correspondence with Beuscher. To her disbelief, Hughes cynically affirms his unwillingness to guide his life and choices according to the emotional dynamics of his partner: “why should I limit myself by your happiness or unhappiness?” (idem: 731) Plath feels an intense need to examine herself in a harsh light, a symbolic punishment for having failed in making the idyll reality: “I have been a jinx, a chain” (ibid.) The logic and language of her letters to her mother resurface in bitter terms: “How could a true-love ever want to leave his truly-beloved for one second? We would experience Everything together.” (idem: 736) As a patient, Plath doesn’t hesitate to prove to her doctor that she was aware of the shortcomings of her life as Hughes’ wife: “For fear he would desert me forever, like my father, if I didn’t watch him closely enough.” (idem: 738) Plath’s arsenal as a woman scorned turns eviscerating once she writes about the woman who seduced her husband in a femme fatale manner: “What has this Weavy Asshole got that I haven’t, I thought: she can’t make a baby (and really isn’t so sorry), can’t make a book or a poem, just ads about bad bakery bread, wants to die before she gets old & loses her beauty, and is bored” (idem: 738).

Paradoxically, the whole disaster had some liminal beneficial effects on her, as if the suffering had a curative, revitalizing effect: “this great shock purged me of a lot of old fears. It was very like the old shock treatments I used to fear so: it broke a tight circuit wide open, a destructive circuit, a deadening circuit, & let in a lot of pain, air and real elation. I feel very elated” (ibid.) Hughes’ infidelities stimulate Plath’s destructive need to annihilate their idealized connection and turn it into a common urge – physical lust: “I have in me a good tart, as distinct from a bad tart.”

(*ibid.*) She appreciates Hughes' honesty in admitting guilt, as he had told her the "truth about the femme fatale, which freed my knowledge to sit about in the light of day, like an object, to be coped with, not hid like some hairy monster" paves the way for a perilous state of mind. "And I didn't die" (*ibid.*), Plath says of her reaction to her husband's confession. The brutality of the observation bears an important symbolic significance – ultimately, Plath did die, and her husband's betrayal and distancing from their family and home had a certain role in her suicidal act.

Plath's despair to normalize her situation and its myriad psychological implications become visible in discourse. Thus, letter-writing is instrumentalized as a therapeutic tool, a means to alleviate the catastrophic pressure of a massive inner landslide. Her statement that she no longer felt suicidal was, in fact, an alarming symptom, as Plath, the patient, clearly tried to restore her mental balance in the midst of what proved to be a fatal storm:

I don't think I'm a suicidal type any more, because I was really fascinated to see how, in the midst of genuine agony, it would all turn out & kept going. I really did believe it was the Worst Thing that could happen, Ted being unfaithful; or next worst to his dying. Now I am actually grateful it happened, I feel new. (Plath 2018: 737)

Her domestic fantasy suddenly turned empty and devoid of meaning, as the central player in her imaginary fairytale was suddenly absent: "All the stupid little things I did with love - baking bread, making pies, painting furniture, planting flowers, sewing baby things - seem silly and empty to me without faith in Ted's love." (Plath 2018: 737) Her correspondence with Beuscher from the summer of 1962 repeatedly warns, overtly or in a poorly disguised manner, of the major breakdown her marital woes were about to cause. Despite Hughes' practical support (he accompanies Plath in her search for a London flat, as owners were reluctant to let to a single woman with children) and a certain amiable code in which they agreed to manage their parental duties, Plath's mental crisis loomed large and insurmountable: "I have been at a nadir, very grim, since my last letter to you" (*idem*: 742), she confessed in letter from July 1962, adding, two months later, that "a legal separation may just set Ted whirling into this wonderful wonderful world where there are only tarts and no wives and only abortions and no babies and only hotels and no homes (*idem*: 757)".

4. Conclusion

The comparative reading of Silvia Plath's letters to her mother and her correspondence with her psychiatrist, cumulatively covering the 1956-1963 interval, reveals a double narrative regime: to her mother, Plath wanted to present a luminous, successful marriage, adding to her long string of accomplishments – academic, artistic, social, erotic and emotional. In April 1961, shortly after the alleged incident that led to her miscarriage, Plath declared triumphantly: "It is so marvelous having married Ted with no money and nothing in print and then having all my best intuitions prove true!" (Plath 2010: 410) It is a process described with an undeniable effort to create a novel-like narrative, if not directly a fictional account that fits the unrealistic dimension of Plath's fantasy of absolute marital communion, mutual support, and artistic growth. On a divergent note, the fourteen

letters she wrote to Ruth Beuscher can be read like a dystopian counterpoint, the opposite, grim version of the narrative created to impress her mother and possibly maintain, at least on a discursive level, the illusion of a compensatory fantasy that started to falter rather early in their marriage. In light of the newly published letters from the writer's ample correspondence, the Plath-Hughes marriage should be displaced from its limited role as life context, object of fascination and source of endless speculation for biographers, and reread as part of the personal mythology growing around the figure of one of last century's most important women writers.

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**“IF I AM ELECTED DEVIL”:
POLITICAL SATIRE AND PARODY
IN PHILIP ROTH’S *OUR GANG***

CRISTINA CHEVEREȘAN

West University of Timișoara

***Abstract:** Half a century after the book’s publication, this article will revisit Philip Roth’s 1971 *Our Gang*, a biting satire of American politics and policies under Richard Nixon’s presidency. It will focus on the writer’s masterful ventriloquizing of political discourse, which lies at the heart of the novel’s display of a disquietingly contemporaneous mixture of reckless ideology and public addresses, manipulative rhetoric and speech mannerisms, cynicism and newspeak. Via close contextual readings, the proposed analysis proves that *Our Gang* is far from dated and has not lost its relevance in time, remaining an intriguing, yet important piece in the Rothian corpus.*

***Keywords:** context, parody, politics, propaganda, rhetoric, satire.*

1. Introduction

While unexpected global confrontations have mercilessly haunted the year 2022, going back to the literature that exposes the actual and potential extent of political evils and the ever-sinuous, if not outright cynical and hypocritical, discourses of world leaders, thirsty for domination and control, strikes as a most necessary endeavour. Published half a century ago, Philip Roth’s *Our Gang* triggered criticism and controversy even more than usually: this time, for what was considered by many as nothing but a rant, a rash and rather shallow attack against the White House administration of the time. As pointed out by Paul Krassner for *The Los Angeles Times*,

Roth’s growth seems best described by the slogan that came to the fore in the feminist revolution of the late 1960s and early ’70s: “The Personal Is Political.” “Our Gang”, his spoof of the Nixon administration – written in 1971 during the Vietnam War – was blatantly political; *Time* magazine called it a “manically scurrilous satire,” accusing Roth of being “extravagantly hostile”; the *New Republic* criticized him for making “no effort to disguise” the fact that his target was the president of the United States. [Actually, Roth was startlingly prophetic about the gang currently occupying the White House]. (Krassner 2005)

To Roth, it was never a matter of concealing his intentions. On the contrary, his book was an outspoken expression of moral outrage on the part of its author, who purposely resorted to oftentimes shocking and exaggerated language and scenery, in order to make his readers aware of the gravity of an unfolding national

situation he strongly disapproved of. In retrospect, his act of daring defiance towards a system in power may resemble yet another prophecy from a writer who, resorting to an array of literary tools, has made a point of exposing endemic social and institutional wrongs. Looking back on the (f)actual events of the Nixon era, the Watergate Scandal appears predictable and sheds a different light on this brief and intense work by Roth, which preceded it. Yet, the author's personal anguish and the ethical reasoning behind his unforgiving satirical piece are undeniable.

That empirical knowledge of American and world history has constantly informed Roth's writings is not an innovative discovery. Nevertheless, a comprehensive analysis of his rich and diverse career will emphasize contextual roots and connections which might have been obscured when certain works were published. Even in his darkest, most deliberately offensive or seemingly jocular approaches, the writer proves to be not just a keen observer of human nature and its discontents. He is also a dedicated, unflinching humanitarian, whose sense of (poetic) justice and reckless vigilante moves are inevitably triggered by his close observation of realities-in-the-making.

Claudia Roth Pierpont examines the writer's sudden, yet not surprising, decision to plunge into derision taken to extremes, meant to reveal what he perceived as the absurdly grotesque political environment and demeanours of a clearly-delineated point in historical time.

He had turned to political satire, he said, because of a single word: "Nixon". He was proud to say that his devout New Deal Democratic family had considered Nixon a crook some twenty years before the rest of the country caught on. When, in a single week in April 1971, the president granted leniency to Lieutenant William Calley, one day after Calley's conviction for the murder of twenty-two Vietnamese civilians at My Lai, and then released an anti-abortion statement proclaiming his "personal belief in the sanctity of human life," Roth could not resist writing an op-ed piece, which *The New York Times* rejected as "tasteless." Barbara Sproul, living with him in Woodstock at the time, tells me that she remembers him banging away on the typewriter and saying over and over, "Tasteless, I'll show them tasteless!" In a mere three months, he had completed the full-length anti-Nixon satire, *Our Gang*. (Pierpont 2013:71)

The result was a piece that is as fast-paced and relentlessly witty, as it is fully disturbing. Indeed, little is Roth interested in taking precautions as to the identification of the real-life inspiration for the parodical characters he constructs. The list of names he provides is transparent and scourging, as well as furiously aimed at dislocating the readers' misplaced sensitivities. Radically departing from his previous, hilariously popular *Portnoy's Complaint*, the author's fifth novel revolves around the caricatural Trick E. Dixon and what stands out as his pitiful group of advisors and devout supporters (among whom the likes of the Highbrow Coach, a.k.a. Henry Kissinger, or Vice President-what's-his-name, a.k.a. Spiro Agnew). For the 21st century reader, now discovering this rather overlooked or dismissed piece of the grand Rothian corpus, Ira Nadel's note on the (f)actual chronology is essential. It reestablishes the succession of events, as Roth's 1971 biting satire was not an echo of, but rather preceded and, potentially, foreshadowed the 1973 Watergate revelations, the VP's resignation in October 1973, and Nixon's 1974 impeachment and resignation. (cf. Nadel 2011:180)

Philip Roth's flagellation of Nixon's convoluted rhetoric, fallacious logic, narcissistic outbursts, contempt for what he took for a completely gullible

electorate did, indeed, paint an unmistakably realistic, though engrossing portrait of a controversial American President while he was still in office. Nowadays, media productions, such as the recent and hotly debated *Don't Look Up*, are part of a long series of artistic endeavours which have set out to dismantle the terrifying lack of substance of political leadership in the Third Millennium, somewhat, yet not essentially upgraded and modified from Roth's depicted Seventies. Writings like *Our Gang* challenge the readers' consciousness. As the analysis will demonstrate, the novel's (im)pertinence goes beyond criticizing the specific public figure it revolves around for inspiration. Prone to cyclic re-readings and reassessments, like much of the author's oeuvre, the book illustrates his outstanding perceptiveness and dedication to cultivating civic awareness, while faithfully and, inevitably, critically recording the moral decay of contemporary societies.

2. (De)Constructing respectability. An awakening

When discussing "Distinctive Features of Roth's Artistic Vision", John N. McDaniel (2003) proves to be one of the researchers who point out the writer's uncompromising reflection on and of the fickleness of private and public principles, values, and ideas as central to his significant body of work.

Roth's assault on the American experience – his exploration of moral fantasy, his concern for moral consciousness, his willingness to confront the grander social and political phenomena of our time – is, I think, the most significant aspect of his art. [...] Roth has demonstrated a willingness to explore the limits of his artistic creed with a deeply felt concern for man and society, a concern that is detectable beneath his ponderous realistic novels and his most vitriolic satire. It is that concern, I think, that leads Roth, in his most recent fiction, to employ some of the same artistic strategies that he has criticized in his fellow writers. *Our Gang*, for example, comes perilously close to substituting "life for art", a point that is emphasized by Roth's preface to the May, 1973, "Watergate Edition" of the novel [...] That much is frighteningly recognizable even in Roth's most recent fiction is, however, Roth's best defense against charges of inconsistency. (McDaniel 2003: 52-53)

On the one hand, the presidential discourse in *Our Gang* might strike the reader as far-fetched, inflated, and utterly farcical. On the other hand, the truly worrisome message it carries across, via pungent vocabulary and figures of speech, regards the stubborn opaqueness of members of the administration vis-a-vis anything that is foreign to their own petty interests, their seemingly growing ignorance and oblivion of the true nature and obligations of having been elected to the offices they treasure. Therefore, before moving on to a selection of illustrative passages from the novel per se, we must dwell on the background that triggered Roth's almost violent reaction to the troublesome waves of 20th century evolution in a U.S. society that appeared to be drifting away from its democratic tradition.

To make matters clear from the onset of his ominous volume, the erudite Roth resorts to intertextuality, opening it with two relevant excerpts, one from Jonathan Swift's 1726 *A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms* and the other from George Orwell's 1946 essay "Politics and the English Language". While Swift refers to false representation and lying ("so perfectly well understood and so universally practiced among human Creatures"), Orwell's featured passage connects political chaos to the decline of language and goes even further in terms of denunciation: "Political language [...] is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder

respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind". This statement provides a proper opening to Roth's own exploration of malignancy and decay.

The connection between the two fictional *mottos* – Orwell's and Swift's, and the story yet to unfold is established, inextricably, by a direct quote from Richard Nixon's April 3, 1971 address from San Clemente (the fictional counterpart of which becomes San Dementia). It makes the transition towards a succession of six chapters, which capture the abominable parallelism between political and human degradation, as well as the language of private and public presidential statements. Due to space limitations, this article will only address the first three of these chapters (i.e the book's first half), which create the necessary tension and suspense for the (anti)-climactic denouement.

The parallel comes as no surprise, considering that Nixon's real-life figure, which animates this fictionalization, was perceived as toxic and adrift quite early in his career.

It is worth noting that *Our Gang* was published before the full disclosure of government corruption in the Watergate scandal. Thus, Roth's growing disenchantment with President Nixon and American society may be traced to the Vietnam War and the upheavals of the 1960s. Describing the 1960s as "a demythologizing decade", Roth perceived the fighting in Southeast Asia and the Presidencies of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon as demonstrating a "counterhistory" to the patriotism upon which his generation was raised. Roth wrote, "The shock to the system was enormous - not least to those like myself who belong to what may have been the most propagandized generation of young people in American history, our high school and college years colored by the worst of the Cold War years - Berlin, Korea, Joe McCarthy; also the first American generation to bear the full brunt of the mass media and advertising." (Briley 2017:144)

While propaganda of all types may well have extended beyond the generation Roth represented and addressed, so has the appeal of his writing, echoing across decades into the 21st century. The very ingeniousness of what seems to be rather a quick-paced novella than a full-grown novel is remarkable. The infamous Tricky E. Dixon makes his first appearance during an interview, or, rather, an interrogation by a citizen who is appalled by the My Lai massacre and tries to comprehend and expose the (lack of) logic behind it. While the citizen's irony is obvious from the very beginning of the verbal exchange ("Your conscience, Sir, is a marvel to us all" – Roth 1972: 1), Dixon's boasting rhetoric ("I'd rather be a one-term President" – *ibid.*), his cynically cultivated newspeak ("I am not going to interfere in the internal affairs of another country" – *ibid.*) and his fierce protection of personal interests trickle into the pages, where they will literally explode later on.

As the protagonist insists on using the resonance, wording, and overall appearance of honest and open-minded statements to mimic democratic behaviour and court the public opinion, he is presented as a living oxymoron, a contradiction in terms and actions. Pragmatics dismantles his discourse. Taken in isolation, many of his statements may sound proper and be exactly what the nation and the world might need to hear. The context, however, contradicts and ridicules them, and Philip Roth unforgivingly exposes the propagandist rift. The entire story projects an alternative scenario, deeply embedded in the context of the depicted age and, therefore, all the more believable. The *what ifs*, the counterfactual plotlines that Roth was to later master in *The Plot against America* are present in the citizen's attempt to reason with Dixon and urge him to confess his real beliefs.

The president, however, is too sly and experienced in dissimulation to fall into easy traps. The interview functions as a test for his abilities to digress and distract attention from the real issues of the war in Vietnam. Picking up on Nixon's actual speaking out for the rights of the unborn as proof of his respect for the inalienable right to life, Roth engages in a ventriloquizing charade, featuring Tricky E. Dixon and his advisors. Their lack of scruples and moral concerns is meant to emphasize, in an extreme manner, the absurdity of hypocritical public behaviour, which mimics righteousness to mask ruthless and treacherous backstage political moves. By means of exemplifying and magnifying a set of negative features that are easily identifiable in the public sphere, regardless of place and time, Roth is intent on disturbing the status quo of communities whose spirit of justice and self-protection seems to lie dormant.

3. Satire sans frontières

Roth's diversified arsenal of rhetorical tools and strategies aims to shatter indifference and routine. A press conference follows in Chapter 2: the questioner, Mr. Asslick, suggests a comparison between the San Dementia resident and Martin Luther King or even "the late Robert F. Charisma" (Roth 1972: 10), Kennedy's fictional equivalent, on the basis of the alleged battle for the rights of a discriminated minority. The President's shameless egocentrism and his uninterrupted string of logical fallacies prove as ridiculous as they are unnerving, while he emphasizes his superiority to King on account of "working within the Constitution" (Roth 1972: 11). Feigning innocence and humility, he is perfectly aware of his offensiveness and anticipates any possible retort. To counter it, he proclaims his version of events as the ultimate truth: "This is meant to be no criticism of Dr. King, but just a simple statement of fact". (ibid.)

Dixon rides the wave of civil and minority rights to pose as both a valiant warrior on behalf of his people in general ("I will not be intimidated by extremists or militants or violent fanatics" – ibid.) and, particularly, as a saviour of imperiled minorities ("Vice President What's-his-name was also unborn once, an unborn Greek-American, and proud to have been one" – Roth 1972: 16). While Roth has been known as infuriating to many by his constant denunciation of the shortcomings and exaggerations of the once noble ideology of political correctness, *Our Gang* provides a blunt exhibition of the monsters that the systematic distortion of good intentions may breed. After going as far as to acknowledge that even Democratic rivals, such as predecessor Lyin' B. Johnson, were once unborn and, therefore, according to his professed logic, entitled to recognition ("I have no doubt that he was an outstanding fetus down there in Texas before he came into public life" – idem: 17), Tricky Dixon takes his patronizing comments and his self-serving fabrications even further:

You just cannot imagine, for instance, the impact that this is going to have on the people in the under-developed countries. There are the Russians and the Chinese, who don't even allow adults to vote, and here we are in America, investing billions and billions of the taxpayers' dollars in a scientific project designed to extend the franchise to people who cannot see or talk or hear or even think, in the ordinary sense of the word. (Roth 1972: 19)

Following Dixon's tragic-comical explanation of the mechanisms by which embryos might be able to cast their votes is as fascinating as it is appalling: it blends ethics and electoral rights with economical lingo and haphazard attacks

against the United States' traditional competitors, if not enemies. This is exactly the kind of effect that Roth aims to create in the mind of the reader, who is bound to recognize a type of absurdity that is no longer – and has, in fact, never been – the apantage of fiction alone. Unabashedly mocking a world leader whom he presents as fervently articulating his devotion to creating “a world in which *everybody*, regardless of race, creed, or color, will be unborn” (Roth 1972: 23), Roth inscribes himself in the long line of satirists who have brought to their readers' attention, via various humoristic approaches, socio-political realities which might have otherwise been too inconvenient, embarrassing or, at times, even dangerous to point out.

Taking on political satire quite early in his career (“At Bucknell University, where I went to college and edited a literary magazine in the fifties, I devoted myself nearly as much to writing satire as I did to writing fiction” – Roth in Lelchuk 1971), the author places himself in the company of writers, journalists, entertainers who, in time, have sought and delivered the practically futile, yet morally lacerating and thought-provoking solutions which lay in their power: “Satiric retribution. Parodic justice” (ibid.). While retracing Roth's involvement with a literary genre which is, by definition, a tool of social criticism, intent on identifying and exhibiting private and public flaws and faux pas, Anne Margret Daniel outlines the writer's lineage and legacy. She offers a brief analysis of intertextual erudition, to be followed up on *à volonté*:

Roth writes this novel as a dramatist. *Our Gang* takes its name from Hal Roach's famous troop of scruffy and winsome kids whose keen social and slapstick humor has gladdened moviegoers' and televisionland hearts since 1922. *Our Gang* is the script for a paradoxical combination of a dismal television docudrama and scary sitcom set in the heart of the West Wing. Ridiculous petty universalizing and gross understatements are the premise for *Our Gang*'s humor, just as they are in the best-known portion of *Gulliver's Travels*, the voyage to Lilliput. Indeed, Irish literature inhabits *Our Gang* in interesting ways. “Tricky Holds a Press Conference” is full of reminders of Swift and is written in a style and tenor akin to Joyce's or Beckett's. The nonsensical back-and-forths between Didi and Gogo in *Waiting for Godot* and the senseless sexual harassments of Leopold Bloom in the courtroom scene during the *Circe* chapter of *Ulysses* are both very like this chapter of *Our Gang*. The naming is downright eighteenth-century, borrowed from the language of plays by Sheridan or Goldsmith: Fickle, Lard, Codger, Shrewd, Wallow, Hollow. (Daniel 2005: 61)

Intertextual or not, yet always humorous, satire habitually functions as a militant vehicle of social study, meant to provide insight into the entrails of the power games or questionable morals which it aims to counter. Roth shapes his as an incursion into the depths of a deranged individual – and, perhaps, loyal group – psyche, with a potential to grow, develop, and influence the collective imaginary of a nation, for better or for worse. What must be taken into account is the fact that the U.S. that he depicts and addresses has already been torn, confused, and disillusioned by the erratically violent transformations of the 20th century, and by the inherent frustrations caused by the unpredictability and unaccountability of public authorities within and without the country itself. As grounded as the novel is in the realities of a specific era in American history, it echoes preoccupations and practices that extend beyond national borders and (communication) strategies. One may rightfully conclude, then, that its relevance and belonging to the ever-valid Rothian canon are fully justified: “Chances are that *Our Gang* will indefinitely remain relevant, present and frightening”. (Daniel 2005: 61)

4. Indignation vs. indifference. Behind the rhetorical curtains

The interplay between backstage episodes and Dixon's stepping up into the limelight is what calibrates the novel. The high-voltage public addresses are interspersed with insight into the President's private insecurity and paranoia, as well as into the plotting and scheming behind what eventually comes to the polished surface of largely broadcasted speeches. The very titles of the four chapters that have not been nominated so far are telling: "Tricky Has Another Crisis, or The Skull Session", "Tricky Addresses the Nation (The Famous 'Something Is Rotten In the State of Denmark' Speech)", "The Assassination of Tricky", and, last but not least, "On the Comeback Trail, or Tricky in Hell". As pointed out, this article addresses the first half of the novel(la), as it observes Tricky's ascent to full irresponsibility and descent into ultimate self-serviance.

In an essay entitled "What's So Funny about Richard Nixon? Vonnegut's *Jailbird* and the Limits of Comedy", Will Kaufman steps into the debate about the rehabilitation of Nixon's image after the Watergate Scandal. While outlining an entire host of satirical oeuvres of the 20th century, he places Roth amidst the "comedical firepower that had been directed at Nixon" (Kaufman 2007: 623). He then efficiently captures the gist of the aforementioned chapters and the writer's move from the infuriation and embarrassment caused by Nixon's initial 1960 candidacy, to the practical condemnation of the President's first term in office.

Ten years later, with his amazement having hardened into contempt, Roth depicted a scheming President, Trick E. (Tricky) Dixon, in a host of bizarre scenarios: declaring himself a homosexual in order to evade charges of adultery, invading Denmark for its harbouring of an anti-Dixon critic, drowning naked like an aborted foetus in a huge plastic bag and challenging Satan for the presidency of Hell. Presented largely as a series of dialogues, monologues and mock news broadcasts, *Our Gang* is an extended burlesque that capitalizes on Nixon's verbal mannerisms for its immediate comic effect, but it also relies on a stretching of logic to ridiculous conclusions. (Kaufman 2007: 627)

While some embraced Roth's ethical stand, there were voices, as Kaufman (among others) points out, who viewed *Our Gang* as an ephemeral expression of indignation, rather than an accomplished artistic endeavour. Given the satire's inherent employment of wit, exaggeration, parody, and double meanings taken to extremes, alongside its implicit license to describe and release social tension via the open derision of what should, ideally, stand out as exemplary institutions and their top representatives, it is hardly surprising that Roth should have chosen it as his preferred literary vehicle, even if temporarily. The author's interview by Alan Lelchuk, "On Satirizing Presidents", emphasizes his well-documented acquaintance with the satirical tradition in general and in the United States as such. While he acknowledges the predecessors of his own attempts to appropriate and appease the genre and their legacy, Roth also proves aware of the extent to which such literary exercises can convey meaningful and lasting messages.

From the very beginning of the discussion, Roth shows his undeterred realism, when he addresses exactly the rather limited scope and endurance of the satirical genre. He, thus, emphasizes the fact that, by default, it encapsulates the spirit of particular times and events, despite its deeper, oftentimes humanitarian nature.

Political satire isn't a kind of writing that lasts. Though satirists by and large deal with enduring social and political problems, their comic appeal lies in the use they make of the situation at that moment. It's unlikely that reading even the very best satiric works of another era we feel anything like the glee or the outrage experienced by a contemporary audience. Subtleties of wit and malice are wholly lost over the years, and we're left to enjoy the broadest, least time-bound aspects of the work, and to hunt through footnotes in order to make connections and draw inferences that are the teeth and claws of this kind of writing. (Roth in Lelchuk 1971)

It is, therefore, obvious that not only was Philip Roth cognizant of the genre-based limitations of *Our Gang*, but also willing to inscribe more into it than his mere frustration with momentary political actions and figures. By pushing the limits of linguistic and ideological decency, he points to the apparently limitless debasement of morals, style, and narrative in what should be the realm of diplomacy, equilibrium, and harmonious cooperation, to the best interests of individual citizens and nations at large. Tricky's entire Chapter 3 conversation with his political and spiritual coaches, in the White House underground locker room, revolves around his need to achieve credibility and the lengths to which he is willing to go to secure a second presidential term. The discussion about the possibility of posing as either homosexual or impotent to offset the Boy Scouts of America's accusation that, as a supporter of the rights of the unborn, he is implicitly in favour of sexual intercourse, is both ludicrous and indicative of the protagonist's duplicity and thirst for power.

When faced with charges as preposterous as his public statements, he does not simply refute them. He rather thinks of how to reinvent himself and to readjust his public persona, so as to resonate with electoral preferences. His political agenda is evidently dictated by his personal stakes and Roth rejoices in imagining a brainstorming session upon the matter of fornication:

TRICKY: Suppose I spoke from HEW, with the Surgeon General at my side, and he read a medical report stating that I am not now, nor have I ever been in the past, capable of performing coitus.

SPIRITUAL COACH: Mr. President, at the risk of being politically naive again, you *are* the father of two children ... that is, if that means anything, in this context [...]

TRICKY: But why can't we just say they were adopted? (Roth 1972: 36-37)

Apart from the sheer irrationality and foolishness that such working premises are designed to embody, the chapter excels in its portrayal of dishonesty as a manipulative and evil art. When the Highbrow Coach comes up with the idea that the best solution to any problem is finding a suitable scapegoat to "pin the rap" (Roth 1972: 51), forging a conspiracy does not strike anyone in Dixon's circle as either unlikely or condemnable. Therefore, suggestions are made, arguments as superficial as the circumstances require are thrown into the conversation, and a decision by consensus is reached, after long episodes of lobbying and negotiation. Although intentionally used and abused, the critical media itself comes under heavy scrutiny for its "irresponsible sensationalism" (Roth 1972: 49). Control and self-control stand out as keys to political success, alongside the reliance upon "the wonderful indifference of the American people" (ibid.). The outcome will flourish in the next section of the book, which comprises a notorious address to the nation. It offers Roth ample opportunities to exploit

his mimicry skills and to sketch out what is supposed to rank among the country's all-time favourite presidential addresses, which I will analyze in a different study. Throughout the imaginary, yet not unimaginable conversation, the writer wastes no occasion to belittle the figure of the protagonist, who avidly feeds himself on the aggrandizement of his virtues, while practically disproving every single one of them. Blindsided by the unforgiving parody of Nixon, its tone, abruptness, and (dis)similarities with reality, many readers may have overlooked passages of unrestrained comic genius, unworthy of criticism for their lack of subtlety, which is, in fact, the apantage of satire. For instance, the misspelling of Jimi Hendrix's first name as Jimmy brings about a succulent piece of self-apologetic, self-canonizing discourse, as Dixon is caught up in his incessantly sanctimonious game of saving face:

I am certain, if I know the great majority of good, hard-working colored people in this country, that the time I just took from my pressing duties as President of the United States and Leader of the Free World to correct a single letter in one of their names would not have gone unnoticed and unappreciated. Call me a dreamer; call me a believer in humanity; call me, as the song has it, a cockeyed optimist; and be sure to call me a big man too, for admitting to my error; but I am sure that they would understand just how difficult a problem this is for us to solve, given the kinds of ways they spell those names of theirs, and I think they would have that wonderful wisdom, such as comes to people who work in menial occupations, to realize that a job of these proportions is not going to be completed overnight, and that consequently we are not about to be bullied into spelling their names correctly by marches or demonstrations or mule trains parked on the White House lawn. (Roth 1972: 82-83)

While the President pretends to be preoccupied with and respectful of issues of African American cultural specificity, the entire *we vs. they* rhetoric he articulates, wrapped in his self-sufficient blend of pompousness and superiority, is masterfully crafted by Roth to create the cardinal opposite effect. Within a matter of sentences, the protagonist goes from a presumably affable and intently subservient position to the vilification of an enemy who is spontaneously constructed. Moreover, it is also projected against a historical background of resistance and exploitation, the unnamed, but ubiquitous elements of which spring onto the page with the force of repressed racial sentiment and frustration.

Although a marginal episode, which does not occupy, *de facto*, an important place in the plot, the passage seems to fulfill the same role that many parenthetical comments and side-actions do in the Rothian body of work: it draws attention to alternative angles and additional plotlines, which might extend the exploration even further, deepening the magnitude of the revelations and subtly pointing out aspects that deserve further investigation and interpretation. As such, it falls into place with the satirical undertaking, multiplying the obvious meanings and supplementing the possible readings. In Ira Nadel's words,

The satire is part of a tradition of political satire in America, which includes James Russell Lowell's verse satires found in *The Biglow Papers* from the mid-19th century and the work of H. L. Menckem in the early 20th. Like those writers, Roth is also and properly ferocious. In *Our Gang*, he debases Nixon's style, parodying his discourse and thought in the manner of a *farceur*. (Nadel 2011: 184)

5. Conclusion

By being fully partisan and relentlessly critical, Roth presents the ruthlessness of ideological battles via a polarization that holds up an unflattering mirror to 20th-century societies at large, not just the American one in particular. Turning the ritualistic, performative entrails of political discourse inside out, the writer exposes the ethical underpinnings of communal existence, and the overarching, never-ending confrontation between solid moral values and their permeability to corruption and manipulation.

My reading has, thus, hopefully completed and complemented the views of critics such as Till Kinzel and their belief that “*Our Gang* deserves to be read in a more universal way” (Kinzel 2014: 264), as the evils of demagoguery still plague and plunder the 21st century. A known supporter of pluralism and the polyphony of opinions, devoted to exploring subtleties and nuances, Roth produces a rather atypical work. Little is left to the readers’ imagination or interpretation and the *reductio ad absurdum* operates as an efficient persuasive mechanism. He creates a believable tyrant figure via the exploration of discursive loopholes and crevasses and capitalizes on verisimilitude to stir the type of (de)constructive emotion that is essential to ethical, if not literal, revolutions. In an oxymoronic manner, disgust and disapproval breed awareness, opposition, and condemnation: that is the message that endures across the decades out of this underrated, yet most powerful, Rothian period piece.

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**EXECUTION REFASHIONING:
APPROPRIATIVE IMPROVISATION IN E. L. DOCTOROW'S
*THE BOOK OF DANIEL***

ZOHREH RAMIN, MONA JAFARI

University of Tehran, Iran

Abstract: *Daniel Isaacson, the narrator in E. L. Doctorow's The Book of Daniel (1971), recounts the story of the life and execution of his parents, in the form of a doctoral dissertation. As a vehicle of textual politics, Daniel's narration, however, transcends a mere historical retelling of the past and fashions a personal synthesis of the ideological conflicts that have irreversibly damaged him and his family. The present article proposes to argue that Daniel's refashioning of the lives of the Isaacsons is an instance of Stephen Greenblatt's notion of "improvisation". Daniel manipulates familiar history and improvises the past into his own version of fiction, while maintaining sufficient distance. By exposing the conflicting positions in the narrative as deeply flawed ideological constructs, Daniel's appropriative improvisation gestures toward an ultimate synthesis, which, far from endorsing the Old or New Left, de-glorifies radical subversion and limns it as inefficacious.*

Keywords: *E. L. Doctorow, improvisation, Stephen Greenblatt, subversion, textual politics, The Book of Daniel*

1. Introduction

"I suppose you think I can't do the electrocution. I know there is a you. There has always been a you. You: I will show you that I can do the electrocution."
(Daniel Isaacson in Doctorow 1971: 359)

E. L. Doctorow's masterful tour de force *The Book of Daniel* (1971) loosely reenacts the life and execution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, the couple who were convicted of conspiracy to commit espionage for the Soviet Union in 1951. The story is narrated by Daniel Isaacson, son of the Rosenbergs' fictional counterparts, Paul and Rochelle Isaacson, in the form of a doctoral dissertation. Daniel, however, eschews ordinary narration in favour of a calculated meta-narrative that weaves political rhetoric into the warp and woof of its self-reflexive texture. Although some studies have analysed the historiographic quality of Doctorow's novels or his use of fiction in narrating or, more accurately, inventing history in a subversive postmodern armature, a concentrated new historical reading of his *The Book of Daniel* in light of Stephen Greenblatt's (1980) notion of "improvisation" has not been conducted. For instance, in "Narrating History: E.L. Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*", Winifred Farrant Bevilacqua (1987) explores historical narration in the novel and the difficulties of recasting history in narrative form. Susan E. Lorsch's (1982) "Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* as Kunstlerroman: The Politics of Art"

and James R. Thompson's (1996) "The Artist as 'Criminal of Perception': E. L. Doctorow and the Politics of the Imagination" are studies that probe into the fictionality of history and the role of the protagonist in historical reconstruction in the novel. Also, in "Genealogy/Narrative/Power: Questions of Postmodernity in Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel*", T. V. Reed (1992) examines the postmodern conceptions of the above mentioned notions, embedded in the novel. The current paper, however, tackles the subject of historical narration from a fresh perspective, by running athwart the frequently held view that Doctorow's *The Book of Daniel* is disruptively polyphonic. For example, Bernice Schrank (1993) and John G. Parks (1991) both posit the strong possibility of radical political views being consistently voiced in the novel.

Another study arguing for the sustained presence of subversive polyphony in the novel is by Bimbisar Irom (2012), who maintains that *The Book of Daniel* occupies a liminal space between retreat and engagement, critiquing both the Old and the New Left. This paper proposes to argue, instead, that the prospect of radical subversion is ultimately limned as hopeless in the foregoing novel, as the opposing voices are eventually contained in the protagonist's narrative refashioning. Accordingly, focusing on a character rather than on Doctorow himself, the present study posits that Daniel's refashioning of the lives of the Isaacsons into a story as a postgraduate dissertation is an instance of Greenblatt's notion of "improvisation", with significant political implications. As a vehicle of textual politics, Daniel's narrative improvisation is not intended to impact on the other characters in the story, but, rather, on the reader, whom Daniel occasionally addresses directly. Thus, Daniel's appropriative improvisation of the story of his family's life transcends a mere historical narrative of the past, seeking, instead, to provide a personal synthesis of the ideological conflicts that have irrevocably damaged him and his family. However, it will be argued that the synthesis is an improvisatory refashioning that de-glorifies radical subversion and portrays it as ineffectual, thereby dramatically undermining ostensible polyphony in favour of an acquiescent compromise verging on political quietism.

2. Improvisation and narrative self-fashioning

In his influential essay "The Improvisation of Power", Greenblatt (2005: 165) defines improvisation as "the ability both to capitalize on the unforeseen and to transform given materials into one's own scenario" or as "the opportunistic grasp of what seems fixed and established"; as a product of "careful preparation," the improvisatory visage of this ability is actually "a calculated mask" that involves the manipulation of received materials into "a novel shape". The process also entails "displacement" and "absorption," the accomplishment of which requires the improviser to lend himself to "role-playing" (idem: 167, 171). Insinuating himself into the preexisting political, religious, and even psychic structures of his milieu, he turns those structures to his advantage and recasts them into a new shape, detached from their original truth-packed position. In other words, the improviser must fictionalise given materials in order to produce his own interpretation. Furthermore, Greenblatt (idem: 166) adds, "improvisation is made possible by the subversive perception of another's truth as an ideological construct" that is concurrently distant and familiar. This apperception of others' truths as malleable ideological constructs contributes to the improviser's scope of displacement and appropriation.

Similarly, Daniel rewrites familiar history and improvises the past into his own version of fiction, while maintaining sufficient distance. He possesses a talent for entering into the consciousness of another, discerning its most deeply rooted structures as manipulable fiction or, in Greenblatt's (idem: 170) terms, "flexible construct[s]", and refashioning them into his own narrative form. His act of story-making uncovers a belief in the fictionality of the past. Daniel's heightened self-consciousness, coupled with an acute empathetic disposition, makes him what he calls a "criminal of perception" (Doktorow 2006: 37). According to Greenblatt (2005: 171), a successful improvisation depends on "role-playing, which is, in turn, allied to the capacity, as Professor Lerner defines empathy, to see oneself in the other fellow's situation". Analogously, Daniel's narration is filtered through a third-person Daniel, a first-person Daniel, and even Paul and Rochelle, which signifies Daniel's empathetic self-cancellation as the writer of the dissertation. Just like Greenblatt's improviser, the author of the dissertation can "exist for a moment in another and as another" (idem: 172). This self-cancellation helps to efface the traces of the "power" and "possession" that the improviser holds over others (idem: 170). In fact, the calculated diffusion of the foregoing psychic mobility lends credence to the accounts of the dialectical voices presented in the narrative, a rhetorical technique calibrated to obscure the subjective lineaments of the narrator's political analysis as well as the signs of his appropriative power. On the one hand, Daniel the writer fashions Daniel the character(s) assuming multiple points of view in such a way that the fragmentation and heterogeneity of the self contribute to the interplay between the multiple voices of history, prior to the fabrication of his personal synthesis. On the other hand, Daniel's occasional self-effacement in his narrative refashioning is, in effect, a displacement and absorption of the other masquerading under the guise of empathy, whereas such empathy entails the draining of the object of its substance, in order for it to serve as "an appropriate vessel" for the improviser (Greenblatt 2005: 172).

Daniel also seems to be well aware of what Greenblatt describes as "the dependence of even the innermost self upon a language that is always necessarily given from without and upon representation before an audience" (idem: 179). Nonetheless, his act of story-making transcends a mere attempt to evoke pity for himself by becoming a tale of himself. Daniel's concerns initially seem more in line with Frank Lentricchia's (1980: xiv) concern with "the multiplicity of histories", history as characterised by "forces of heterogeneity, contradiction, fragmentation, and difference". Daniel's fictionalisation of the past registers a potential shift from "History" to histories, which would encompass, at first blush, a subversive and polyphonic perception of the past. However, the multiplicity of voices that initially carries a patina of polyphony in the representation of the "forces of heterogeneity" (ibid.) does not hold out in Daniel's appropriative narrative. This restriction demarcates the point at which the current study departs from and disarticulates the claim to disruptive polyphony in the novel proposed in a number of the studies mentioned above.

3. "[A] portrait of electric current, normally invisible, moving through a field of resistance"

Despite his uncomfortable oscillations between three different standpoints, that is to say, Old Left, New Left, and, to a much lesser degree, a right-wing stance, Daniel's improvisation eventually manipulates all three ideological constructs in

his own personal narrative in such a way as to reach a compromise that may, in fact, prove conducive to the status quo. His use of textual politics in narrative form strongly recalls Terry Eagleton's (2008: 123) reading of deconstructive texts: "Unable to break the structures of state power, post-structuralism found it possible instead to subvert the structures of language. Nobody, at least, was likely to beat you over the head for doing so". Eagleton (1996: 4) traces the postmodern proclivity for textualisation to the epochal shift from revolutionary transformation to textual subversion that transpired in the late '60s and '70s. In other words, textual politics could serve as a means of compensating for an undermined capacity for action or "political powerlessness" (Montrose 1989: 26). In a similar fashion, Daniel opts for writing as the proper outlet for his ostensible dissent. This has the potential to become an expedient proxy for political action. Nevertheless, far from a mere ventilation of a dissenting voice, Daniel's capitalisation on textual improvisation is a way of negotiating and reconciling the past, the present, and the future, but, as Greenblatt (2005: 186) also points out, "even a hostile improvisation reproduces the relations of power that it hopes to displace and absorb".

Ultimately, none of the opposing positions proves effective or worthwhile in Daniel's narrative refashioning. The Isaacsons meant nothing to the impetuous New Left and received virtually no support from the conservative Old Left. In respect of the Old Left, Daniel contemptuously remarks, "Communists have no respect for people, only for positions ... you blind them with your ideals and while they are looking up you stab them in the belly for the sake of your ideals" (Doktorow 2006: 248). In one of the instances in which the reaction of the Old Left to the incarceration of Mr. and Mrs. Isaacson is revealed, Robert Lewin, Daniel's foster father, notes: "Of course the Party made no effort to help them" (idem: 268). As a matter of fact, at another point, Daniel states that within twenty-four hours of his parents' arrest, they were both "written out of the Party. They were erased from the records. The party did not want to be associated with anyone up on an espionage rap. Quickly and quietly erased out of existence." (idem: 151).

As for the attitude of the New Left toward the Isaacsons, the part in Book Two, Halloween, where Daniel meets Artie Sternlicht, a guru of the New Left, contains revelatory observations. The anarchistic and impudent Artie observes, "You want to know what was wrong with the old American Communists? They were into the system. They wore ties. They held down jobs. They put people up for president. They thought politics is something you do at a meeting. When they got busted they called it tyranny" (idem: 186). Artie's hectoring diatribes betoken a radical departure from the founding ethos of the republic toward an actively sustained anarchistic dissidence. Redirecting his attention to the Isaacsons, he remarks,

Your folks didn't know shit. The way they handled themselves at their trial was pathetic. I mean they played by *their* rules. The government's rules. You know what I mean? ... they made motions, they pleaded innocent, they spoke only when spoken to, they played the game ... the whole frame of reference brought them down because they acted like defendants at a trial. (Doktorow 2006: 186)

Unlike the Isaacsons, who, in Artie's words, played by the government's rules, Artie asserts that if he is put on trial and found guilty, he will "find them guilty. And I won't come on except as a judge of them, a new man, like a new nation with new laws of life" (idem: 187). In other words, he would be assuming a

position of authority as a new man following the laws and principles of his own making, not as a victim still clutching at a covert belief in the system. Revolution for the New Left, in contradistinction to the Old Left, consists in action-packed insurgency and destructive anarchy, both of which ultimately prove ineffectual and abortive in Daniel's narrative refashioning.

Moreover, finding the senile Mindish immersed in the quintessential capitalist temple, Disneyland, while riding an Autopia, which "offers only the illusion of steering to the person behind the wheel" (idem: 353), registers the upshot of the old Communist ideals, that is to say, a demeaning assimilation into the cretinising and etherising world of consumerism. Daniel's part in establishing the foundation dedicated to his parents seems little more than a kind and compensatory gesture for his dying sister, Susan, with whose radical impulses Daniel hardly ever agreed, and who, he concludes, "died of a failure of analysis" (idem: 365). Daniel's sharp pen cuts in both directions. In fact, his own temporary involvement in New Left radicalism only serves to contribute to the purposeful impression of a polyphonic dialogue that consists in the appraisal of the opposing voices, which ultimately terminates with further skepticism and discontent. Daniel's brooding about his part in revolutionary protests during the one night he spent in jail reflects his increasing unease and all too familiar disillusion:

I will tell now how one boy in the big cell, in this grand community of brotherhood bust, how this one boy is unable to share the bruised cheery fellowship of his companions or care for gossip that Artie Sternlicht has topped everyone by landing in the hospital . . . but sits in the corner, unable to stretch out full length, a spasm of *wariness* bowing his spine, knotting his fingers to his palms, his knees to his chest, his head to his knees. He cannot enjoy such places. They are too *familiar*. He knows how far they are from home. (Doktorow 2006: 313; italics added)

The devastating impacts of his childhood trauma caused by the draconian punishment of his parents reverberate through his reflection, as he intimates that he is too "familiar" with these situations to labour under the illusion of effecting a dramatic change in the status quo through radical political action. He is too "sensitive" to survive such places and has been through too much to be able to unswervingly advocate such mentality, which, in his experience, always lands one in the all "too familiar" place, namely, prison.

Daniel's casual indifference to the outbreak of student protests at Columbia University at the very end of the novel is another testament to his ultimate disavowal and distrust of radical activism. When someone comes into the library asking Daniel to leave, as they are shutting down the university, he reluctantly replies, "You mean I have to get out?" in answer to which the protestor grumbles, "Close the book, man, what's the matter with you, don't you know you're liberated?" (Doktorow 2006: 367). Daniel's nonchalant indifference gives away his misgivings about radical subversion, initially obfuscated in his rhetorical mobility. In fact, Daniel's narrative accommodates "the multiplicity of histories" and "forces of heterogeneity," bearing a veneer of subversive polyphony, only to contain the disruptive forces in a tacit reconciliation with the established power. By exposing the disparate positions in the narrative as deeply flawed ideological constructs, Daniel turns the past to his own advantage in a way that renders any future evidence of his parents' guilt or innocence futile and irrelevant, as he reflects, "perhaps they are neither guilty nor innocent" (idem: 159-160).

Daniel's fictionalisation of the catastrophic ramifications of radical subversion marks a recourse to the safer and less destructive territory of narrative and its cathartic promise, by which a nonviolent compromise can be orchestrated. Daniel's improvisatory refashioning of the life and execution of his parents effectively constitutes what is akin to an invisible electric current that passes through the potentially subversive field of resistance, arresting the flow of polyphony along the way by the portrayal of radical politics as hopelessly dysfunctional. Daniel concocts a rhetorical antidote to the noxious ideological constructs that have ruined his family, in a bid to put to the test and call into question the ideological ideals and values that recede infinitely out of reach and never seem to materialise in practice. Pushing opposing ideological structures to the background, Daniel endeavours to keep the politics of dominance and subversion at a distance in and through his narrative refashioning, while covertly conducting to the status quo by containing virtually all attempts at far-reaching disruption. Consequently, Daniel's improvisation is intended to operate on the readers, who might be wavering between ideals promoted by the Old Left and the New Left, in such a way as to disabuse them of fancy notions like radical subversion and revolution.

4. Conclusion

The synthesis formulated by Daniel's narrative improvisation exceeds the status of a mere cathartic ventilation of radical impulses by means of textual politics, hinting instead at a rhetorically framed resignation to the status quo, which could also be seen as the unacknowledged complicity of Daniel's narrative refashioning with established power. In other words, the final product of Daniel's improvisation disapproves of radical subversion and, by extension, of strict adherence to both left- and right-wing politics and, instead, promotes a compromise that, *ipso facto*, borders on quietism. As a result, despite its misleading first impression, Daniel's narrative improvisation cunningly employs the veneer of polyphony only to contain its constituent voices at the end by portraying all subversive acts as ineffectual and futile.

Having learned from experience, Daniel has ultimately come to the conclusion that, in the capitalist system of the U.S., radical subversion is doomed to disastrous failure with dire consequences, and the closest one can get to a subversive gesture is by appropriative improvisation in writing. Nonetheless, while improvising and fashioning stories within the confines of the system may theoretically compensate for political quiescence, rhetorical narratives such as Daniel's concurrently betray a tacit concession to the system by manipulating the reader into eschewing radical political action, thereby subserving the containment of radically subversive forces.

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THE TECHNOCRATIC MONKS: ART, DEFENSE SYSTEMS, AND LAPSED CATHOLICS IN DON DELILLO'S *UNDERWORLD*

ALEXANDRU BUDAC

West University of Timișoara

Abstract: *A kaleidoscopic narrative encompassing all of Don DeLillo's recurrent motifs – sport games and war games, paranoia and secret codes, obsessed collectors of secular relics, religious rituals superseded by consumerism, dysfunctional relationships – , Underworld (1997) is at least as relevant today as it was in the late '90s. My paper centers upon land art and desert lore as tropes meant to convey loneliness and the feeling that we have become a mere abstract audience in the political theatre, but it also takes into consideration the main protagonist's Jesuit education.*

Keywords: *Catholicism, Don DeLillo, Italian Americans, nuclear war, postmodern art, Underworld*

1. Introduction: A strong belief in big numbers

Generally considered as Don DeLillo's masterpiece, *Underworld* (1997) is a summa comprising his favorite topics, those specific to his early works and those he has been approaching in a more minimalistic, low-key manner after the September 11 attacks: the American cult for sporting events, the media saturated culture, nuclear angst, paranoia, political cabals, the capital flows, the whole catastrophic specter a human mind can conceive, the quest for personal redemption through art. What singles *Underworld* out among Don DeLillo's books is not its historical acumen and its encyclopedic ambition, but rather the fact that, in this novel, more than anywhere else, DeLillo follows in the steps of Walt Whitman, as writer Rachel Kushner phrased it, by addressing his fiction to the people of the future (Kushner 2015: ix). This kaleidoscopic, disrupted postmodern saga about life in the United States during the Cold War from 1951 to the early 1990s might seem today not necessarily prophetic or prescient, but rather morally accurate. DeLillo's aesthetic takes advantage on the military-industrial complex, the media culture, the way humans living in big cities reshape their environment in order to probe how modern-day life affects their emotional balance and distorts their consciousness. Joseph Tabbi (1995: 174) notices that DeLillo acomodates "the collapse of distinctions between nature and technology" and that "the material world becomes, in his fiction, the concrete material and outward form of everyday thought."

Underworld is a novel about solitude in an interconnected world and about anxieties which are even more pervasive now than they used to be almost thirty years ago. What makes *Underworld* exceptional is neither its politics – actually DeLillo "never became a political novelist" (Coward 2008:154) –, nor its paranoid

framing (Thomas Pynchon is still the best at that). Its vibes, both funereal when it comes to the corporate culture, and uplifting when human bonding through sports fandoms and parental love comes into focus, are fueled by small talk, petty misunderstandings, private jokes, unexpected time arcs which bring together small objects – a treasured baseball or the comfortable sole of a running shoe –, ancient children games adapted to the New York streets. All these are conjured up only to get lost immediately in a world obsessed with big things: big business, big projects, big crowds, big landfills, big communication networks, big planes and airports, and even bigger bombs. The technocrats of *Underworld* replace the faith and religious rituals with a strong belief in mathematical systems and obsessive compulsive disorders of the bureaucratic kind. One might say that they are number fetishists:

Numbers on a large enough scale may well come to substitute for an idea of God, and in relation to such a sea change we may fear an addictive compulsion to believe only in the numbers, whose combinations are capable of infinite modulation. (Fletcher 2012: 390)

The commitment to statistics, mathematical models, and bleeding edge technology in every aspect of human life renders ethical issues redundant, because a high degree of abstractization disconnects one's perception from the real state of things. While assessing – in his conversation with the philosopher Nick Bostrom – our general inability to evaluate future risks and the consequences of our actions in the long term, Sam Harris (2021: 324) notes that “people are not able to locate the moral injury”, if the model regarding future actions for a better life on our planet is too hypothetical or utopian. We tend to react better to moral issues, like the suffering of our peers, when we recognize them in a way that makes possible a straightforward and compassionate analogy with our own lives. “As we scale the problem, people care less.” (idem: 322). In *Underworld*, Don DeLillo's belief in the redemptive force of artistic creativity and his reevaluation of some Catholic precepts in a secular context mend this fracture between the cold technocratic thinking and affectivity. Even so, one must take notice that “DeLillo's literary Catholicism is all stained glass: beautiful artifice, ornamentation in place of lived belief.” (Ripatrazzone 2020: 26)

2. The trickster and the land artist

The insidious consequences of action at a distance which renders one's tasks, the human relationships, and even the possibility of total annihilation more and more abstract troubles Matt Shay, whose work for a secret facility called The Pocket, hidden “somewhere under the gypsum hills of southern New Mexico” (DeLillo 2015: 401), consists in evaluating the risks of a nuclear accident:

There were people here who weren't sure whether they were doing weapons work. They were involved in exploratory research and didn't know exactly what happened to their findings, their simulations, the results they discovered or predicted. This is one of the underlying themes of the systems business, where all the work connects at levels and geographic points far removed from the desk toil and lab projects of the researchers. (DeLillo 2015: 401)

Lost in a white desert, where even animals bleached themselves to escape predators in that “sea-bottomed world”, Matt Shay, his face “pressed to a computer

screen” (DeLillo 2015: 402), tries to understand how his colleagues, “the bombheads” (idem: 403, 404), can be fully dedicated to their work and yet indifferent to the consequences of the weapons of technology. Matt reminisces about his childhood years – those first years after his father left to buy a pack of Lucky Strikes, never to return – when his mother took him to Loew’s Paradise, where he liked to immerse himself in the Italian décor. There were paintings with gilded frames, statues, marble busts, and angels on pediments, but most of all there was the glowing light of the projector, so soothing an experience that he would not have been surprised to see his father’s ghost summoned up in the semidarkness. (idem: 408) This used to be for Matt Shay the most genuine spiritual experience:

He climbed to seats near the ceiling, where stars twinkled and moved. The whole sky moved across the ceiling, stars and constellations and misty blue clouds. His mother wanted him to be an altar boy when he was old enough but this was more tremendous than church. (DeLillo 2015: 407)

As an adult, the former moviegoer and former chess prodigy delves in the numbers pouring out of his computer screen, overwhelmed by uncontrollable emotions every time he hears the sonic boom of military aircrafts flying at low altitudes across the desert, “and then the afterclap rolling off the mountains, like they were blowing out a seam in the world.” (408) He came to this place, the Pocket, to seek self-knowledge, yet he ends up stoned and paranoid at parties, driving erratically among the dunes, the names of people and places floating “deeper into the white parts of the map, where he would try to find a clue to his future.” (422) The desert, which is both a landscape and a state of mind, “features in nearly all of Don DeLillo’s novels as an ‘end zone’ of meaning.” (Tanner 2000: 203)

This estrangement from one’s daily activity, this living in denial is in stark contrast to Albert Bronzini’s dualistic conviction - that no matter what physicists say, it is we who imbue time with meaning (Bronzini is a science teacher and Matt Shay’s chess mentor, a benign character in *Underworld*):

There is a balance, a kind of standoff between the time continuum and the human entity, our frail bundle of soma and psyche. We eventually succumb to time, it’s true, but time depends on us. [...] Never mind the time theorists, the cesium devices that measure life and death of the smallest silvery trillionth of a second. He thought that we were the only crucial clocks, our minds and bodies, way stations for the distribution of time. Think about it, Einstein, my fellow Albert. (DeLillo 2015: 235)

This is an assessment of things by someone endowed with a charitable nature, the Italian American teacher, a “redemptive figure” in *Underworld*, who dedicates himself to helping others. (Giaino 2011: 135-136) Bronzini’s line of thought echoes in a subtle, secular way Saint Augustine’s meditations on time from Book XI of his *Confessions*. The bishop of Hippo argues that we deceive ourselves by trying to measure time. We speak of a “long time” or a “short time” when we refer to the past or the future, but this is just a matter of subjective perception, because the former has passed and one has to rely on memory, whereas the latter does not yet exist, it is related to our still unfulfilled expectations. So, we are always aware of periods of time from the present moment when we speak and think, but the present has no duration and our habitual use of words – that is, the past, present, and future tense – is rather inaccurate. (Augustine 1961: 264-269)

However, he proves that we do measure time, because, when he recites a psalm or reads a book, he continuously pays attention to the words already spoken and confined to memory, while anticipating the parts still to be recited. “It is in my own mind, then, that I measure time.” (idem: 275-278) Reciting the psalm makes him aware of the way small parts relate to the whole and serves him well in extrapolating the private reading to “the narrative of a person’s life, in which the parts are individual actions, or the narrative of a period of history, in which the parts are individual lives. Life is a text, whose living is its reading.” (Stock 1998: 239) Augustine’s rationale is sound from a Christian perspective, where he contrasts human life with God’s eternity. Conversely, for the characters of *Underworld*, subjective time perception is deeply affected by statistics, news, loops in Home Video systems, repressed traumas, addictions, deadlines, anxious expectations, selfishness. As a consequence, the small parts of their lives seem not to add up from their point of view, but the fragmented stories cohere unexpectedly in the larger frame of events that DeLillo designs for each of them.

For the most part, the dominant voice in *Underworld* is Nick Shay’s, Matt’s older brother, afflicted by the unsolved disappearance of their father, Jimmy Constanza, and haunted by a crime committed in his teens, namely the killing of the waiter and drug addict George Manza with a sawed off shotgun. Was it truly an accident or a death wish? Harold Bloom (2019: 411) states that “until *Underworld*, DeLillo’s characters are curious blends of personalities and ideograms.” Usually, DeLillo provides obsessive compulsive disorders to the characters who are morally dubious and control freaks, such as the Vietnam veteran and lone gunman Glen Sely in *Running Dog* (1978), the ex-CIA operative Win Everett in *Libra* (1988), the FBI director J. Edgar Hoover and Sister Alma Edgar, the charitable Catholic nun who wears latex gloves when she meets the sick and poor from Bronx in *Underworld*. Nick Shay does not abstract himself into an ideogram of fear and control, not even to the degree that his brother Matt takes on the aseptic whiteness of the desert. Nick is free as few of DeLillo’s male protagonists are. Paul Giaimo (2011: 131-132) astutely describes him as an “Italian American trickster”, a petty gangster’s apprentice in his teens, called *scucciament*’ by his boss (DeLillo 2015: 695) – in dialect, from *scocciare*, to irritate, to annoy – but also a storyteller in his adulthood, able to imbue his life with significance while narrating it. (Giaimo 2011: 131)

After he gets out of the juvenile correction facility in Staatsburg, Nick Shay is sent to a Jesuit extension program at Fordham University – the university DeLillo graduated from – where his case comes to the attention of the “black-suited and roman-collared” (DeLillo 2015: 538) Father Andrew Paulus. He kindly – yet in all priestly seriousness – sermonizes Nick:

One of the things we want to do here is to produce serious men. What sort of phenomenon is this? Not so easy to say. Someone, in the end, who develops a certain depth, a spacious quality, say, that’s a form of respect for other ways of thinking and believing. Let us unnarrows the basic human tubing. And let us help a young man toward an ethical strength that makes him decisive, that shows him precisely who he is, Shay, and how he is meant to address the world. (DeLillo 2015: 538)

Their dialogue, rich in ethical paradoxes, has been an object of critical interest ever since the first edition of the book. Father Paulus explains to his pupil the Thomistic notion of velleity, “volition at its lowest ebb”, that is one person’s

proclivity not enough known and honed by herself or himself that cannot strengthen a character. “Intensity makes for moral accomplishment. [...] A sense of purpose.” (idem: 539) The Jesuit priest proves that Nick is not able to name the parts of his own shoes – from “the sole” and “the heel” and “the tongue” onward the language becomes arcane indeed (“the cuff”, “the quarter”, “the welt”, “the vamp”, etc.) – because he does not know how to look around him, and he does not know this because he does not master the right words. (540-541) Father Paulus wants this young man with anger issues to convert his violent drives into moral fiber, so he teaches him Thomas Aquinas’ concept of “natural reason” and Aristotle’s categories by exemplification. (Giaino 2011: 145-146) Thomas Aquinas holds that human beings are naturally inclined to seek the truth and desire the good. Although the whole universe is governed by God’s “eternal law”, not fully accessible to us, the thirteenth-century theologian maintains that human beings can freely participate in it through the “natural law”, that is through their reason and virtuous acts meant to forestall unnatural behavior. (Kerr 2009: 75-78) Father Paulus seizes the opportunity to ingrain these teachings in his Italian-American pupil:

Sometimes I think the education we dispense is better suited to a fifty-year-old who feels he missed the point the first time around. Too many abstract ideas. Eternal verities left and right. You’d be better served looking at your shoe and naming the parts. You in particular, Shay, coming from the place you come from. (DeLillo 2015: 540)

Nevertheless, in his fifties, Nick Shay is an executive for a waste management company, a faithless sacerdotal reader of human history in dunes made of human residue, a rationalist among “cosmologists of waste” (DeLillo 2015: 88), another technocrat. Don DeLillo shrewdly reveals the relation between the Jesuit educational system – the emphasis on rigour, discipline, methodology, and the dangerously induced feeling that, once accepted by the Society of Jesus, one should count oneself among the elect and must put the order’s interests before anything else – and the way elites are trained in our corporate world. If there is still a trace of the Latin mass in Nick’s view of the world, a sense of transcendental experience, it should be sought after in Nick’s – and by extension in DeLillo’s – faith in language, as Amy Hungerford (2006: 344-347) argues.

Nick Shay’s work uncannily relates to the artistic visions of Klara Sax, who has not always been a land artist. Back in the early ’50s, when she was married to Albert Bronzini, Matt Shay’s good-natured chess teacher, she used to be an aspiring painter in search of her own style, but opened her painting room to receive Nick instead - only seventeen, a teen trickster. In “this intimacy tinged with incestuous estrangement”, she reaches a “kind of erotic disruption” (Boxall 2006: 208-209) that will help her mature as an artist. One might say that, despite the generation gap, Klara and Nick had a brief affair, yet he describes their passionate meeting as “Just an occurrence, a thing in two episodes, a few hours only [...]” (DeLillo 2015: 72), another past experience measured in units of subjective time. When Nick Shay broods on their first encounter, at the beginning of the novel set in 1992, he is fifty-seven years old and she is seventy-two and an accomplished artist, a celebrity surrounded by reporters and student apprentices. Klara’s ambitious project consists of turning an aircraft boneyard into a work of art, a landscape painting, using all the available strategic bombers. For Klara Sax, the B-52 stratofortress is a synecdoche of a war that did not take place in the end and a

source of assurance that borders on aesthetic rapture when she evokes their prowling in the sky:

War scared me all right but those lights were a complex sensation. Those planes on permanent alert, ever present you know, sweeping the Soviet borders, and I remember sitting out there rocking lightly at anchor in some deserted cove and feeling a sense of awe, a child's sleepy feeling of mystery and beauty. I think this is power. I think if you maintain a force in the world that comes into people's sleep, you are exercising a meaningful power. (DeLillo 2015: 75-76)

She cherishes nose art – unit insignia, mascots and cartoons, and most of all the pin-ups with long legs and apotropaic function, the closed world of young men at war, a world “with its particular omens and symbols”. (idem: 77) Klara Sax entitles her project *Long Tall Sally*, after the girl in the famous song, painted on a B-52, which operated during the Vietnam War.

What Klara really talks about is the creative means of turning waste into art in the same way that Nick finds religious impulses in the bureaucracy involved with waste – especially nuclear waste – management. Tony Tanner (2000: 144) states that these moments when “a configuration of ordinary things suddenly takes on an extra glow of meaning” are what passes for secular epiphanies in Don DeLillo's fiction. Tanner stresses that “epiphanies have to be caused rather than insisted on, and *Underworld* suffers somewhat from this failing.” (ibid.). He might be right, but the British critic refers to the most evident of the epiphanies, to those that take place near landfills, in the desert, on the abandoned nuclear test sites, whereas I think that it is the small epiphanies that sustain the novel's finesse. When Nick Shay sees Klara Sax for the first time in forty years, she has an injured foot, a sprained ankle “wrapped in a tan elastic brace”, and “one white running shoe” on the good one. (DeLillo 2015: 67) Considering how long it took for Father Paulus' lesson to come to fruition, one might say this is Nick's private epiphany. But we, the readers, do not know this yet.

Sports games and fan crowds have always been the object of DeLillo's fascinated interest. The playing field strategies enhance his analogies between mass entertainment and the possibility of obliteration at an unprecedented scale, such as the rich, albeit technical, verbiage of a football training camp that the protagonist translates into the language of thermonuclear war in *End Zone* (1972) or “the Shot Heard Round the World” (DeLillo 2015: 669). This is the home run that makes the Giants victorious against the Dodgers at the New York Polo Grounds on October 3, 1951, which takes place at the same time with a major Soviet atomic test in *Underworld*. But sports and sportsmanship also sustain the writer's sane and tender meditations on the human body. Sports have never been a topos in Western literature and, since the Greek poet Pindar, not many a writer has tried to reproduce in language the dynamic of human bodies clashing competitively in the arena. In DeLillo's case, perhaps the best example would be *Amazons* (1980), a funny, bawdy memoir of Cleo Birdwell, the fictitious first female player to be accepted by the National Hockey League, a novel DeLillo renegades and which has not been reprinted since the 1980s, at the author's request. Nevertheless, DeLillo's fascination with healthy, athletic bodies does not reside solely in aesthetics or erotic longing.

Another novel, *Running Dog*, concerns the possible existence in a private collection of a pornographic film involving Hitler and a few prominent Nazi officials during the last days of The Third Reich. The hunt for this improbable

piece of erotica that nobody has actually seen ripples through the black market and puts in motion art dealers, corrupted collectors from the U.S. Senate, mafia bosses, sleazy traders in the adult movie industry, and two female journalists from the radical *Running Dog* magazine, who seize the opportunity to write the investigative report of their career. The involvement of the agent and Vietnam War veteran Glen Selvy brings a covert paramilitary organization – the Radial Matrix – into this muddy business that actually turns up murderous from its very beginning. Earl Mudger, former CIA operative in Saigon and the mastermind of the Radial Matrix, wants Glen Selvy, one of his best men back in the war days, who does not always work in the interest of his team, dead. Mudger sends his emissaries – two Vietnamese hitmen he brought back home with him– in pursuit. At their first encounter, Selvy – who gives a new meaning to the “running dog” in the title – seems to have the upper hand, but when the hunters and their game arrive at an abandoned Radial Matrix training base in the west Texan desert, the otherwise skilled agent makes a quite suicidal mistake and ends up dead. The only hitman left alive decapitates him in order to bring a trophy to Earl Mudger. Thus, when Selvy’s acquaintance, Levi Backwater, a desert hermit also connected to the secret activities of the Radial Matrix, wants to perform a Tibetan rite for the dead man, as they had mutually agreed on before the final confrontation, he has not the deceased’s mandatory strand of hair to fulfill it. Tom LeClair underscores the way DeLillo correlates Selvy’s emotional cold detachment and conditioned military training to the objectification and commodification of the body in pornography – because pornography “is the most obvious effect of a culture’s denying the whole body” – and the main theme of *Running Dog*, namely Hitler’s immortality (and the immortality of all the evils he epitomizes) on footage, despite the fact that his body has never been found. (LeClair 1987: 172-173)

3. Conclusion. The whole body

Unlike Glen Selvy and other ill-fated male characters in Don DeLillo’s fiction, the lapsed Catholic Nick Shay finds his immanent redemption. He has the ability to develop coping strategies in order to deal with his father’s disappearance, his criminal past, his wife’s infidelity – and his own cheating on his wife, Marian –, the way others refer to his ethnicity, his problematic job and so on. Earl Mudger, one of the villains in *Running Dog*, while talking about his illegal activities in Vietnam with the journalist Moll Robbins, notices that “there’s a neat correlation between the complexity of the hardware and the lack of genuine attachments. Devices make everyone pliant. There’s a general sponginess, a lack of conviction.” (DeLillo 1989: 91).

Nick Shay’s personality is somewhat elusive, but it is never spongy. And he is not a man who lacks convictions. When one looks at the contemporary world through his eyes, one cannot miss the fact that, for him, technological transgressions are transgressions against the body. His arrival at the Museum of Misshapens, a necropolis of victims (infants mostly) of radiations in Kazakhstan (DeLillo 2015: 799-801), alongside Brian Glassic, his colleague – and his wife’s lover – is strong and sinister proof of that. Don DeLillo, a monist who does not believe that man was created in the image of God, makes clear by the way his writing underlines the importance of human bonding that destroying the environment and mutilating the body are horrendous acts of secular profanation.

Maybe this is why Nick's gaze is longing, yet not detached, cynical or concupiscent. For example, when he looks at Marian, his wife, he can see her from many perspectives at the same time:

She wore beat-up jeans and an old tank top that drooped in front, the kind of woman who grows into her beauty, I think, who becomes beautiful over time and then one day you see it, sort of suddenly and all together – it becomes a local scandal of surprise and comment. (DeLillo 2015: 114)

Even when his thinking makes use of the inanimate objects and the images of mass consumerism – clothes, brands of cosmetic products, and furniture – the words he chooses do not separate the appearance from personality. And when he decides to visit Klara Sax in the desert, the mind and the landscape merge in the same feeling:

Let's just say the desert is an impulse. I'd decided in a flash to switch planes and get a car and hit the back roads. There is something about old times that's satisfied by spontaneity. The quicker you decide, the more fully you discharge the debt to memory. I wanted to see her again and feel something and say something, a few words, not too many, and then head back into the windy distance. It was all distance. (DeLillo 2015: 63-64)

Of the three theological virtues – faith, hope, and charity – the second one still has some promising ring to it. Or, at least, Nick Shay makes us believe it has.

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WORDS AND NARRATIVES

VIEWPOINT AND COMMENT ADVERBS IN P.G. WODEHOUSE AND THEIR TRANSLATION INTO ROMANIAN

DARIA PROTOPODESCU

University of Bucharest

Abstract: *Viewpoint and comment adverbs are a class of Sentence Adverbs (SA) that take the whole sentence into their scope. The only distinction between viewpoint and comment adverbs is related to their placement in the sentence. This paper investigates both the behaviour of these adverbs in Wodehouse's text 'Right ho, Jeeves!' and the translation strategies employed by the Romanian translator in rendering these adverbs.*

Keywords: *adverbs, equivalence, omission, prepositional phrase (PP) paraphrase, translation strategies*

1. Introduction

The translation of adverbs into Romanian always poses various problems that hinge on either the translator's ability to correctly identify their structure or on the heterogeneous nature of adverbs. More precisely, in the case of viewpoint and comment adverbs, it is not always easy to capture their correct interpretation when translating them: some of them may occur in a context where they have a manner reading rather than sentence or clausal reading. This happens because such adverbs evince different interpretations, depending on their placement in the sentence, so the positions in which they surface heavily influence their readings.

In this article, I explore in what way the placement and interpretation of a small class of sentence adverbs (i.e., viewpoint and comment adverbs) affect their translation into Romanian.

2. Theoretical background

There are some adverbs and adverbial expressions which tell us about the speaker's viewpoint or opinion about an action, or make some comment on the action. They are different from other adverbs because they do not tell us how an action has occurred. Comment and viewpoint adverbs modify entire clauses rather than single verbs, adverbs, or adjectives. There is no real distinction between comment adverbs and viewpoint adverbs, except in their sentence placement. Many adverbs that can be used as viewpoint adverbs can also be used as comment adverbs. However, there are also cases when an adverb is far more common as either one or the other.

2.1. On the rise of viewpoint and comment adverbs

The term “viewpoint adverbs” is adopted from Dalton-Puffer and Plag (2000). Adverb formations in *-wise* are variously labeled, as “viewpoint adverbials”, “domain adverbials” and “sentence adverbials” (Lenker 2002). They are denominal and take as their scope the clause rather than the Verb Phrase (VP). For Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985: 568), their meaning is “if we consider what we are saying from an [adjective] point of view or if we consider what we are saying from the point of view of [noun phrase]”, and they belong to a larger set of constructions called “viewpoint subjuncts”, which includes: Adjective + *-ly* (speaking) (e.g., *frankly speaking*); *as regards* NP; *with respect to* NP; *as far as* NP is concerned. Such constructions are described as “topic restricting” by Rickford et al. (1995: 103). According to Quirk et al. (1985: 569), viewpoint subjuncts have the semantic role of respect in that the base of the adverb acts as a relevant point of reference for the clause. Lenker (2002: 163) claims that they share properties with Quirk et al.’s category of disjuncts, which convey the speaker’s evaluation of the communication e.g., *frankly speaking*, and are used by speakers “to indicate that the proposition of the whole sentence or clause is only true in the perspective chosen by the speaker, the given domain” (ibid.), as in *morally, he is wrong* (Bellert 1977, qtd. in Lenker 2002: 164). They differ from disjuncts, however, in that they are still “relatively integrated within the structure of the clause”, while disjuncts are more peripheral (Quirk et al. 1985: 440).

Shift in the adverbial scope from VP to the clause is well documented (Quirk et al. 1985), and accounts typically focus on “style disjuncts” involving certain high frequency lexemes, e.g., *hopefully, frankly*, rather than adverbial suffixes. Lenker (2002) argues that the evolution of *-wise* viewpoint adverbs, which, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (2013) make their first appearance in the American English of the 1940s, is bound up with the use of viewpoint adverbs in *-(c)ally*.

In Lenker’s account, viewpoint adverbs formed with the suffix *-wise* are seen to have emerged from a register which is “technical” (in the sense of specialist, professionalized) and “informational”, but not necessarily written. As such, we rarely expect them in literary contexts, and my investigation proves this, since no *-wise* viewpoint adverb was detected in my corpus.

The expansion of VPAdv *luckily* to sentence adverb (SA) *luckily* is in line with many other SA developments of *-ly* and other adverbs during the Modern English period (Swan 1997; Killie 2007, Protopopescu 2017), such as *sadly, surprisingly, curiously, happily, fortunately*, resulting in a set of speaker-oriented evaluative adverbs for the expression of attitude.

In the characterization of adverbs, Conrad and Biber (2000: 58) identify three parameters: a) the semantic class, which relates to the meaning of the adverb; b) their grammatical realization, which relates to their form (adverb, adverbial phrase, noun phrase, prepositional phrase, etc.), and c) their placement in the clause (initial, pre-verbal, post-verbal and final). The characterization is made for English, but the parameter related to form works for Romanian just as well, as we are going to see in the analysis of the data in my corpus.

2.2. Sentence placement of viewpoint and comment adverbs

Viewpoint adverbs are placed at the beginning, or more rarely, at the end of the sentence. They are usually separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

Comment adverbs are placed before the main verb, unless the verb “to be” is used, in which case the placement can be either before or after the verb. In some cases, comment adverbs placed before the main verb may also be separated from the rest of the sentence by commas, although, in most cases, they will not. In the examples below, viewpoint and comment adverbs are shown in the correct sentence placements. When a sentence placement is unusual, stilted, or too formal for spoken language, it is marked with a question mark.

Viewpoint or commenting adverb	Initial position	Pre-verbal position	Final position
clearly	<i>Clearly</i> , they don't know whether they are coming or going.	They <i>clearly</i> don't know whether they are coming or going.	They don't know whether they are coming or going, <i>clearly</i> .
definitely	? <i>Definitely</i> , you are intelligent.	You <i>definitely</i> are intelligent. You are <i>definitely</i> intelligent.	?You are intelligent, <i>definitely</i> .
obviously	<i>Obviously</i> , you are doing something.	You are <i>obviously</i> doing something.	You are doing something, <i>obviously</i> .
personally	<i>Personally</i> , I'd rather read a good book.	I'd <i>personally</i> rather read a good book.	I'd rather read a good book, <i>personally</i> .
carelessly	<i>Carelessly</i> , she threw her book into the pond.	She <i>carelessly</i> threw her book into the pond.	?She threw her book into the pond, <i>carelessly</i> .

3. Corpus and analysis of the data

For my analysis of the translation of viewpoint and comment adverbs into Romanian, I have chosen the novel *Right ho, Jeeves!* by P.G. Wodehouse, and its Romanian translation by Carmen Toader, published in 2004 by the Polirom Publishing House.

The reason behind this choice lies in the fact that, unlike other authors who, as a rule, avoid the use of adverbs, Wodehouse employs a plethora of adverbs. Thus, I counted as many as 210 different instances of *-ly* adverbs in *Right ho, Jeeves!* Most of them are manner adverbs, but some of them are also used as intensifiers and as the larger class of sentence adverbs, which accommodates viewpoint and comment adverbs as well. No viewpoint *-wise* adverbs are employed, but we do have a few occurrences of *-ly* viewpoint adverbs and several more of what I label here ‘comment adverbs’. As I am going to show in my analysis, their translation poses problems of equivalence.

In my analysis of the corpus, I use the following abbreviations: (ST) for the source text, the original English version by P.G. Wodehouse, (TT) for the target text, the Romanian translation by Carmen Toader, and (BT) for the literal back translation I provide.

3.1. Translation strategies

As stated from the very beginning, due to the heterogeneous nature of adverbs and the different interpretations they may acquire depending on their

sentence placement, their translation poses quite a few problems. If we are to relate this to the features of Romanian and its relation to adverbs, we can spot even more problems ahead. The expectation is that as far as translation strategies go, equivalence is not going to be prevalent in the case of adverbs. This has to do with the fact that Romanian is a partly adverbial language, unlike English which is fully adverbial (Protopopescu 2011: 70, Protopopescu 2012: 69, Vişan and Protopopescu (forthcoming 2022)). It means that Romanian prefers PP paraphrases of English adverbs, rather than equivalence with a corresponding adverb. We also expect to find instances of translation loss where adverbs are omitted in the target text, possibly because the translator might find their rendering redundant.

3.1.1. Equivalence

I shall start my analysis by taking a close look at instances of equivalence. To this end, let us take a look at the following set of examples involving the adverb *personally*.

- (1) ST: I have alluded earlier to the difficulty of staggering when you're sitting down, showing that it is a feat of which I, *personally*, am not capable. (p. 130)
 TT: Am pomenit mai devreme cât de dificil este să te bălăngăneş ti când stai jos, arătând că e o ispravă de care eu *personal* nu sunt în stare. (p. 148)
 BT: I have mentioned earlier how difficult it is to stagger when sitting down, showing that it is a feat of which I, *personally*, am not capable.
- (2) ST: *Personally*, I snuggled up against the chandler and let my attention wander. (p. 198)
 TT: Eu, *personal*, m-am cuibărit lângă negustor ş i mi-am lăsat mintea să zburde. (p. 232)
 BT: I, *personally*, have snuggled up next to the merchant and let my mind fly away.
- (3) ST: *Personally*, I think he would have played it safe. (p. 201)
 TT: Eu, *personal*, cred că ar fi mers la sigur. (p. 236)
 BT: I, *personally*, think that he would have gone for certainty.

Let us also see what happens with another comment adverb. In (4) we deal with a possible mistranslation of the adverb *definitely*.

- (4) ST: She *definitely* told me so. All he had to do was propose. (p. 133)
 TT: – *Chiar* ea mi-a spus-o. Tot ce avea de făcut era s-o ceară în căsătorie. (p. 152)
 BT: – She *herself* told me. All he had to do was propose marriage to her.

In this case, although we are dealing with an instance of equivalence, as the English adverb is rendered into Romanian by means of another adverb, the meaning and usage of the latter is different from its English counterpart. The English adverb *definitely*, means “*clearly*” here. It could be translated into the target language as *clar*, its semantic equivalent, or even as the elliptical Adj + *că*-Complementizer structure - *clar că* (*clear that*). However, the Romanian translator changes the focus of the whole structure with her choice of the adverb *chiar*, which emphasizes the meaning of the word or idea that follows it, in this case the subject of the sentence; hence the backtranslation of *chiar* as *herself*. The meaning of *chiar* is *precisely, exactly*. Therefore, this is a case of partial equivalence, as it is an instance of semantic mismatch.

3.1.2. Paraphrase

My first two examples of paraphrase, (5) and (6) below, involve the same adverb, *carelessly*.

- (5) ST: "I hear you're in London," I said *carelessly*. (p. 25)
 TT: – Am auzit că stai la Londra, am spus eu *cu nepăsare*. (p. 25)
 BT: – I've heard that you are staying in London, I said *with carelessness*.
- (6) ST: There was something about the thought of these people *carelessly* revelling at a time when, for all they knew, I was probably being dragged about the countryside by goats or chewed by elephants, that struck home at me like a poisoned dart. (p. 281)
 TT: Exista ceva în gândul la oamenii ăștia, care benchetuiiau *fără nici o grijă* în timp ce știau că eu aș fi putut fi târât de-a lungul și de-a latul satului de țapi sau mestecat de elefanți, care m-a izbit aidoma unei săgeți otrăvite. (p. 322)
 BT: There was something in the thought about these people, who were partying *without any care* while they knew that I could have been dragged across the village by goats or chewed on by elephants, that struck me like a poisoned arrow.

What is interesting here is that we are dealing with two instances of the same adverb, with the same meaning, *without care or concern*, yet their Romanian translation differs. In both cases we are dealing with a PP paraphrase, which is expected in the case of sentence adverbs, yet in (5) the translator opts for *cu nepăsare* (*with carelessness*), while in (6) for *fără nicio grijă* (*without any care*). *Carelessly* is a subject-oriented, viewpoint adverb in both instances. In (5) it occurs in the less likely final position for a subject-oriented adverb, without being isolated by a comma, while in (6) it occurs in a preverbal position, which is its preferred position. One might argue that the position in (5) renders itself to the manner interpretation, but the Romanian translation which uses a PP paraphrase clearly indicates the subject-oriented interpretation. The English adverb in (5) can have a manner interpretation due to its final position in the sentence, (*I said that in a careless manner*, rather than *I was careless in saying that*), but in the Romanian text (am spus eu *cu nepăsare* 'I said with carelessness'), the adverbial PP is unambiguously subject-oriented, hence the paraphrase (*I was careless in saying that*). This can be syntactically explained by its placement in the Romanian text, in combination with the placement of the subject, which appears in its unmarked post-verbal position in Romanian, with the PP paraphrase closely following it. So, this is why, although the adverb *carelessly* in (5) has a manner interpretation in the English source text, it acquires a subject-oriented interpretation, with a PP paraphrase in the Romanian target text.

In the case of the adverb *fortunately* and its negative counterpart *unfortunately*, we can notice more consistency on the part of the Romanian translator in (7), (8), and (9) below.

- (7) ST: *Fortunately*, however, the settled gloom of those round him exercised a restraining effect upon him at the table. (p. 283)
 TT: Însă *din fericire*, deprimarea statornicită a celor din juru-i a exercitat un efect de temperare asupra lui la masă. (p. 222)
 BT: But, *fortunately*, the constant depression of those around him exercised a calming effect upon him at the table.

- (8) ST: **Fortunately**, before embarrassment could do much more supervening, Angela came in, and this broke up the meeting. (p. 380)
 TT: **Din fericire**, înainte ca stânjeneala să se înfiripe prea zdravăn, Angela a intrat și a pus capăt întrevederii. (p. 298)
 BT: **Fortunately**, before embarrassment would take over too badly, Angela entered and cut the meeting short.
- (9) ST: At that, however, I think he would have got by, had he not, at this juncture, **unfortunately** stirred Gussie up again. (p. 298)
 TT: Însă cred că ar fi scăpat și de data asta, dacă în acest moment nu l-ar fi stârmit, **din nefericire**, iarăși pe Gussie. (p. 234)
 BT: But I think he would have got away with it this time as well, if at that moment he had not, **unfortunately**, stirred up Gussie again.

Unlike the inconsistency shown with **carelessly** in (5) and (6) above, in two instances, (7) and (8), the TT resorts to a PP paraphrase, a combination of the preposition **din** (*from, out of*) and the noun (**ne**)**fericire** (*(un)happiness*). Both the adverb in the ST and its Romanian counterpart occur in initial position and are separated from the rest of the text by means of commas.

As already stated, adverbs, in general, pose difficulties in their rendering into Romanian. If we consider the adverb **fundamentally** in (10), and its translation into the TT, with its relevant BT, there is a mismatch from a semantic point of view.

- (10) ST: “And you can’t get away from it that, **fundamentally**, Jeeves’s idea is sound. (p. 30)
 TT: – Și n-ai cum s-o negi, **de fapt**, ideea lui Jeeves e solidă. (p. 31)
 BT: “And you can’t deny it, **in fact**, Jeeves’ idea is solid.”

The meaning of **fundamentally** in Romanian is usually translated as *esențial, esențialmente, la bază, (essentially)*. **Essentially** is actually suggested by thesaurus online as the first synonym for **fundamentally**. The choice for **de fapt** (*in fact*) by the Romanian translator appears to slightly change the interpretation of the structure. However, any of the Romanian counterparts of **fundamentally** mentioned above would sound quite awkward in the context, so this is probably why the TT chose a more natural sounding paraphrase in spite of the slight change in meaning.

3.1.3. Omission

Omission in translation obviously leads to translation loss, since part of the source text is lost to the target reader.

- (11) ST: I mean to say, Gussie might have lowered the existing Worcestershire record for goofiness and **definitely** forfeited all chance of becoming Market Snodsbury’s favourite son ... (p. 213)
 TT: Adică Gussie poate că a doborât recordul existent în Worcester la nerozie și și-a ratat **Ø** orice șansă de a deveni fiul favorit al orașelului Market Snodsbury, ... (p. 251-252)
 BT: That is to say, maybe Gussie broke the existing record for foolishness in Worcester and **Ø** he missed any chance of becoming the favourite son of the small town of Market Snodsbury, ...

The adverb **definitely** adds not only something related to the attitude of the speaker, but it also reinforces the idea conveyed by the clause (*forfeited all*

chance...). **Definitely** takes the sentence in its scope, emphasizing the total lack of opportunity caused by the action of forfeiting. The omission of **definitely** in the TT could be explained by the translator's choice of rendering the epistemic verb *might* with the help of another sentence adverb, the epistemic adverb **poate**. Since the clause containing **definitely** is coordinated with that containing *might*, the presence of two SAs belonging to two different word classes may have seemed awkward to the Romanian translator. However, a second SA would definitely not sound awkward if the TT had preserved it, translating the sentence as ... **poate** că a doborât recordul existent ... și **clar** și-a ratat orice șansă... (my own version).

3.2. Analysis of the sentence placement of adverbs in the corpus

In the treatment of adverbs, it is always of great relevance to take a close look at their sentence placement. Given their evolution over time, and the fact that some manner adverbs have developed clausal readings and some have a manner interpretation when placed lower in the clause, but develop a subject-oriented interpretation if placed higher in the clause, a brief look at their sentence placement is necessary.

3.2.1. Auxiliary position

The auxiliary position refers to the position of an adverb between an auxiliary verb and the lexical verb in English. In the case of manner adverbs it usually offers the most ambiguous contexts, to the extent that they could be interpreted as having either a subject-oriented or a manner reading. I have selected two contexts for the current discussion. In (12), the SA **obviously** is translated by a PP paraphrase. What makes this context slightly unusual, setting it apart from other instances of PP paraphrase, is that, while in other contexts of PP paraphrase the structure of the PP is Preposition + NP, here the structure of the PP is made up of a preposition and the coordinated structure of two adverbs, **doar** (*only*) and **poate** (*maybe*). The meaning of this PP is **without a doubt**, which clearly indicates some sort of idiomaticization of the PP.

- (12) ST: The situation **obviously** cries out for Jeeves. (p. 101)
 TT: Situația **fără doar și poate** că țipă după Jeeves. (p. 80)
 BT: The situation **without a trace of a doubt** is crying out for Jeeves.

The adverb in (12) is placed in preverbal position, so to get a clearer picture of the auxiliary position of the adverb, let us take a look at the context in (13), where another instance of **obviously** occurs. Here, the TT places the adverb in initial position in a structure which appears to be favoured in Romanian in the case of SAs.

- (13) ST: She must **obviously** be properly ticked off and made to return him to store. (p. 338)
 TT: **Evident că** trebuia trasă cum se cuvine la răspundere și convinsă să îl trimită la plimbare. (p. 265)
 BT: **It is obvious that** she had to be properly held accountable and persuaded to send him off.

Romanian has developed a strategy of rendering epistemic adverbs (those expressing degrees of possibility) with a structure made up of ADV +

complementizer *că* (that), (*desigur că, evident că, clar că, sigur că*). While some might argue that these are in fact elliptical structures of the type *It is ADJ + that (că)*, the presence of *desigur* among them is a clear indication that these are in fact adverbs, not adjectives derived via ellipsis of the copula verb (Dinică 2008: 594).

3.2.2. Preverbal position

The preverbal position expresses the speaker's point of view with respect to the rest of the clause. This is evident in (14).

- (14) ST: And the thought of being engaged to a girl who talked openly about fairies being born because stars blew their noses, or whatever it was, *frankly* appalled me. (p. 166)
 TT: Iar gândul de a mă logodi cu o fată care discuta fățiș despre zânele care se nasc pentru că stelele își suflă nasul, sau cum fusese chestia, mă înspăimânta *sincer*. (p. 130)
 BT: And the thought of getting engaged to a girl who openly talked about fairies who are born because the stars blow their noses, or how the thing had been, frightened me *honestly*.

The target text, however, does not retain the preverbal position of the adverb and places it instead in final position, without a comma. The point of view of the speaker is retained, so we are not faced here with translation loss; however, Romanian also allows for preverbal position as well, which would have placed more focus on the adverb.

3.2.3. Final position

In what follows, I am going to briefly discuss what happens in the case of these adverbs in final position in my corpus. I could identify only one such occurrence for the adverb *mentally*. Interestingly, although it is a viewpoint adverb and it occurs in final position in the sentence, as can be seen in (15) below, the adverb is not separated from the rest of the sentence by means of a comma, as one might expect, considering their behaviour.

- (15) ST: "Tell me *frankly*, Jeeves, are you in pretty good shape *mentally*?" p. 255
 TT: – Spune-mi *sincer*, Jeeves, ești într-o formă *mentală* bună? p. 300
 BT: "Tell me *honestly*, Jeeves, are you in a good *mental* shape?"

In this case, the Romanian translator opts for a transposition strategy, the adverb *mentally* being substituted by a corresponding adjective (*mentală*, feminine, singular). The Romanian text therefore loses the viewpoint interpretation of the adverb. The Romanian translator achieves a form of compensation by retaining the adverb as a corresponding adjective. However, the adjective modifies the noun *shape* and no longer expresses a viewpoint as in the ST.

4. Conclusion

Having looked at the corpus under investigation and bearing in mind the syntactic (sentence placement) and semantic (reading/interpretation) features of

adverbs, we can safely conclude that viewpoint and comment adverbs can be rendered into Romanian mostly by means of PP paraphrase and equivalence.

I have identified instances of translation loss due to either a) omission or semantic mismatching of the TT, b) adverb substitution by a semantically corresponding adjective, which changes the focus and interpretation of the adverb in the clause, and c) paraphrase by means of an idiomatic phrase.

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FUNCTIONAL TRANSPOSITION OF ‘AROUND’ AND ‘ROUND’ IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

YURII KOVBASKO

“Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian” National University, Ivano-Frankivsk,
Universidade Estadual do Centro Oeste, Guarapuava

***Abstract.** The research studies the process of functional transposition of the lexical units ‘around’ and ‘round’, which function in English as both adverbs and prepositions. It is proved that the category of the adverb was the initial one and served as the basis for their functional transposition into the category of the preposition. It is hypothesized that, despite representing a range of common meanings and being characterized by a common morphological structure, ‘around’ and ‘round’ have followed different developmental pathways and their transpositional patterns are distinctive as well.*

***Keywords:** adverb, functional transposition, Middle English, Modern English, Old English, preposition*

1. Introduction

The theory of functional transposition is an absolutely novel interpretation of the interrelationship between lexical units that belong to the closed and the open or closed and closed word classes.

Functional transposition is defined as a diachronic-synchronic functional process and its outcome, which presupposes the ability of lexical units, by means of grammaticalization and lexicalization and without addition of any morphological and/or syntactical markers, to acquire and realize functions inherent to other word classes, and, in this way, remain within its original word class (Kovbasko 2022c: 63).

The concept that some lexical units can simultaneously belong to different parts of speech, i.e. “a linguistic sign can change its grammatical value and yet retain its semantic value by adopting the function of a lexical category (noun, verb, adjective, adverb) to which it did not previously belong” (Bally 1932: 116), is not new. Hence, much depends on the linguists’ views on the processes which represent such shifts. For instance, Sweet (1892: 38) stated that “in English, as in many other languages, we can often convert a word, that is, make it into another part of speech without any modification or addition, except, of course, the necessary change of inflection, etc.”, and made conversion the most recognizable process of functional shifts.

An attempt to redefine the conventional idea of conversion is offered by other scholars who assert that “the term ‘conversion’ is used by many linguists instead of transcategorization. We prefer transcategorization since it is more

transparent than conversion, which does not make clear that one is referring to the notion of category” (Ježek, Ramat 2009: 394). Their approach has found its proponents, however, the terms may slightly differ: e.g., *transcategorization* (Halliday, Matthiensen 1999; Ramat 2019), *transcategoriality* (Robert 2005; Hancil 2018), *recategorization* (Dubinsky, Williams 1995; Vea 2015).

Categorial shifts are also described under the terms of *translation* (Tesnière 1959), *derivation* (Kisselew et al. 2016), and *zero-derivation* (Arista 2019). They are also word-formation processes and, in any case, they take morphological and/or syntactic markers, even if they are zero markers (Sanders 1988: 165), which makes it easier to analyse inflectional languages or declinable words. Functional transposition, in its turn, focuses on the interrelationship between open and closed or closed and closed word classes, does not take into account lexical units that add any morphological and/or syntactic markers of the new category after transposition, and does not form any new words, but just makes transposed items function in new categories (Kovbasko 2022a, 2022b).

The current paper is an attempt to analyse the lexical units ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’, which have much in common in terms of etymology, morphology, and semantics, because they are a distinct example of functional transposition between the categories of the adverb (open word class) and the preposition (closed word class). My aim is to trace the process of functional transposition of ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’, which overlap semantically and display inner overlapping within the categories of the preposition and the adverb in Present-day English. It is hypothesized that, despite representing a range of common meanings and being characterized by a common morphological structure, ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’ have followed different developmental pathways and their transpositional patterns are distinctive as well. The study of the transpositional potential of these lexical units requires, firstly, the analysis of their historical semantics in order to track the emergence and development of each meaning individually, and, secondly, a diachronic corpus analysis of both lexical units.

2. Methodology

A classic periodization into Old, Middle, and Modern English (Hogg, Denison 2006), is completely inappropriate, due to the protracted gaps in-between the three key historical points. Therefore, the decision was taken to split up the periodization into 16 time spans, which could provide a thorough and substantial study on functional transposition (see Table 1 below).

#	Time span	#	Time span	#	Time span	#	Time span
1	–850	5	1150–1250	9	1500–1570	13	1780–1850
2	850–950	6	1250–1350	10	1570–1640	14	1850–1920
3	950–1050	7	1350–1420	11	1640–1710	15	1920–1990
4	1050–1150	8	1420–1500	12	1710–1780	16	1990–2020

Table 1. Key historical scopes of the English language in studying functional *transposition*

This periodization does not deny the traditional one, but represents it in a more detailed way. Old English (OE) consists of the first 4 historical scopes (850–

1150); Middle English (ME) includes the next 4 scopes (1150–1500); Modern English (ModE, 1500–2020) comprises the remaining 8 scopes, which are subdivided into Early Modern English (EModE, 1500–1710), Late Modern English (LModE, 1710–1920), and Present-day English (PDE, 1920–2020).

The extent of each scope is 70–100 years, which is explained by the need to balance the research and to succeed in corresponding to the traditional division. In order to collect more manuscripts and lexical units for further research, the first six historical scopes equal 100 years each. The other historical scopes range from 70 to 80 years, to balance them with the previous periods in terms of the number of manuscripts under study; they are fully adequate for the transpositional shifts to be institutionalized in the language. The last scope of PDE covers 30 years; however, the retrieved statistical data is more than enough for the analysis.

In order to study the phenomenon of functional transposition in the English language, the following corpora have been selected:

- The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts: Diachronic and Dialectal (HCET, - 850–1710), which covers the texts (c. 1.5 m words) from early OE to the end of EModE. The extracted texts have been analysed without resorting to any corpus software;

- The Corpus of Late Modern English Texts (CLMET), which represents written texts of the British English (c. 15 m words) from 1710 and up to 1920, has been analysed by means of the Lancsbox software;

- The Corpus of Historical American English (COHA), which is the largest structured corpus of historical English and contains over 475 m words, and The British National Corpus (BNC), which is a collection of 100 m words of British English from the late 20th and early 21st centuries; both represent PDE and provide statistical data, so there is no need to apply any corpus software;

- The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) has been analysed to retrieve additional examples, which may have been missed from the corpora analysis.

Therefore, a massive empirical basis, together with the elaborated periodization, provides a thorough and comprehensive review of functional transposition in the English language.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Functional semantics of ‘around’ in diachrony

3.1.1. The preposition ‘around’

In the beginning, the preposition ‘*around*’ represented locality, identifying the place or location (see 1), and the direction of movement (see 2):

- (1) Rewlers of rewmes around all þe erthe. (OED: *Langland, W.: The Vision of William concerning Piers Plowman iii. 264*)
- (2) A lambent flame arose, which gently spread Around his brows. (OED: *Dryden, J.: The Works of Virgil: Containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Æneis*)

The institutionalization of the preposition ‘*around*’ intensified the development of locality and resulted in the new meaning, ‘*on all sides of, in all directions from*’, which was expressed both directly (see 3), and indirectly (see 4):

- (3) The Prospects around me. (OED: *Steele: The Spectator, №.118, 1*)
 (4) To pour the radiance of unclouded reason around the last struggles of dissolution. (OED: *Hallam, H.: View of the State of Europe during the Middle Ages I: 496*)

Moreover, the metaphorization of locality caused the development of the meaning ‘*about, approximately*’, which showcased overlapping of locality and temporality, e.g.:

- (5) Presuming he was born around three o’clock in the afternoon, he is under Leo and the Sun. (OED: *N.Y. Mercury (Farmer)*)

The core meaning ‘*on or along the circuit*’, in combination with the deictic centre, stimulated the metaphorization of locality, which was represented by the preposition ‘*around*’, and propelled the formation of several new meanings: ‘*avoid, bypass*’ (see 6), and ‘*to waste time*’ (see 7):

- (6) ... you can’t get around the fact that this book was written not for a generation but for a media eager to snap up fresh-tasting morsels (BNC: *The Face: 1460*)
 (7) I just hang around the flat all day getting bored (BNC: *So Very English: 1821*)

Nevertheless, these meanings are not fully institutionalized, compared to those which directly represent locality.

3.1.2. The adverb ‘around’

The analysis of the diachronic semantics of ‘*around*’ testifies that the word existed and started functioning as an adverb. This is quite obvious, if we take into account the morphological structure of this lexical unit, which merges the preposition ‘*a*’ and the noun ‘*round*’ into the expression ‘*in (a/the) round*’. Moreover, since the 19th century, it has been speculated that such constructions served as the basis for the adverbs “the chief use of which is to shorten discourse, by expressing in one word what would otherwise require two or more” (Bullions 1859: 66). Therefore, the primary function of the adverb ‘*around*’ is to shorten the phrase ‘*in the round, in circumference; in a round, in a circle*’ and represent locality in discourse, e.g.:

- (8) They [i.e. the eggs] beon more feor aroun. (OED: *Kyng Alisaunder: 6603*)
 (9) Non was set at non ende, But alle a round, for alle were hende. (OED: *Manning, R.: The Story of England: 368*)

The examples and their time spans showcase that the adverb ‘*around*’ was transposed into the category of preposition on the basis of this meaning.

In the course of time, one may observe the development of locality in the meanings represented by the adverb ‘*around*’, for instance, its extension to ‘*on all sides, in every direction*’, e.g.:

- (10) ... *God, that made this world aronde*, (OED: *Sir Beves: 1373*)

The formation of the adverb ‘*around*’ and its further functional transposition into the preposition category did not give rise to any new meanings. On the other

hand, the above-mentioned meanings had been represented by the preposition and adverb ‘*about*’ since the early OE period, e.g.:

(11) Gif friðgeard sy on hwæs lande abuton stan oððe treow oððe wille oððe swilces ænigge fleard, (HCET: *Anonymous: Laws (Eleventh Century): 819*)

(12) & ealle ða steorran þe hire on fæste sind turniað onbutan mid hire. (HCET: *Aelfric: De Temporibus Anni: 348*)

Sentences (11) and (12) exemplify the use of the preposition and the adverb ‘*about*’ in the functions which were inherent to the preposition and adverb ‘*around*’ in the first stages of the ME period. So, the fact that the unit ‘*about*’ had appeared and became institutionalized several centuries earlier than the unit ‘*around*’ explains the extremely low frequency of the latter. The unit ‘*around*’ required over three centuries to reach the frequency level sufficient enough for it to be analysed. This is also explained by the fact that throughout the ME period, the unit ‘*about*’ acquired and institutionalized a number of functions, which shifted the focus and semantic directionality of the lexical unit. Due to these factors, ‘*around*’ managed to become institutionalized in the language and acquire additional meanings in ModE, e.g.:

(13) Exercised and walked around with the officers in A.M. (OED: *Journal of the Rev. Ammi R. Robbins: 6*)

(14) In looking around, the President had a right to select an officer who would honestly ... discharge his duty (OED: *The Congressional Globe: Containing the Debates and Proceedings ... of Congress: 492*)

In examples (13) and (14), one can observe how the adverb ‘*around*’ represents locality, with the meaning ‘*here and there, with no fixed direction; all about*’.

The research proves that nowadays the adverb ‘*around*’ continues acquiring the new metaphorized meanings of both locality, ‘*when someone is spending time not doing anything important*’ (15), and temporality, ‘*something that happened before or things that happen regularly*’ (16), and even of existence, ‘*existing*’ (17):

(15) When you’ve botched a job a dozen times, you don’t hang around waiting to try one more time, you abandon it (BNC: *The Big Glass: 2886*)

(16) We both like to joke around and play up (BNC: *Today: Sports Pages: 5730*)

(17) They have been around since Egyptian times, which makes them one of our oldest decorating materials (BNC: *Do It Yourself Magazine: 760*)

These meanings have not been fully institutionalized yet, so it testifies that they are recent developments. However, the tendencies to a more extensive use of phrasal verbs, language economy, and metaphorization of speech suggest that these meanings will be institutionalized. Moreover, I presuppose that the unit ‘*around*’, which is currently developing, will acquire new locative and temporal meanings, as well as represent some other semes. To substantiate these presuppositions and trace the tendencies of the lexical unit development, it is necessary to conduct a diachronic corpus analysis of the preposition and adverb ‘*around*’.

3.2 Diachronic corpus analysis of ‘around’

The lexical unit ‘*around*’ appeared and was sporadically used in the first half of the ME period, but it became widespread only at the end of the EModE period. Due to this, the decision has been taken to analyse its development since the 16th century, i.e. after its quantitative institutionalization in the language.

The beginning of the EModE period is characterized by the revival of the lexical unit ‘*around*’, which had almost never been used before, e.g.:

(18) and at eche end of the front a round towr, (HCET: *Leland, J.: Itinerary: 591*)

(19) The fountaine, where they sat arounde. (OED: *Spenser, E.: The Shepheardes Calendar: June 60*)

At that time, the adverb ‘*around*’ had the meanings ‘*in the round, in circumference; in a round, in a circle*’ and ‘*on all sides, in every direction*’. The first meaning became the basis for the functional transposition of the adverb ‘*around*’ into the category of the preposition, which occurred in the mid ME period. So, over three centuries, the lexical unit ‘*around*’ did not reveal any significant semantic shifts, apart from the use of the adverb for rhyming couplets and lines (see (20) and (21)):

(20) All their heads around
With chaplets green of cerial-oak were crowned.
(OED: *Dryden, J.: The Flower & Leaf: 229*)

(21) Nor war or battle’s sound
Was heard the world around.
(OED: *Milton, J.: On the Morning of Christs Nativity iv*)

The tendencies changed in the early LModE period. First of all, the use of adverbs in verse rhyming lost its significance and, as a result, the frequency of the adverb ‘*around*’ decreased. A certain growth in the category of the preposition ‘*around*’ is observed due to the transposition of the meaning ‘*on all sides of, in all directions from*’ from the category of the adverb (see 22), the metaphorization of the existing meanings (see 23), and the development of temporal meanings (see 24):

(22) ... and at last she open’d her unwilling Eyes, and gaz’d around her, as if she had been in another World: (CLMET: *Chetwood, W.: The Voyages and Adventures of Captain Robert Boyle: 3601*)

(23) Parts answering parts shall slide into a whole, Spontaneous beauties all around advance, (CLMET: *Pope, A.: Moral Essays. Epistle IV. Of the Use of Riches: 67*)

(24) There are not the chances around these days as there were some years ago (CLMET: *So You Want to Be an Actor: 2156*)

The adverb ‘*around*’ continued its lexicalization, by actualizing the meaning of certain verbs in discourse, e.g.:

(25) Theophano looked around for a protector, (CLMET: *Gibbon, E.: The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: 20581*)

In example (25), ‘*around*’ is generally interpreted as an adverbial particle. To my mind, it is an erroneous approach, as the so-called adverbial particles are nothing but grammaticalized adverbs or lexicalized prepositions, which are characterized by their own basic semantics and highlight or specify the meaning of the verb they are combined with. Whether these are grammaticalized adverbs or lexicalized prepositions depends on the primary and secondary etymology of the units (see the theory of etymological functionalism, Kovbasko 2022c). In the case of ‘*around*’, I argue that we face the process of grammaticalization of the adverb, which started its fossilization in combination with certain verbs. This point of view is supported by statistical data, as the frequency of the adverb has gradually been decreasing in favour of the adverbial particle. It means that the category of the adverb ‘*around*’ split into the adverb which continued its development, by acquiring new meanings and functions, and the adverb which fossilized in the role of a dependent constituent of phrasal verbs, being unable to acquire new meanings. To trace back this functional and semantic split in the category of the adverb ‘*around*’ throughout the ModE period, the statistics in Table 2 has been collected and displayed separately for the adverb ‘*around*’ and its grammaticalized counterpart – the adverbial particle ‘*around*’.

PoS		1500– 1570	1570– 1640	1640– 1710	1710– 1780	1780– 1850	1850– 1920	1920– 1990	1990– 2020
Pre P	Qnt.	1	21	39	236	862	989	114228	282022
	%	33.3	51.2	60	69.4	68%	65.4	54.4	49.6
Adv	Qnt.	2	20	26	53	162	145	6774	35100
	%	66.7	48.8	40	15.6	12.8	9.6	3.2	6.2
Adv Part	Qnt.	----	----	----	51	243	378	89149	250957
	%	----	----	----	15	19.2	25	42.4	44.2

Table 2. Correlation of ‘*around*’ as preposition, adverb, and adverbial particle in Modern English

It is worth stating that till the beginning of the 18th century, the lexical unit ‘*around*’ had been functioning rather sporadically, as only ten examples have been registered in the EModE texts under analysis. The statistics do not trace the predominance of any ‘*verb + around (adv)*’ construction, the frequency of which would showcase the use of ‘*around*’ as a constituent of phrasal verbs. In each case the lexical unit ‘*around*’ represented locality. In the early LModE period, the tendencies started changing and a number of new phrases combining ‘*around*’ and certain verbs, such as ‘*cast*’, ‘*flock*’, ‘*gaze*’, ‘*look*’, etc. (see 26), were formed. Later, the set of such verbs embraced other units, including ‘*breathe*’, ‘*close*’, ‘*gather*’ (see 27):

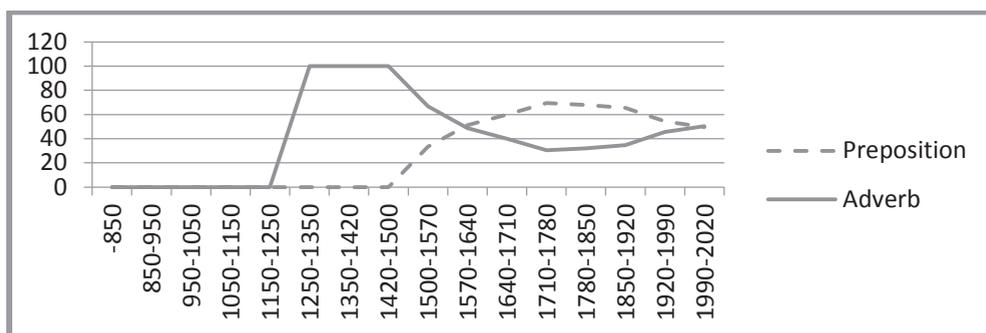
(26) ... there cast your eyes around, and view the number of the stars ... (CLMET: *Lennox, C.: The Lady’s Museum: 918*)

(27) Where each old poetic mountain Inspiration breathes around, (CLMET: *Cary, H. F.: Lives of English Poets: 390*)

The increase in the frequency of the constructions ‘*verb + around (adv)*’, where ‘*around*’ was used to specify the meaning of certain verbs, resulted in the

reduction of the use of the adverb ‘around’ in other constructions. According to the PDE statistics, the language is still characterized by an increase in the use of phrasal verbs, in which ‘around’ is one of the constituents. However, this happens not at the expense of the adverb ‘around’, the frequency of which has become stabilized and even has a tendency to grow, but at the expense of the preposition ‘around’, whose frequency is gradually decreasing. This is indicative of the moderate grammaticalization of the adverb ‘around’, which is losing the ability to form new meanings and is solely used to represent the already institutionalized or even fossilized meanings, aiming at modifying the meanings of the verbs they are used with.

The development of the unit ‘around’, its functional transposition into the categories of preposition and adverb are represented in Graph 1. It must be mentioned that the adverbial particles are graphically represented within the category of the adverb to which they belong. It is done so, because the adverbial particles do not make an independent part of speech and, in fact, they are either ordinary adverbs fossilized in combination with certain verbs or lexicalized prepositions, which have lost their prepositional complements, and have transposed into the category of the adverb. That is why, Graph 1 represents the statistics on the adverb and adverbial particle ‘around’ under one generalized term – adverb.



Graph 1. Functional transposition of ‘around’ in English

It is worth mentioning that the correlation between the adverb and the preposition ‘around’ came into focus in the EModE period, when their frequency achieved the level adequate for the statistical research. Nevertheless, the adverb ‘around’ appeared in the ME period, but, at that time, it was used extremely rarely. In the early EModE period, the frequency of the adverb ‘around’ grew and its transposition into the category of preposition started. Throughout the EModE period, the frequency of the preposition was steadily growing, reached its peak in the mid LModE period and then started its gradual decrease. However, the major change, which contributed to this, was the split of the adverb ‘around’ into a locative adverb and an adverbial particle. Due to this tendency, the adverb ‘around’ has generally regained its position as compared to the preposition ‘around’ (see Graph 1), but the number of the adverbs ‘around’ capable of acquiring new meanings has constantly decreased. That is why, the correlation between the adverb and the preposition ‘around’ in PDE equals 50.4% and 49.6% respectively; but almost 90% of all registered ‘around’ adverbs are fossilized and are used as constituents of phrasal verbs. These figures are in high contrast with those of

EModE, when adverbs acquired new meanings and were used as the units of locality. It means that the adverb ‘*around*’ has been losing its primary locative functions.

3.3. Functional semantics of ‘round’ in diachrony

3.3.1. The preposition ‘round’

The preposition ‘*round*’ started functioning in the ModE period and represented locality, with the meanings ‘*so as to encircle, or make the complete circuit of*’ and ‘*so as to include, traverse, visit, etc., in turn or successively; also, all about (a certain area)*’, showing movement and its direction:

(28) Full thirtie times hath Phœbus Cart gon round Neptunes salt Wash. (OED: *Shakespeare, W.: The Tragedie of Hamlet, Prince of Denmarke: 165*)

(29) Anon wee’l drinke a Measure the Table round. (OED: *Shakespeare, W.: The Tragedie of Macbeth iii, iv: 12*)

Moreover, the preposition ‘*round*’ focused on the position of the object, with the meaning ‘*around; about; on the circuit or outer bounds of*’, e.g.:

(30) Put it round the brims of your plate. (OED: *Evelyn, J.: Sculptura; or, the History and Art of Chalcography and Engraving in Copper: 32*)

In the course of time, representation of locality by the preposition ‘*round*’ has developed and metaphorized, acquiring such meanings as ‘*throughout, all through; from beginning to end of*’ (see 31), ‘*in all (or various) directions from; on all sides of*’ (see 32), and ‘*so as to revolve about (a centre or axis)*’ (see 33):

(31) The King ... was often weary of time and did not know how to get round the day. (OED: *Burnet, G.: History of his Own Time I: 472*)

(32) When we come to look round us from the Ascent we have made. (OED: *Rogers: J.: Sermon Series 12: 347*)

(33) Venus, Her Motion round her own Axis [is performed] in 23 Hours. (OED: *Chambers, E.: Cyclopædia; or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences s.v.*)

The metaphorization of the sense of locality has additionally helped the preposition ‘*round*’ to acquire some temporal meaning. So, all these meanings formed the basis for further overlapping of the preposition with the adverb ‘*round*’.

Therefore, the core meanings of the preposition ‘*round*’ were initially of a locative nature and were formed in the first half of ModE. This contributed to their full institutionalization, unlike other meanings, for instance, ‘*of time: about; approximately*’, which appeared in the 20th century.

3.3.2. The adverb ‘round’

The adverb ‘*round*’ was formed in the ME period with the primary meaning ‘*of motion: with a circular course, so as to return again to the point of departure*’ and served as the basis for the transposed preposition ‘*round*’ as well as the adverb and preposition ‘*around*’, e.g.:

- (34) Al round it orn aboute is heued, ase it were a dyademe, And al-round þare-a-bouten it lay. (OED: *Becket, T.: Materials for the History of Thomas Becket: 167*)

This meaning proves that ‘round’ was not a derivative of the adjective *round*, but was formed in the language as the adverb, because the meanings which bring it closer to the adjective, for instance, ‘so as to form a ring or circle; so as to have a circular form or section’, appeared later:

- (35) His heer was by his erys ful round yshorn. (OED: *Chaucer, G.: The Canterbury Tales. Prologue: 589*)

In the ME period, the sense of locality metaphorized and ‘round’ started to function as an adverb of manner:

- (36) Lo, my toppe I dryve in same, – Se, it torneth rounde! (OED: *World and the Child. A Propre New Interlude of the Worlde and the Chylde, otherwyse Called Mundus & Infans: 79*)

Another basic adverbial meaning, ‘in every direction from a centre; on all sides’, was observed in ME, e.g.:

- (37) He will ... refe vs þe remys þat are rounde. (OED: *York Mysteries xxx: 165*)

Therefore, the functional semantics of the adverb ‘round’ in the ME period is focused solely on locality, which later became the basis for transposition into the category of the preposition and served as a key component for the lexical unit ‘around’.

In the ModE period, the representation of locality took the second place; however, a number of new meanings, viz. ‘from all sides; all over’, ‘through, throughout; from beginning to end’, ‘in the neighbourhood or vicinity’, were formed:

- (38) King Henrye frownd, and turned him rounde. (OED: *Barton, A. i. iii. in Percy, T.: Reliques of Ancient Egypt Poetry II: 177*)
- (39) The flowers of the acacia ... may be kept all the year round. (OED: *Chambers, E.: Cyclopædia; or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences s.v.*)

In sentence (38), the adverb ‘round’ is used in the meaning ‘in the opposite direction’ and sentence (39) is an example of the reversed transposition of ‘round’, as the adverb represents the meaning ‘through, throughout; from beginning to end’, which was formed within the category of the preposition. So, transposition between the classes was bidirectional.

3.4. Diachronic corpus analysis of ‘round’

The first examples of the lexical unit ‘round’ are registered in the early ME period and showcase its use as the adverb, e.g.:

- (40) In chirche whan I preche, I peyne me to haue an hauten speche; I rynge it oute as rounde as eny belle. (OED: *Chaucer, G.: The Canterbury Tales. Prologue: 3*)

- (41) For I am kyng and well knowen in these realmes rounde. (OED: *World and the Child. A Propre New Interlude of the Worlde and the Chylde, otherwyse Called Mundus & Infans: 5*)

Throughout the ME period, the use of ‘round’ as an adverb grew constantly; however, it was not enough to speak of its full institutionalization. It proves the hypothesis that non-institutionalized lexical units are not capable of functional transposition, or, in other words, in order to be transposed, the lexical unit must be fully institutionalized in the language.

The situation changed in the early EModE period, when the number of adverb ‘round’ uses was high enough for us to state that the category was institutionalized, e.g.:

- (42) And this shall cause the lande to lye rounde, whan it is sowen at the nexte tyme, and then shall it not drowne the corne. (HCET: *Fitzherbert, A.: The Boke of Husbandry: 136*)
- (43) Then came the Lewes rounde aboute him, and sayde vnto him: How longe dost thou make vs doute? (HCET: *Tyndale, W.: The New Testament (Tyndale): 729*)

As the process of institutionalization was completed at the next stage (1570–1640), it became possible to transpose the adverb ‘round’ into the class of preposition, e.g.:

- (44) ... for standing in a plaine field, or rather upon some high mountaine void of bushes and trees, and looking round about, you shall see your selfe inuironed ..., (HCET: *Blundevile, T.: A Briefe Description of the Tables of the Three Speciall Right Lines Belonging to a Circle: 281*)

The analysis of the category of the adverb ‘round’ illustrates the formation of the adverbial construction ‘round about’, whose frequency exceeds 20%.

The fact that the absolute majority of the primary meanings of the preposition ‘round’ were transposed during one stage supports the relevance of the category and explains the sharp increase in its frequency at the next stage (1640–1710) of the EModE period:

- (45) His shoes were clean, his money was in his pocket: but nothing was about his neck, and a mark was all round it, (HCET: *Burnet, G.: The Reign of Charles the Second: 538*)
- (46) ... a full inch above and below the head of the Stock, work it up round the Scion till it be sharp at the top, (HCET: *Langford, T.: Plain and Full Instructions to Raise All Sorts of Fruit-Trees That Prosper in England: 369*)

The adverb has followed the already determined tendencies and has been used (around 20%) as part of the construction ‘round about’ (see 47), and in combination with verbs, specifying new meanings (see 48):

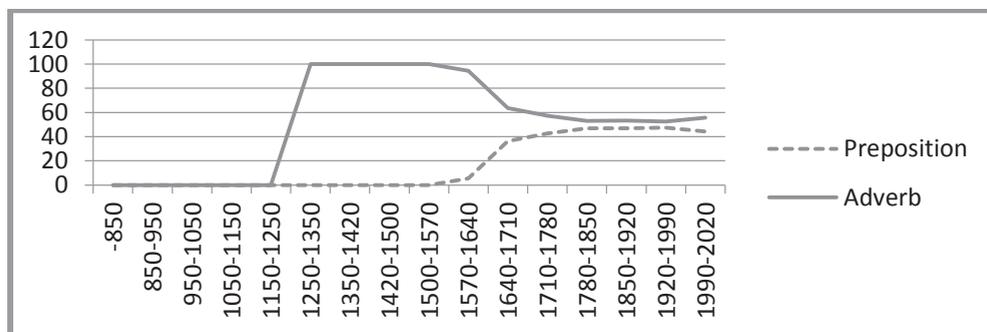
- (47) ... which should be divided into a paved Court to go round about the Schoole, (HCET: *Hoole, C.: A New Discovery of the Old Art of Teaching Schoole: 746*)
- (48) We came to the House, and beset the House round, some to the back Gate, and some to the fore Gate; (HCET: *Anonymous: The Trial of Lady Alice Lisle: 264*)

Nevertheless, the frequency of the preposition ‘*round*’ was growing and reached over 40 per cent in the early LModE period (see Table 3).

PoS		1500– 1570	1570– 1640	1640– 1710	1710– 1780	1780– 1850	1850– 1920	1920– 1990	1990– 2020
Pre P	Qnt.	0	2	16	20	39	64	5677	7563
	%	---	5.6	36.4	42.7	47	46.8	47.4	44.3
Adv	Qnt.	11	34	28	27	44	73	6311	9519
	%	100	94.4	63.6	57.3	53	53.2	52.6	55.7

Table 3. Correlation of ‘*round*’ as preposition and adverb in Modern English

The statistics in Table 3 illustrates that the functional transposition of the adverb ‘*round*’ into a preposition started in the middle of the EModE period and the transposed category developed rapidly. This is explained by the relevance of the transposed unit and by the fact that the majority of its meanings were transposed at the very beginning and during one stage. After this swift growth of the preposition use, the correlation between the categories was stabilized in the range of 42%–48% for the transposed lexical unit. The process of functional transposition of the lexical unit ‘*round*’ in the English language is represented in Graph 2.



Graph 2. Functional transposition of ‘*round*’ in English

The key points on the graph are the formation of the adverb ‘*round*’, which happened in the early ME period, its transposition that occurred 300 years later in the middle of the EModE period, and a rapid increase in frequency of the transposed category in the late EModE period. Since the early LModE period, the correlation between the categories has become rather stable; however, it is characterized by slight fluctuations.

4. Conclusion

My research hopefully proves that the relationships between the lexical units ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’, despite their morphological and semantic similarity, are rather complicated, as all their common factors derive from the transpositional processes that took place in ME.

First of all, both units were actualized as adverbs in the first half of the ME period (1250–1350) and, in fact, were not interwoven. The adverb ‘*round*’ was formed as the independent lexical unit and bore no relation to the adjective it is associated with, because the adjectival meaning appeared after the adverbial one. The adverb ‘*around*’ was a combination of the preposition ‘*a*’ and the noun ‘*round*’ forming the expression ‘*in (a/the) round*’. It means that ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’ started their developmental paths independently; however, initially, they both functioned as locative units and their semantics was identical. The reason which propelled the formation of two semantically identical adverbs was the inability of each item to institutionalize to the full extent. As a result, for almost 300 years they were coexisting in the language and became institutionalized only in the early ModE period. This assumption is additionally proved by the fact that both units were institutionalized in the same period (1500–1570), because the speakers were cognitively ready to perceive them as locative adverbs. This readiness also gave the start to the process of their functional transposition into the category of the preposition.

As, at that time, both adverbs functioned as synonymic locative units, the process of transposition revolved around the common sense of locality; nevertheless, this was the milestone in their further development, when their paths diverged but some interference was preserved. The adverb ‘*around*’ was the first to be transposed into a preposition, whose actualization and institutionalization in the language coincided and whose frequency, due to the cognitive readiness of the speakers, was high. At the same time, this influences the transpositional processes of the adverb ‘*round*’, because the speakers did not see the need for another preposition with the same meaning. It postponed the transposition of the adverb ‘*round*’ into a preposition for another period (1570–1640) and its institutionalization for the late EModE period (1640–1710). Since its institutionalization, the preposition ‘*round*’ has developed quite gradually and its frequency has fluctuated within a range of 5% for the last 300 years. The preposition ‘*around*’ was the first to be transposed and, naturally, showed a higher frequency rate, but when ‘*round*’ became institutionalized as a preposition, the use of the preposition ‘*around*’ started its decrease, which has been observed since the beginning of the LModE period. In PDE, the correlation between the initial and the transposed categories of both lexical units is described by self-regulation, which has been achieved over the last 500 years, and has resulted in an almost equal frequency rate – 49.6% and 44.3% for the prepositions ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’ and 50.4% and 55.7% for the adverbs, respectively.

Functional transposition is one of the two characteristic processes which describe the development of ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’. The other is the fossilization of the adverbs ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’, which led to the functional split in the category of each adverb into adverbs capable of acquiring new meanings and the so-called adverbial particles that modify certain verbs and together form phrasal verbs.

Therefore, the case of the lexical units ‘*around*’ and ‘*round*’ is one of the numerous instances of functional transposition between open and closed or closed and closed word classes.

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HEDGES IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY-RELATED RESEARCH ARTICLES

ALEKSANDRA RADOVANOVIĆ

University of Kragujevac

DRAGANA VUKOVIĆ VOJNOVIĆ

University of Novi Sad

***Abstract:** The main purpose of scientific writing is to present objective information based on data and research. However, in English academia, it is common to mitigate one's claims and allow for other points of view by hedging. In this paper, hedges are explored in the post-method sections of 44 research articles (RAs) in the field of tourism and hospitality, written in English by English and Serbian scholars. A number of established similarities and differences regarding the frequency and use of hedges by native and non-native speakers of English are further discussed and conclusions are drawn regarding cross-cultural aspects of scientific writing.*

***Key words:** English, hedging, research articles, rhetoric, Serbian*

1. Introduction

Although research writing is deemed factual and informative, as part of academic genres, it is also done and presented with a potential readership in mind. Its style and register are perceived as neutral, presenting facts and making objective, impersonal claims. However, based on vast array of research into the subject of metadiscourse and hedging (Crismore et al. 1993; Vande Kopple 2002; Hyland 1994, 1998b, 1998c, 2005), academic writing has proved to be also focused on the readers, establishing a dialogue with them, giving room for assumptions and mitigation of the truth value and factuality of the propositions, as well as expressing the writer's caution when making their claims. There is constant interaction between the readers and the authors: firstly, readers try to predict the content and evaluate what is presented, and, conversely, authors take the readers' background knowledge into account, and anticipate their viewpoints and approaches to the text (Hyland 1994: 239).

Hyland (2005: 3) explores the features of metadiscourse as a way to engage in interaction with the audience and the text itself and make decisions about the impact the author wants to create by communicating their ideas. In addition to the interactional view of oral communication, written communication is also considered as interactive, acknowledging potential readers, their assumptions and needs, and choosing rhetorical devices to adjust their writing accordingly (idem: 11). Hedges fall into the category of interpersonal metadiscourse used to "show uncertainty to truth of assertion" (idem: 34). From another perspective, hedges are also used as threat minimizing tools, as devices for expressing caution regarding

the certainty of knowledge or they can also be considered as a politeness strategy (Myers 1989: 7; Salager-Meyer 1994: 151).

How do researchers modify their statements? A vast array of previous research into this matter (Markkanen and Schroeder 1989; Myers 1989; Salager-Meyer 1994; Hyland 1998a; Vold 2006) reveals that there is a whole spectrum of rhetorical devices that come under the umbrella term of 'hedging'. Given that "scientific hedging is primarily a lexical phenomenon" (Hyland 1998a: 104), this paper focuses only on lexical items used as hedges, thus excluding phrasal and syntactic realisations of hedging (e.g., tenses, passives, if-clauses, indirect and parenthetical constructions). The current study investigates 'lexical hedges' (Hyland 1998a) realized by central grammatical categories (modal auxiliaries, lexical verbs, adverbials, adjectives, and nouns) in the post-method sections of research articles (RAs) in the field of tourism and hospitality, written in English by Anglophone and Serbian scholars, with the aim to reveal differences and/or similarities between these two groups of writers as regards their hedging use and its principal lexical forms.

2. Theoretical framework

Various definitions have been proposed for hedging, and its most frequent subcategory of epistemic modality (Hyland 1994; Myers 1989; Crompton 1997; Salager-Meyer 1994). Hedging as a term was first proposed by Lakoff (1972: 195) as referring to "words whose job is to make things more or less fuzzy". Swales (1990: 175) argues that hedges are used for "projecting honesty, modesty and proper caution in self-reports and for diplomatically creating space in areas heavily populated by other researchers."

The main functions of hedging and especially of epistemic modality can be summed up as having two main purposes. The first is helping authors adjust their level of confidence when making certain claims in their research (Rizomilioti 2006: 55) and providing ways of expressing reservation about the absolute accuracy of their findings (Salager-Meyer 1994: 154). In this way, authors can actually present their findings as personal opinions and not as firm statements (Hyland 1996: 434). Meyer (1997: 21, 40) emphasizes that even though hedges are used to weaken the authors' claims, they are actually strengthening the argument in the written discourse as a way to allow for other views on the proposed claims.

The second purpose of hedging is related to the pragmatic aspect of politeness that is established in communication with the reader and can be considered as a positive or negative politeness strategy (Salager-Meyer 1994: 3). According to Hinkel (2005: 29), vagueness, hesitation, uncertainty, and indirectness are also present, in addition to the pragmatic aspect of hedges related to politeness. The politeness theory has its roots in Brown and Levinson's work (1987), who view hedges as a way of avoiding disagreement, their use being considered a negative politeness strategy. This was elaborated further by Myers (1989), but he provided "only a partial account of hedging in scientific discourse" (Hyland 1996: 434).

As mentioned in the introduction, hedges fall under the category of metadiscourse, which has been revisited many times by major authors in this field, such as Hyland (2005), Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore and Farnsworth (1989). For example, Vande Kopple (1985) classifies hedges as validity markers under the category of textual discourse, whereas Crismore et al. (1993) classifies

hedges as a subcategory belonging to interpersonal metadiscourse. After considering all the different approaches to metadiscourse classifications, Hyland (2005: 49) develops an interpersonal model of metadiscourse with two main categories – interactive, whose main function is 'help to guide the reader through the text', and interactional, meant to “involve the reader in the text”. Hedges are included in the latter group and their aim is to “withhold commitment and open dialogue” (ibid.). Hyland (1998a: 353) argues that hedges underscore the subjective position of the authors, who present their findings as personal opinion, thus demonstrating “plausible reasoning” rather than facts and certain knowledge.

The analysis presented here is anchored in Hyland’s theoretical positions and takes as hedge any lexical means “used to indicate either (a) a lack of complete commitment to the truth of a proposition, or (b) a desire not to express that commitment categorically” (Hyland 1996: 251). Numerous classifications of hedges notwithstanding (e.g., Salager-Meyer 1994; Crompton 1997; Hyland 1998a), here, as mentioned above, we rely on the standard classification into grammatical categories which has been successfully applied in prior related research (e.g., Hyland 1994; Hyland and Milton 1997; Varttala 1999; Demir 2018).

2.1. Previous relevant studies

Although the first investigations regarding politeness and power relations were into spoken language (Holmes 1984; Coates 1987), the research interests later shifted more towards the written language, especially the scientific and academic discourse (Crismore and Farnsworth 1989; Salager-Meyer 1994; Hyland 1994, 1996; Hyland and Milton 1997; Meyer 1997).

For a more insightful overview of the use of hedges in academic writing, a contrastive view of hedging is more than necessary for the speakers of languages other than English, since the elaboration on differences and similarities between the native and non-native practices would help non-native speakers adapt more easily to the requirements of the international academic community (Vold 2006: 62). Furthermore, the disciplinary differences should not be neglected, including the differences in the terminology and rhetorical strategies used (idem: 63).

Numerous previous studies focus on investigating the frequency and functions of hedging in different genres belonging to various scientific disciplines (Myers 1989; Varttala 1999; Rizomilioti 2006; Salager-Meyer 1994). For example, Rizomilioti (2006: 63-64) investigates the so-called downtoners, boosters, and indicators of certainty in Biology, Literary Criticism, and Archaeology corpora, and has found significant differences in the frequency of the parts of speech used across the three corpora, with modal auxiliary verbs and lexical verbs being the predominant categories in all three fields, but to a much higher extent in the Archaeology corpus. Comparing his data with previous research by Hyland (1998a, 1998b), the author concludes that it is difficult to make generalizations about the frequency of epistemic devices in humanities and science, since each discipline demonstrates certain idiosyncrasies; academic writing is not homogenous and the different genres and disciplines need to be further studied (Rizomilioti 2006: 66).

Hyland (2005: 55-57) also observes in his research on metadiscourse in dissertations across six disciplines, with a four-million-word corpus, that hedges are twice as common in the soft fields, which leads us to the conclusion that hedges and metadiscourse are worth exploring in a range of disciplines in order to make a contribution to the possible general overview of metadiscourse. Further, previous

studies have demonstrated that hedging tends to be most frequent in the “more discursive sections” (Hyland 1998a: 153) of RAs, viz. in the Results, Discussion and Conclusion sections, or post-method sections in short, which is why they constitute the object of our present study.

There has also been a growing interest in comparing the use of hedges in academic writing by native and non-native speakers of English (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2016; Chen and Zhang 2017; Demir 2018) or in comparing the use of hedges in different languages (Hinkel 2005; Mirzapour and Mahand 2012; Nasiri 2012) or by authors with different cultural backgrounds (Mauranen 1993). Regarding this topic, non-native English writers have been described as being too direct in their writing, as they do not employ any adequate hedging devices (Hinkel 2005). Hyland (1994: 244) observes that mastering hedging is essential for L2 students, as a way of learning appropriate ways of academic argumentation and is not related to the writer’s proficiency level of the foreign language.

Martin (2001) investigates abstracts chosen at random, written in English and Spanish in the field of psychology. He finds that modality devices are used to a much greater extent in the abstracts written in English, which is explained as a potential avoidance of criticism by international scientific community and a desire for the author's knowledge claim to be accepted by the reader (Martin 2001: 206). The scarce use of modality for mitigating scientific claims in Spanish is explained by the fact that this rhetorical practice has not been conventionalized in Spanish scientific writing practice, since the research community is much smaller and they do not expect criticism from their peers (idem: 207).

In their analysis and comparison of non-native English student writers and native English student writers, Hyland and Milton (1997) observe that non-native writers struggle with expressing reservation or uncertainty about their claims, which is considered a convention in scientific and academic writing, when compared to other genres (Stubbs 1996, qtd. in Hinkel 2005: 30). Hinkel (2005: 31) also found that non-native speakers often exaggerate their “claims due to the comparative prevalence of intensifiers”.

There are not many examples of previous studies regarding the use of hedges in the field of tourism, which is the research focus of this paper. However, one of the recent studies of epistemic modality in tourism research articles (Vuković Vojnović and Jerković 2015: 251) shows that native English speakers make use of hedging mainly in the Discussion/Results sections of their papers, mostly to mitigate their claims and make them less prone to criticism. It has also been observed that epistemic modal auxiliaries formed the most frequent category, with the auxiliary *may* as the most frequent.

3. Corpus and methods

For the purpose of the current study, we have compiled a corpus of post-method sections of RAs in the field of tourism and hospitality written in English by native and non-native (Serbian) writers, taking the name and affiliation of the (first) author as an indicator of nativeness. The NWs sub-corpus (64,318 words) contains the relevant sections of 22 articles written by Anglophone writers, retrieved from reputed journals covered by Scopus within the subject category Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality Management (see Appendix for details). To compile the NNWs sub-corpus (39,752 words), we extracted relevant sections from 22 articles published in national journals, which thematically correspond to the

chosen international publications (see Appendix). The two sub-corpora are comparable enough, since they include the same sections (exclusive of tables and direct quotations from research participants), with *tourism*, *hospitality*, *hotel*, or *travel* as either title words or keywords; the articles were published in the same period (between 2018 and 2021).

As mentioned above, we have focused on lexical items “commonly considered as hedges” (Salager-Meyer 1994: 154) and have drawn on the inventory of items previously identified as potentially performing a hedging function in academic texts (notably Hyland 1998b, 2005). We have combined software-assisted methods with manual coding. First, we retrieved the concordance lines of relevant items in each corpus using the Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al. 2014) corpus tool, and then inspected each occurrence, considering the wider context, in order to determine whether it acts as a hedge or not. Both authors of this article coded the identified occurrences independently and then reached an agreement on discrepancies through discussion and consensus. Clusters of hedges were counted separately (e.g., *may suggest* was treated as two hedges). The findings on particular items in each sub-corpus, classified per category, were then combined and compared. To enable comparison between the sub-corpora which differ markedly in size, raw frequencies were normalised per thousand words (hereinafter *ptw*).

Only the items used to tone down the level of the writer’s commitment to the truth or factuality of the proposition were coded as hedges. Thus, for instance, *assume* in example (1) was taken as a hedge, whereas in (2) it was not regarded as such.

- (1) Furthermore, Hu et al. (2020) *assumed* that deep compliance is always effortful (NWs_14)
- (2) Lenders are increasingly *assuming* active roles in interactions with hotel owners... (NWs_8)

What could make the identification of hedges problematic are the not so clear demarcation lines between epistemic and root modality meanings, particularly circumstantial modality. Besides modality markers expressing epistemic possibility (e.g., *may*, *might*, *perhaps*), we also considered as hedges some instances of root modality markers (see Hyland 1998a). Largely, this applies to the cases when a marker in question (typically, a modal auxiliary or an adjective) is coupled with some contextual clues which indicate that there was epistemic uncertainty attached. So, *can* in example (3) was taken as a hedge, while *can* occurring in the phrases *can be seen*, as in (4), was not.

- (3) ..., as these events *can* attract a large number of locals, as well as tourists, and thus have significant economic implications. (NNWs_16)
- (4) As *can* be seen, the likelihood of leaving absolutely no plate waste behind increases significantly when there are fewer people in the family (NWs_7)

Further, evidentiality is seen as a sub-category of epistemic modality, hence epistemic lexical verbs comprise those encoding evidential meanings as well, specifically reporting verbs which “occur as markers of tentativeness in reports of the author’s own or other researchers’ work” (Varttala 1999: 185). As for adverbials, the hedging function may be attributed to both downtoners and adverbials functioning as disjuncts.

4. Findings and discussion

The general findings on hedging in the analysed RAs are presented here, followed by a closer look into each hedging category of the subsections; particular attention is paid to the similarities and differences between the two sub-corpora. For each hedging category, except for modal auxiliaries, the most frequent items are presented in tables in descending order of their normalised frequency (NF). Throughout this section, the bracketed numbers refer to the order in the tables (NWs, NNWs).

4.1. Overview of hedges

The graph below shows the breakdown of the categories of hedges found in our corpus based on NF. It is noteworthy that our findings on hedges used by Anglophone writers agree with those of some previous studies (e.g., Hyland 1996; Demir 2018).

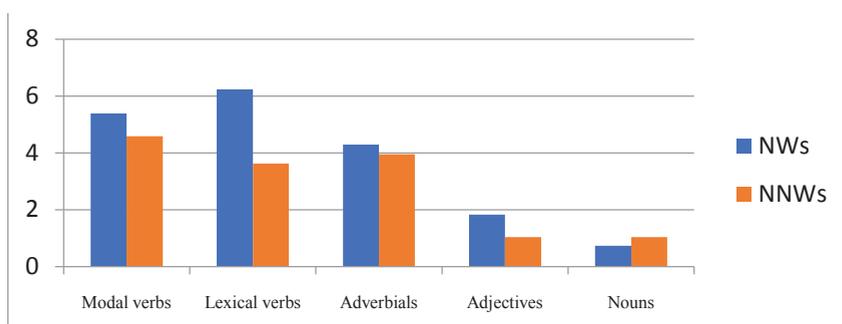


Figure 1. Grammatical categories used to express hedging

It can easily be seen that there are rather great differences between the two sub-corpora. Except for nouns, each hedging category is less represented in the articles from the Serbian journals. The RAs written by NWs are more extensively hedged, as indicated by the overall incidence of hedges in the two sub-corpora (18.47 vs. 14.21 ptw). We can also see that there are some differences in the preferences for hedging categories.

4.2. Modal auxiliaries

Being the principal exponents of epistemic modality, modal auxiliaries are effective means through which writers manipulate the level of precision of their claims, as the following examples illustrate.

- (5) ... tourists' newly acquired knowledge of the foods (and foodways) *may* affect their tasting experiences adversely. (NWs_8)
- (6) In the future, Serbia *could* base its tourist offer on rural areas. (NNWs_9)
- (7) With a prediction that refunds and complaints *should* decline ... (NWs_11)

Although modals turn out to be the major means of hedging in the NNWs sub-corpus, only two (*could*, *would*) out of the six modals found in a hedging

function are more frequent in this sub-corpus, while three modals (*may*, *might*, *could*) are more commonly employed by NWs than by Serbian writers, as shown in Table 1.

	NWs	NNWs
<i>may</i>	2.15	0.35
<i>might</i>	0.34	0.10
<i>can</i>	0.78	1.86
<i>could</i>	1.32	0.78
<i>would</i>	0.62	1.31
<i>should</i>	0.17	0.18

Table 1. Modals used as hedges

As can be seen, *might* and *should* are the least favoured hedges by both groups of authors, and the most striking difference relates to the hedging through the use of modal *may*. *May*, in fact, turns out to be not only the most common modal used by Anglophone writers, but also the most frequent lexical hedge in the articles by NWs. It is, however, more than six times less frequently used by Serbian writers (2.15 vs. 0.35 ptw). On the other hand, *can* is more than twice frequent in the NNWs sub-corpus as compared to the NWs sub-corpus (0.78 vs. 1.86 ptw). What possibly accounts for these discrepancies is that *can* seems to be employed by NNWs in cases where *may* could be a better alternative, as example (8) indicates. Further, recurrent combinations like *can be explained* and *can be concluded* add significantly to the high frequency of *can* in the NNWs articles. It is interesting that, while constituting 40 per cent of the occurrences of *can* in this sub-corpus, these combinations are not found in the NWs articles.

- (8) The paper *can* have a wide scientific, economic and social significance.
(NNWs_8)

4.3. Lexical verbs

Lexical verbs are the hedging category with the most pronounced differences between the two analysed sub-corpora. In the articles written by Anglophone writers, they take primacy over all other word classes, while NNWs use them twice less frequently (6.23 vs. 3.62 ptw). Besides this, the two sub-corpora differ in the variety of verbs employed (NWs 32 items vs. NNWs 26 items). Further differences relate to the types of verbs most commonly used, as shown in Table 2.

NWs		NNWs	
<i>suggest</i>	1.37	<i>conclude</i>	1.53
<i>consider</i>	0.96	<i>think</i>	0.38
<i>Seem</i>	0.54	<i>believe</i>	0.25
<i>appear</i>	0.45	<i>suggest</i>	0.20
<i>Tend</i>	0.42	<i>consider</i>	0.12

Table 2. The most frequent lexical verbs used as hedges

In both sub-corpora, *suggest* and *consider* feature among the top-ranked verbs, albeit with markedly lower frequency in the NNWs articles. In NWs articles, they are followed by “epistemic copulas” (Crompton 1997) (*seem, appear, tend*). While these verbs occur as important devices for softening the authors’ claims in the NWs articles, as examples (9) – (11) illustrate, they are only sparingly used by NNWs (just four instances, i.e. 0.10 ptw altogether). The latter, however, resort more frequently to mental state verbs (*conclude, think, believe*) to convey tentativeness, as in example (11).

- (9) Various sources *suggest* that online sale of tourist and hotel services is recording steady growth ... (NNWs_19)
- (10) ..., Chinese people *tend* to display stronger solidarity and organizational loyalty. (NWs_14)
- (11) Such findings *seem* to corroborate what Francioni (2012) ... (NWs_12)
- (12) ... and many other character traits that are *believed* to be inherent in the service-oriented staff.. (NNWs_19)

It is worth noting that there are other verbs commonly used by NWs, which tend to be quite rare or practically non-existent in the NNWs sub-corpus (e.g. *feel, argue, perceive, see (as), seek*).

4.4. Adverbials

Adverbials are the most diverse class of hedges: there are 49 items used by NWs, 30 of which are also used by NNWs. Compared to the verbal hedges, the use of adverbial hedges displays stronger similarities in the two sub-corpora. Besides a less marked difference in frequency (4.29 vs. 3.95 ptw), we find adverbials of indefinite frequency, quantity, and limitation, among the five top-ranked items in both sub-corpora, as presented in Table 3.

NWs		NNWs	
<i>Often</i>	0.68	<i>often</i>	1.53
<i>About</i>	0.25	<i>mostly</i>	0.50
<i>Usually</i>	0.22	<i>almost</i>	0.28
<i>Mainly</i>	0.20	<i>relatively</i>	0.17
<i>relatively</i>	0.20	<i>in most cases</i>	0.15

Table 3. The most frequent adverbials used as hedges

This result is hardly surprising, as approximators are highly common in the Results sections of the analysed articles. As examples (13) – (15) show, they are especially useful for writers to present their quantitative findings with less precision. Interestingly, the adverbs typically associated with epistemic modality, exemplified by *probably* in (16), do not feature among the most frequent items in either sub-corpus; yet they are more commonly employed by NWs.

- (13) *almost* 80% of the respondents consider that ... (NNWs_14)
- (14) Such reviews are *often* published using the accounts created only to make fake reviews. (NNWs_7)

- (15) The findings *mainly* support the application of the SET framework in this context ... (NWs_18)
- (16) This is *probably* the result of a number of factors. (NWs_4)

4.5. Adjectives

Compared to the adverbial hedges, the adjectives used as hedges are far less common in our corpus (1.83, 1.03 ptw) and represent a much smaller category. Our analysis revealed 20 such items, again with the greater variety found in the NWs articles (18 vs. 11 items). As Table 4 shows, *potential* and *possible* are the most preferred adjectives across the corpus.

NWs		NNWs	
<i>likely</i>	0.73	<i>possible</i>	0.35
<i>potential</i>	0.28	<i>potential</i>	0.32
<i>possible</i>	0.22	<i>likely</i>	0.10
<i>proposed</i>	0.11	<i>expected</i>	0.05
<i>unlikely</i>	0.09	<i>typical</i>	0.05

Table 4. The most frequent adjectives used as hedges

It appears that NWs use adjectives as explicit epistemic modifiers more frequently, as is the case of the adjective *likely* in example (16). In the articles from Serbian journals, adjectives in attributive position prevail. We can see from example (18) that adjectives in this use are not strictly epistemic, still, as Hyland (1998a: 131–132) maintains, they also qualify the writer's position.

- (17) It is *likely* that location may be a factor in differentiating residents' attitudes ... (NWs_7)
- (18) Local residents are aware of the *possible* positive impacts of cycling tourism development; (NNWs_15)

4.6. Nouns

Nouns are the least prominent category of hedges. Our analysis revealed 19 nominal hedges, which are morphologically and semantically strongly related to the lexical verbs and adjectives discussed above. They are another means for presenting information tentatively, as in the examples below.

- (19) It is our *assumption* that more local residents would provide cycling friendly services ... (NNWs_20)
- (20) The *claim* is that business according to HACCP is not changed (NNWs_11)

Nominal hedges are the only hedging category which Serbian writers use more frequently than NWs (0.73 vs. 1.03 ptw). This, however, does not entail a greater variety, since NNWs rely on a much more limited set of items (16 vs. 9 items). Interestingly, of the four most frequent nouns used as hedges by NWs,

shown in Table 5, only *probability* is used by NNWs, while the remaining three do not occur in the NNWs texts.

NWs		NNWs	
<i>prediction</i>	0.11	<i>assumption</i>	0.27
<i>proposition</i>	0.07	<i>possibility</i>	0.20
<i>suggestion</i>	0.07	<i>probability</i>	0.17
<i>probability</i>	0.07	<i>assertion</i>	0.10

Table 5. The most frequent nouns used as hedges

5. Conclusion

We have set out to investigate lexical hedges in the post-method sections of RAs written in English by Anglophone and Serbian authors. The analysis has revealed substantial differences in the amount of hedging used, the tendency to rely on particular hedging categories and the variety of lexical items employed. As already observed (Chen, Zhang 2017: 24), some of the underlying causes for these differences might be of a different nature, with different cultural norms, rhetorical traditions, and levels of pragmatic competence probably being the principal ones.

The results have shown that native writers prefer lexical verbs and modals for hedging, followed, in decreasing order, by adverbials, adjectives, and nouns. On the other hand, non-native writers employ modals first of all, then adverbials, lexical verbs, nouns, and adjectives; they also use more nouns for hedging purposes than NWs, but the range of items is more limited. NWs use a wider range of hedging devices and a larger number of items in each category (except for the nouns), which indicates that they tend to be less categorical and direct in their claims. This corresponds to previous research findings by numerous other authors discussed here in the literature review and theoretical background sections. This sheds light on the cross-cultural challenges NNWs face when presenting their research in English to an international audience. In view of this, the results can be used as an input for teaching specific rhetorical techniques in academic writing at tertiary level, which would help NNWs gain confidence and native like proficiency when presenting their research work internationally.

Our findings may also contribute to the investigation of academic writing in the tourism-related fields, which has not been done extensively so far. Further comparative research could be done on larger corpora, covering specific subfields, and belonging to other languages as well.

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Appendix

Corpus details

NWs		NNWs	
Journal	No. of Ras	Journal	No. of RAs
<i>International Journal of Tourism Research</i>	1	<i>Serbian Journal of Management</i>	2
<i>Current Issues in Tourism</i>	1	<i>Ekonomika preduzeća</i>	2
<i>International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management</i>	2	<i>Teme</i>	3
<i>Tourism Management</i>	2	<i>Economics of Agriculture</i>	3
<i>International Journal of Hospitality Management</i>	3	<i>Strategic Management</i>	1
<i>Journal of Sustainable Tourism</i>	1	<i>The European Journal of Applied Economics</i>	2
<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research</i>	2	<i>Megatrend Review</i>	1
<i>Tourism Management Perspectives</i>	2	<i>Hotel and Tourism Management</i>	2
<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	2	<i>The Annals of the Faculty of Economics in Subotica</i>	2
<i>Cornell Hospitality Quarterly</i>	2	<i>Economic Themes</i>	1
<i>Tourism and Hospitality Research</i>	2	<i>Economic Horizons</i>	1
<i>Tourism Economics</i>	1	<i>Industry</i>	2
<i>Tourism Review International</i>	1		

WOULD IT KILL YOU TO STOP DOING THAT? ON SOME RHETORICAL QUESTIONS WHICH FUNCTION AS INDIRECT REQUESTS

DŽEMAL ŠPAGO

“Dzermal Bijedic” University of Mostar

***Abstract:** While, in most instances, the difference between rhetorical and action-eliciting questions is clear-cut, there are certain borderline cases where questions that are apparently rhetorical function as indirect requests. This paper deals with the analysis of examples of such rhetorical questions taken from a number of plays by four American and British playwrights. The results confirm that, although such instances are quite rare, indirect requests can also be made in the form of questions that imply obvious answers, and that contain no elements of asking for information.*

***Keywords:** action-eliciting questions, conversational implicatures, indirect requests, rhetorical questions.*

1. Introduction

Regardless of the language we speak, our age, education, or status, we all use rhetorical questions (henceforth, RQ) on a daily basis, in an attempt to achieve different communicative goals. Additionally, this linguistic form is often used as a highly effective persuasion technique in journalism, political speeches and campaigns, marketing, judicial proceedings, as well as many other spheres of life. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that RQs have been a riveting and intriguing topic for linguists and rhetoricians for quite some time.

The reasons for the effectiveness and such wide usage of RQs include their multifunctionality (Ilie 1994) (they can be used to perform different goals in communication, sometimes more than one at a time), as well as their persuasive effects (Frank 1990; Blankenship and Craig 2006), which make them a great tool in putting forward speakers' ideas and convincing interlocutors to accept them, or, alternatively, in challenging arguments presented by interlocutors (Blankenship and Craig 2006; Cerović 2016). Although RQs may be followed by answers supplied either by the addressor or addressee (Ilie 1994), their purpose is neither to elicit nor to ask for an (informative) answer. Instead, the speaker's intention in posing such questions is to let interlocutors recognize and acknowledge the apparent answer that is already implied by an RQ as the only possible one, thereby enticing them into accepting the speaker's arguments. Such questions can be used in both aggressive and friendly communication (Špago 2020), often in combination with irony or sarcasm (Oraby et al. 2017).

While a lot of research deals with different aspects and different functions of RQs both in daily communication and in a specific context, they, by and large, avoid the questions that, although apparently rhetorical, are used to implicitly suggest that the addressee should do something. In her analysis of RQs, Ilie (1994: 77) explicitly argues that an RQ can never be used to ask for information, or to ask someone to do something, "...although it may eventually lead to an act of decision-making aimed at a certain course of action as a desirable goal". However, in some instances, RQs and action-eliciting questions seem to overlap, since certain questions that meet all the requirements for being labeled as rhetorical, simultaneously function as indirect requests.

In this paper, based on examples of RQs taken from a number of plays by four famous American and British playwrights, I analyze instances where RQs are apparently used with the intention to urge the addressee to do something, and explore different patterns in which such RQs appear.

2. Background

Questions can be classified according to different criteria. Based on the form in which they are realized and „the way the set of answers is defined“ (Huddleston 1994: 411), they can be classified as *yes-no (polar)*, *wh-*, or alternative questions (Quirk et al. 1985; Huddleston 1994). In addition to these three basic types, there are minor types of questions that can be associated with one of the above types: question tags, echo questions, declarative and nonclausal questions (for a detailed account of the last two types, see Weber 1993).

On the other hand, based on the speakers' intention and the function that they perform, Athanasiadou (1991) classifies questions into four categories:

- *Information questions*, which are intended to ask for and obtain information (*Where did you buy that jacket?*),
- *Rhetorical questions*, whose purpose is to provide information, which makes them opposite to the above category (*What have you ever done for me?*),
- *Examination questions*, where the intention of the speaker is to test the addressee's knowledge (*What is a transitive verb?*),
- *Indirect requests*, which are intended to urge the addressee to do something (*Can you close the window, please?*).

Focusing on the type of answers that they seek, Ilie (1994) proposes the following classification of questions:

- *Answer-eliciting questions*, which seek an answer and can be further divided into questions that seek an informative answer (information-eliciting), those that seek an answer, but not information (examination and courtesy questions), and those that ask for permission or confirmation (permission- and confirmation-eliciting questions),
- *Action-eliciting questions*, which ask for action, and
- *Mental-response-eliciting questions*, which require a *mental response* - she places rhetorical questions into this category, and explains that this response "... is basically cognitive, i.e. it represents the addressee's recognition of the implicit answer to the rhetorical question" (Ilie 1994: 82).

Regarding the nature of RQs, different accounts are offered by researchers who have explored such questions. According to one view (Han 2002; Sadock

1974), RQs are indirect statements which have the form of questions. They function as indirect statements that have the opposite polarity to that of the question (*What do you know about anything?* is equivalent to *You don't know anything*, whereas the RQ *Who doesn't know that?* implies the statement *Everybody knows that*). These implied statements are often more expressive and persuasive than explicit statements, since they "... enable speakers to make stronger statements, with greater implications, than would be possible if they had made straightforward assertions" (Frank 1990: 726).

Other views are that RQs are questions which are actually information-seeking, but with a constrained set of possible answers (van Roy 2003); redundant interrogatives, as their answers are already known (Rohde 2006); or that RQs are questions which are semantically the same as information questions, but they are different from them at the level of pragmatics, as they are used to stress an already known fact (Caponigro and Sprouse 2007).

Although they are not asked with the intention of eliciting a verbalized answer, RQs are sometimes, for different reasons, followed by answers provided by either the addressor or addressee (Ilie 1994). On the other hand, RQs can be used as successful and convincing answers to information-eliciting questions (*A: How reliable is he? B: How shallow is the ocean?*) (for a detailed account of such RQs, see Schaffer 2005).

There is a difference of opinion when it comes to what questions can be classified as rhetorical. While there is a general consensus that questions which imply an obvious answer are rhetorical, Schmidt-Radefeldt (1977) and Haverkate (1997) also include questions that are used to draw the interlocutor's attention (*Do you know...?*) as rhetorical. Additionally, other types of questions are sometimes classified as rhetorical, such as those that are used in soliloquies (*Am I that stupid?*) (Kiefer 1980) or questions that express the addressor's surprise or annoyance (*Are you crazy?*) (Haverkate 1997).

Interestingly, instances that represent borderline cases between RQs and action-eliciting questions (those that simultaneously imply an obvious answer and indirectly urge the addressee to do something) have been paid little, if any attention so far.

3. Methodology, data and research questions

Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been utilized in this study. The former was used to identify, analyze and group RQs which function as indirect requests, and the latter (descriptive statistics) was used to measure the frequency of occurrence for different patterns in which such RQs appear in the corpus. I first identified all instances of RQs in my corpus, and then selected and analyzed those that, in the given context, apparently suggest that addressees should follow a certain course of action.

The corpus from which examples of RQs have been taken consists of 13 plays by Arthur Miller (*A View from the Bridge*; *The American Clock*, *Broken Glass*), Tennessee Williams (*Sweet Bird of Youth*; *The Mutilated*; *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale*), Tom Stoppard (*Dirty Linen*; *Squaring the Circle*; *Arcadia*) and Harold Pinter (*The Heat of the Day*; *The Birthday Party*; *The Hothouse*; *The Homecoming*). The selection of the corpus was motivated by the fact that plays represent the closest substitute for real-life conversations, and, as such, can serve as a reliable source of RQs that are used in everyday

communication. Both American and British playwrights were included in order to ensure that the two major variants of English are represented, but without any intention to explore potential similarities or differences between them in regard to RQs.

The research questions that this study is intended to answer are the following:

- Can RQs function as indirect requests?
- If yes, what are the most common patterns in which such RQs are realized, and how common are they?

4. Results and discussion

4.1. RQs as action-eliciting questions

While, in most cases, RQs and action-eliciting questions represent two distinct types of questions that perform different communicative goals, the results of this study indicate that there are questions that, although apparently rhetorical, can also function as action-eliciting in a particular context. Typical action-eliciting questions bear some similarity to information-eliciting questions. Ilie (1994), following Kiefer (1980), states that the distinction between the two categories is subtle rather than clear-cut, as both of them contain elements of the other group:

Questions expressing mainly information desiderata are normally considered to be information eliciting, whereas questions expressing mainly action desiderata are normally considered to be action eliciting (...). (Ilie 1994: 76-77)

The rationale behind this claim is that, when asking information-eliciting questions, the speaker simultaneously asks the interlocutor to do something - at least to provide an answer (in the same vein, Bach and Harnish (1979: 40) define questions as "... special cases of requests, special in that what is requested is that the speaker provide the hearer with certain information"), whereas action-eliciting questions also contain elements of asking for information about the interlocutor's willingness or ability to do something (at least out of courtesy). Therefore, when asked if they are able or willing to do something, the addressees are left with an option to answer that they cannot do something for some reason, or to do it without waiting for the speaker to request it explicitly. However, the following examples reveal a significant difference between some questions that obviously function as action-eliciting in the given context:

(1) TAYLOR: Would you be able to give me something to eat?
(Miller 2003: 389)

(2) ROSE: **Are you playing cards or hatching an egg?**
DORIS: Oh, it's my turn? All right; here!
ROSE: Hallelujah. (idem: 433)

While the speaker's intention in both examples is clearly geared towards getting the addressee to do something, it is only the example (1) that contains some elements of an information-eliciting question (inquiring about the addressee's ability to help the speaker, and thereby tacitly asking him to do so). Conversely, in the example (2), we have an alternative question asked during a card game that

offers two potential answers - one that is obvious in that particular context (*you are playing cards*), and the other one which is absolutely unacceptable in any context (*it is impossible for a woman to hatch an egg*). Since it implies an obvious answer and it is equivalent to an indirect statement, this question is rhetorical by any standards. However, given that the implied statement seems redundant (why would the speaker imply something that is already clear to everybody?), the addressee, following the Grice's maxim of relevance (see Grice 1989), interprets the implied statement as a tacit request to do something, and acts accordingly.

While RQs typically function on a two-layer basis (a question represents an indirect statement), the question in the example (2) has the third component, with the implied statement functioning as an indirect request, as shown in Figure 1:



Figure 1: RQs as indirect requests

Considering the fact that statements can be used to indirectly urge the addressee to do something, it is quite logical that RQs, as questions that are equivalent to indirect statements, can also perform that same function. Namely, implicit statements in such RQs contain conversational implicatures:

(3) HARRISON: Are you off your head? **Do you think we've got all night?**
(Pinter 1989: 81)

(4) BERNIE: It's about time you quit hustling, not because you think so but because the guys you hustle for the price of a bottle or a couple of drinks have eyes to see you with, sister, and what they see is a wino, long in the tooth.

CELESTE: *Is this any way to talk to a girl at Xmas?*
(Williams 2000: 593)

The questions in the above examples obviously fall within the scope of RQs as defined by Ilie (1994: 53) (RQs are questions that have "... one and only one implied answer which excludes all other answers"), and they are equivalent to indirect statements of opposite polarity (*we haven't got all night / this is not a way to talk to a girl at Xmas*). However, it is clear that, in the given context, the speakers' intention goes beyond simply making those statements more convincing and memorable by formulating them in the form of RQs. Instead, those RQs are meant to make the addressees do something (*hurry up / stop talking like that*), once they recognize and acknowledge the obvious answers that they imply.

Altogether, I have identified 492 examples of RQs in my corpus, and, among them, 34 RQs (7%) that could be labeled as indirect requests. Among the examples of RQs identified, those that function as indirect requests have been realized in one of the following ways:

- in the form of *why-don't-you/we-do-something* questions,
- in the form of asking addressees if they want something unpleasant to happen to them,
- by asking addressees who told or allowed them to do something,
- without following any specific pattern.

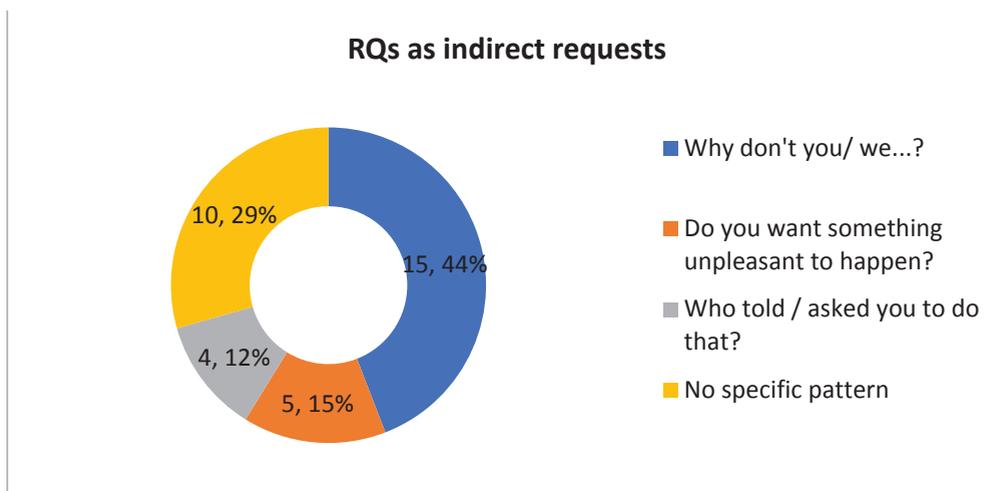


Figure 2: The form of RQs functioning as indirect requests

4.2. RQs in the form of *why-don't-you/we* questions

A common way of formulating RQs as action-eliciting questions is to ostensibly inquire about the reasons for not doing something:

(5) MAX: (...) Anyway, what's the difference, you did it, you made a wonderful choice, you've got a wonderful family, a marvellous career . . . **so why don't we let bygones be bygones?** (Pinter 1966: 48-49)

(6) JOHN: **Why don't we take a drive.**
ALMA: What a divine suggestion! (Williams 2000: 440)

(7) EDDIE: (...) **Whyn't you run down buy a tablecloth.** Go ahead, here.
CATHERINE: *There's no stores open now.* (Miller 2003: 319)

Questions realized in this form are equivalent to indirect statements that something should be done (the answer that they imply is *there is no reason not to do that*). Therefore, they are different from typical action-eliciting question (for instance, *shall we take a drive / can you buy a tablecloth*) that contain elements of information-eliciting questions.

The rhetorical interpretation of such questions is often facilitated by punctuation marks (or, in spoken utterances, by stress and intonation), as is the case in the examples (6) and (7), since questions with the same form can also be used as information-eliciting. Furthermore, as shown in example (7), they can be accompanied by imperatives.

The addressee's response in example (6) shows that the question is understood as rhetorical. However, as we can note in example (7), the addressee may choose to challenge the implied statement by responding to an RQ as if it were an information question, which is in line with Kleinke's (2012) claim that the rhetorical force of RQs may be open to negotiation.

4.3. RQs in the form of *do-you-want* questions

Another way of posing action-eliciting questions in the form of RQs is to ostensibly ask addressees if they want to experience something disagreeable or unpleasant. Since the obvious and the only meaningful answer to such questions is *no*, addressees can easily infer that the questions are meant to urge them to do something that will prevent the mentioned unpleasanties from happening. Therefore, such RQs function as warnings:

(8) REV. WINEMILLER: **Do you want them to overhear you?**

ALMA: Oh, they're not there any more, she's dragged him out of danger!
(Williams 2000: 435)

(9) WALESA: These demands against the security police – they can't be made in the name of the union. We are a non-political organization. It was a pledge. **Do you want to ruin everything?** (Stoppard 1998: 228-229)

(10) HYMAN: You should already be having therapy to keep up your circulation. **You have a long life ahead of you, you don't want to live it in a wheelchair, do you?** (...) (Miller 2003: 544)

The RQs in the above examples, equivalent to indirect statements (*you don't want them to overhear you / you don't want to ruin everything / you don't want to spend your life in a wheelchair*) that simultaneously function as indirect requests (*speak quietly / don't do that / go to see a specialist*), are communicatively more effective than the use of direct orders or demands, since they draw the addressees' attention to the potential harm of continuing with their present behaviour. As a result, it is more likely that the addressees will be persuaded to act in a particular way if requests are made by means of RQs.

4.4. RQs in the form of *who-told/asked-you* questions

The third pattern of RQs as action-eliciting questions that have been identified in my corpus is in the form of inquiring who asked or allowed addressees to do something. Since they clearly imply that addressees did not have permission to do the mentioned things (the obvious answer to such questions is *nobody*), these questions serve as indirect requests for undoing whatever had been done, while simultaneously expressing the speaker's criticism and anger towards the addressees or their actions:

(11) STANLEY: **Who gave you the right to take away my tea?**
(Pinter 1961: 12)

(12) MAX: **Who asked you to bring dirty tarts into this house?**
TEDDY: Listen, don't be silly - (Pinter 1966: 41)

(13) RODOLPHO: Eddie?
EDDIE: **Who said you could come in here?** Get outa here!
(Miller 1972: 368)

While, as shown in the example (13), such RQs can be accompanied by explicit directives (which strengthen the commanding tone of the utterance), the

speaker's intention to have the addressee do something is easily recognizable from the questions, even without any explicit orders.

4.5. RQs as action-eliciting questions without a specific pattern

Some of the RQs from my corpus that indirectly ask for action do not have any specific repeated form that would differentiate them from other RQs. Examples (2), (3), and (4) include such RQs that only in a particular context can be interpreted as indirect requests. However, it is possible that the limited number of RQs included in this study prevented me from finding more repeated patterns of RQs that can be used as action-eliciting questions. For instance, the forms of the RQs in the following examples seem conducive to such use:

(14) CHANCE: She's gone. **Why talk about it?** (Williams 2000: 160)

(15) WITHEKSHAW: (...) **are we going to judge grown responsible men in this day and age by the standards of Mrs.Grundy (...)?**

COCKLEBURY-SMYTHE: But what's the report based on if we aren't going to call any witnesses? (Stoppard 1976: 93)

While only one such example has been identified in my corpus, RQs in the form of *why+lexical verb* typically imply that it is pointless to do something, and, by extension, they represent indirect suggestions. Similarly, RQs in the form of asking if we are going to allow or do something indirectly suggest that this should not be done, thereby prompting our interlocutor to act accordingly (in the above example, to reject a witness testimony).

5. Conclusion

The results of this research confirm that although rhetorical and action-eliciting questions are two distinct types of questions, the former can be used with the intention to function as indirect requests. Namely, questions which do not ask for answers and are equivalent to indirect statements can also be used to urge addressees to do something. In those instances, RQs function on a three-layer basis: questions on the surface level are equivalent to indirect statements which serve as indirect requests. The selection of RQs intended as indirect requests, just like in the case of RQs in general, is linked to their persuasive effects, since they help the speaker convince the addressee that something needs to be done.

RQs that function as action-eliciting questions are not common. Out of 492 RQs identified in my corpus, only 34 (7%) were used to indirectly suggest that addressees should do something. Some of them had the form of *why-don't-we/you* questions (15; 44%), asking if the addressees want something unpleasant to happen (5; 15%), or asking who told or allowed addressees to do something (4; 12%). Yet, a significant number of such RQs (10; 29%) did not follow any specific pattern, or a pattern could not be established due to the limited number of RQs included into this study.

In conclusion, although rhetorical and action-eliciting questions are two distinct categories of questions, RQs can also be intended and understood as indirect requests.

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NEGOTIATING MEANING IN THE TRANSLATION OF RIDDLES IN J.R.R. TOLKIEN'S *THE HOBBIT*

NADINA VIȘAN

University of Bucharest

Abstract: *The aim of the present paper is to investigate strategies of translating riddles in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit. Taking as framework Pagis' (1996) and Senderovich's (2005) model of analysis for riddles as well as Wagner's (2020) pragma-semantic model of ambiguity, the paper redefines literary riddles as forms of conventionalized ambiguity that are strategically produced, perceived and resolved. The analysis of four target texts reveals that the main strategies employed in preserving a balance between opacity and transparency in literary riddles are equivalence, explicitation, rationalization and omission and that translation loss can be repaired through compensation.*

Keywords: *ambiguity, compensation, literary riddles, opacity, transparency.*

1. Introduction: literary riddles as strategies of authentication

Most of the literature on riddles (Taylor 1943, Pepicello, Green 1984, Senderovich 2005, etc.) defines a riddle as a piece of encoded text presented by a riddler to a riddlee as a challenge. The riddle is not complete unless it is also provided with a solution (whether "guessed" by the riddlee or "revealed" by the riddler, if the riddlee finds himself/herself unable to work it out). Folklorists aptly define a riddle as "a traditional, fixed-phrased verbal expression containing an image and a seeming contradiction" that "consists of two parts: an image and an answer." (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 2001: 9). Both linguists (Pepicello, Green 1984) and specialists in literature (Pagis 1996) agree that riddles are constructed through a careful balance between "anomaly" and "congruence" (Pepicello, Green 1984: 107) or between "lucidity and obscurity" (Pagis 1996: 84). What they mean is that for a riddle to function properly, it needs to contain both encrypting mechanisms and decoding clues, so that there is a balance between opacity and transparency of meaning.

The area of maneuver, though very large, is restricted on two counts. Just as a distant or arbitrary hint is too obscure and violates the condition of reasonable solubility, an overly detailed or self-evident hint violates the condition of reasonable opacity because it demands no effort and prevents the reader's active involvement in the game. (Pagis 1996: 91)

I believe that this delicately constructed balance between what needs to be known and what needs to be concealed in a riddle is the major problem that a translator will have to deal with when rendering the riddle into a target language.

On the one hand, the fixed form (prosody, rhyme, etc.) has to be preserved, while, on the other hand, the clues need to be kept intact so as not to upset the balance between opacity and solubility.

A second important point is that folk riddles differ from literary riddles. The difference between them is threefold: while folk riddles are pitched by the riddler to the riddlee during a “symposium”, under the eyes of a community that also serves as arbitrator, literary riddles are regularly part of a fictional contest that takes place between characters. There is no arbitrator involved and the characters’ contest is based on mutual agreement upon a set of rules. While both kinds of riddles rely on a shift of power between contestants (normally the riddler gets to have the upper hand because it is s/he that provides the challenge and it is also s/he that decides whether the answer of the riddlee is correct), while they take turns at pitching riddles, the literary riddle poses an intriguing problem in itself, since the delicate balance of power relies on the trust between the contestants and, in most cases, one of the contestants proves to be treacherous. The solving of such a riddle thus pushes the narrative forward. This is in fact the second difference between the literary riddle and the folk riddle: the former is context-dependent in the sense that, although “atemporal” or “extratemporal” (Bakhtin 1981: 156-158), it moves the story forward and has a clearly defined role in the plot. As remarked by Sebo (2012: 39), the riddle contest “occurs at the pivotal moment in the narrative”. Thirdly, as Pagis (1996: 84) remarks, the literary riddle is a protean species: once solved, it “ceases to exist” as a riddle and turns into a different kind of poem, such as a “descriptive epigram”.

I insist upon these differences between folk and literary riddles as I have gleaned them from the literature, because it is literary riddles in translated children’s literature that this paper deals with and because, to my mind, these differences are crucial for a translator’s task. If the translator is the first reader of the source text, s/he is already in possession of the answer to the riddle in question, which means that s/he will probably have to strategically “un-know” the answer before translating the riddle as a riddle. Otherwise, the balance between opacity and solubility might be upset and the translated riddle may be in danger of becoming just another “descriptive epigram”, to quote Pagis. This makes translating literary riddles even more challenging.

Moreover, with the literary riddle, there are at least two different planes that need to be taken into consideration (such as the narrative level of the characters and the extra-narrative level of the author and readers). If the riddle is translated, there will be a third level to be considered, as the translator may be seen to count as a mediator between the author and a new set of readers, therefore as an intermediate negotiator of meaning.

If I were to redefine the riddle according to Wagner’s (2020) pragma-semantic model of ambiguity, I would probably say that a literary riddle is a conventionalized form of strategically produced, strategically perceived, and strategically resolved ambiguity, both on an inner level (between characters) and on an outer level (between author and readers). In Wagner’s model, ambiguity is produced and/or perceived strategically when it has a clear communicative purpose. In this case, on the inner level, the characters produce riddles (which are forms of carefully constructed ambiguity), so as to compete in a contest that is but a reflection of what Sebo (2012, 2013) calls a “meta-contest”: the riddling contest is meant to hide the real contest between characters, in which one of them will be bettered (and possibly killed) by the other. So, the communicative purpose of the

riddle in this case is to negotiate meaning and ultimately to negotiate the character's life.

On the outer level, the author produces the riddles both as strategies of narrative advancement and as strategies of authentication (that is as authorial strategies that “lend the fictional world additional complexity and verisimilitude” (Gymnich 2005: 10, qtd. in Furkó 2020: 187).

Thus, on the inner level, the characters need to negotiate their lives by solving as many riddles as possible. But, as pointed out by Kaivola-Bregenhøj (2001: 9), solving riddles does not test one's wits as much as it tests one's *knowledge of the world*. The winner of the riddling contest is the one that is the more experienced and learned of the two contestants, the one that is able to make more sense of reality. On the other hand, on the outer level, the readers' attempt to solve the riddles can be seen as a way of accessing the fictional universe and of getting familiarized with it. This aspect of riddle solving may explain why, for the characters, the riddles might appear more “transparent”, therefore easier to solve, than they appear to be, for the readers. Obviously, the characters are more conversant with the fictional universe than the readers are, while the readers may, in their turn, be more knowledgeable about the events narrated in the story than the characters themselves might be.

To sum up, literary riddles are a species that is based on a carefully constructed balance between opacity and transparency, they are forms of conventionalized ambiguity, strategically produced, perceived and resolved on two levels, they are context-dependent, as they are integrated in the narrative and play a role in the plot, and they are a protean species in the sense that ambiguity resolution (the obligatory solving of the riddle) triggers their ceasing to be riddles and their being transformed into “an overt poem” (Pagis 1996: 98). All these aspects need to be weighed when translating literary riddles.

2. Riddle translation

I have chosen J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit* as the source for the corpus of my paper not just because it contains a wealth of riddles, but because the riddle contests it contains are tactically placed at pivotal moments in the narrative and because the main character in the narrative is transformed by these encounters. More than that, the book has been translated and re-translated into Romanian, which provides variants to the source riddles that might illuminate the translational process. It is interesting to mention that, with the exception of the 1995 target text, neither of the other two translators I have analysed translated the poems in the book themselves: the first (1975) target text is due to Catinca Ralea and appeared at “Ion Creangă” Publishing House, and the poems were translated by Leon Leviț chi. Both translators are known to be some of the greatest translators Romania has produced. The second (1995) target text was signed by poetess Junona Tutunea for “Elit” Publishing House and was repeatedly criticized as being too domesticating and a loose adaptation of the original (Bîrsanu 2020, Vișan 2022). The third target text was signed in 2007 by Irina Horea (for the prose) and Ion Horea (for the poems) and appeared at “Rao” Publishing House. The first target text was republished in 2005 also by “Rao” and might have competed with the third target text, which was subsequently republished several times. For the purposes of this paper, I have also produced my own version, which will count as a fourth target text.

As previously suggested (Bîrsanu 2020), the first two target texts' implied readers are children, as demonstrated by the addition of the word *poveste*, "fairytale", in the title of the Romanian versions. It is quite possible that the translators of the first two target texts may have thought that, for translated children's literature, the norm was that of collaborative reading between parents and children (as pointed out by Kruger (2011: 823)). In the case of the third target text, given the fact that the translation was commissioned by "Rao" as a continuation of the recently produced Romanian version for *The Lord of the Rings* books, very popular due to their adaptation into feature films, the implied readers are probably made up of the fans of the Middle-Earth universe, which means a mixed lot age-wise. As for the fourth target text (mine), the implied readers are specialists in translation studies reading the present paper.

Let us now discuss the type of riddles used in Chapter V of the book. The riddling contest that takes place is between the main character, Bilbo, the hobbit, and Gollum, about whom we only learn that he is a scary, yet pathetic creature, living in the dark. Bilbo, the underdog, turns out to be the winner not so much because of his skill or cunning, as because of his being exceptionally lucky. In this contest, the riddles the two contestants pitch to each other are inspired from the reality of their every-day lives and their gradual solving of these riddles allows for the characters to get acquainted with each other. It turns out that they are two faces of the same coin (Olsen 2012: 94), one sunny and unthreatening (Bilbo), the other dark and dangerous (Gollum): "in the end it seems that they might almost be 'before' and 'after' pictures of the same character." Consider the table below, which contains the answers to the riddles the characters propose:

GOLLUM'S RIDDLES (starts first, has the advantage)	BILBO'S RIDDLES (goes second, is the underdog in the competition)
MOUNTAIN	TEETH
WIND	SUN ON DAISIES
DARK	EGGS
FISH	Leg riddle - FISH ON TABLE, MAN ON STOOL, CAT GETS SOME
TIME (Tempus edax rerum = time, eater of things) – destroyer of mountains	PRECIOUS RING (the answer to a false riddle, a "neck" riddle: WHAT DO I HAVE IN MY POCKETS?)

Table 1. Bilbo's and Gollum's enigmata: coincidentia oppositorum

The encounter with Gollum, from which Bilbo has a narrow escape only due to "good luck" and to unwittingly resorting to a "(save one's) neck" riddle, is crucial for the development of the story. While all the riddles pitched in the contest are "true" riddles, in that they are formed around subjects that are part of the characters' shared knowledge, the last question that saves Bilbo's neck is a "false" riddle, since only Bilbo knows the answer to it and there is no way Gollum can answer the impossible question. Interestingly enough, while the "true" riddles (to use the term employed by Taylor 1943: 145) are "easy" for the characters (Tolkien uses the adjective "easy" in relation to riddles at least five times in this chapter), they are quite difficult to work out by the readers. The opposite happens with the neck riddle, which is impossibly opaque to Gollum, but transparent to the readers, who are aware of the answer since they have already learned that Bilbo has found a ring and placed it in his pocket.

Let us see to what extent the translators have managed to preserve a balance between obscurity and lucidity by looking at a few of the translated riddles in the first contest, most of which are under the form of poems. In judging whether solubility and opacity have been preserved in balance, we make use of Senderovich's (2005) observations with respect to the form of the riddle. She points out that most riddles are built on syntactic parallelism and that structural symmetry is meant to seamlessly conceal the subject of the riddle. So it turns out that an important strategy of concealment is syntactic parallelism. Revealing clues, on the other hand, are often underlined by means of rhyme. As noticed by Senderovich (2005: 74), in many riddles the first part is meant metaphorically and is placed in a rhyme with the second, literal part, somehow placing the most important clues in focus. Thus, "syntactic and verse forms work at counter purposes."

Consider the first riddle in the table below, built on opposition. This particular riddle is made up of an alternation between metaphoric meaning (roots, trees, grow) and literal meaning (up it goes). Syntactically, apart from the coordinated clauses, the riddle also alternates assertion with negation (has roots – but nobody sees them; goes up – but it never grows). It is probably important that both the syntactic and the prosodic pattern should be maintained for the riddle in order to be successfully rendered into the target language and, indeed, all target texts seem to do so, with the exception of TT2. Apart from doing away with the interrogative form of the original riddle, TT2 also destroys the positive-negative pattern, preserving the negation only in the second part. As for concealing elements (roots-trees-grows), all target texts manage to preserve them, with the exception of TT1, which replaces *trees* with *orișicare*, "anyone". As for TT3, the first negation in the riddle ("as nobody sees") is reformulated as "like nobody else", which changes the semantics of the first clue. This is an important part in the riddle, since, as pointed out by Olsen (2012: 87), it is also an opportunity for Gollum to indirectly brag that he is the only creature that has seen the roots of a mountain, that he is "the knower of secrets" and will therefore best Bilbo in the game. Both TT1 and TT3 nail the repetition ("up, up it goes"), which is omitted in TT2. TT4 on the other hand makes use of compensation in kind (by using two verbs instead of the repeated particle) and compensation in place (inserts a repetition of the adjective *tall* in line 2 and a repetition of the verb *grow* in the last line.) In doing that, TT4 is more rhetorical, more emphatic and manages to place in a rhyme the very key words that rhyme in the original (*goes/grows*), which, as Senderovich (2005) explains, is crucial for the mechanism of the riddle.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3	Target Text 4
What has <u>roots</u> as nobody sees, Is taller than <u>trees</u> , Up, up it goes, And yet never <u>grows</u> ?	Ce are rădăcini, dar nimeni nu le vede, E mai înalt, cu mult, ca orișicare Și urcă ssuss, și tot mai ssuss, sspre sstele, El nu crește nicicum, și totuși el e mare!	Rădăcini furișe a-nfripat Mai mult ca pomii s-a 'nălțat! În cer are frunte-avântată, Însă nu crește niciodată!	Ce-are rădăcini ca nimeni alt, Decât copacii-i mai înalt, și tot urcă, urcă, iată, Fără să crească vreodată?	Ce-are rădăcini nevăzute de om, Ce-i mai înalt decât cel mai 'nalt pom, Ce se-nalță, sus țintește De crescut însă nu crește?

Source Text	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation
What has <u>roots</u> as nobody sees, Is taller than <u>trees</u> , <u>Up, up it</u> <u>goes</u> , And yet never grows?	What has roots, but nobody can see them, Is much taller than anything And climbss <i>up</i> , <i>upper</i> still, to the stars, He never grows at all and yet he is big	Stealthy roots it extended Higher than trees it rose! In the sky its forehead peaks, Yet it never grows.	What has roots like nobody else, Than trees it is taller, It keeps <i>climbing</i> , <i>climbing</i> , look, Without ever growing?	What has roots Never seen by man, What is <i>taller</i> than the <i>tallest</i> tree, What soars, up it aims, But as for <i>growing</i> , it never <i>grows</i> ?

Table 2. Gollum’s riddle. Answer: MOUNTAIN. Metaphoric extension: roots-trees-grow, clue: goes up, never grows; built on paradox (goes up but never grows) (contradictive, oppositional riddle, Sebo 2012: 149)

The second riddle I have selected for perusal is, in my opinion, the trickiest to translate of them all. Here, syntactic parallelism is exquisitely used in order to conceal the answer to the riddle. Unlike all the other riddles, the answer is made up of two entities and the syntactic parallelism is meant to draw a parallelism between these two entities: the sun (also known in the Middle Ages as “the eye of the world”, as pointed out by Olsen (2012: 94)) and the daisies (whose English name contains the word *eye* in its etymology). This is a very clever riddle, quite opaque to the readers. However, Gollum has no problem decoding it by digging up long buried memories from the time when he used to live under the sun.

In table 3 below, I have underlined the revealing clues, which are placed symmetrically in the riddle. It can be noticed that only TT1 and TT4 manage to preserve the parallelism intact and, of the two, TT1 is the more successful, by also preserving the generic noun *faț ă*, “face”, instead of resorting to explicitation and replacing it with the more poetic and prosodically shorter *chip*, “visage, countenance”. The concealing, metaphoric element (“eye”) is meaningfully repeated five times in the source riddle. Of the four variants, only TT4 manages to fully recapture the repetition. Moreover, if one looks at the way in which words rhyme, TT4 manages to compensate the impossibility of rhyming the equivalent of the Romanian noun for *face* (due to adjectives being postposed in Romanian) by replacing the ABAB chiasmus in the original with a ABBA chiasmus in the translation: ST, *eye in a blue face – eye in a green face* vs. TT4, *on a blue face an eye – an eye on a green face*. TT4 is also the only variant that manages to place the noun *ochi*, “eye”, in verse-final position so as to rhyme, which, as explained before, is part of the carefully constructed balance between opacity and transparency in the source riddle.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3	Target Text 4
An eye in a <u>blue face</u> Saw an eye in a <u>green face</u> . "That eye is like to this eye" Said the first eye, "But <u>in low place</u> , Not <u>in high place</u> ." <i>Repetition of eye – 5</i>	Un ochi (1) pe-o <u>fată</u> <u>albastră</u> Vede un ochi (2) pe o <u>fată</u> <u>verde</u> . "Ochiul (3) ăla e ca mine, Spune ochiu'ntîi (4). Da, numai că eu <u>sînt sus</u> Iară <u>el e jos</u> ."	Din <u>chip de-azur</u> Un ochi (1) vede Alt ochi (2) în jur, <u>Pe fată verde</u> . „Mi-e aidoma”, Primul gîndea. „Dar sus stau eu, El – jos mereu.”	Dintr-un <u>albastru chip</u> , un ochi (1) <u>Pe-un verde chip</u> văzu un ochi (2). „O, cât ne- asemănăm” și-a spus – „Însă acolo jos, Nu sus!”	Pe un <u>chip albastru</u> un ochi (1) Un ochi (2) vede pe-un <u>chip verde</u> „Ăl ochi (3) e la fel ca ăst' ochi (4)” Spune primul ochi (5), „Dar <u>colo jos</u> , Nu- <u>ai</u> ca sus.”
	4	2	2	5
Source Text	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation
An eye in a <u>blue face</u> Saw an eye in a <u>green face</u> . "That eye is like to this eye" Said the first eye, "But <u>in low place</u> , Not <u>in high place</u> ."	An eye on a blue face Sees an eye on a green face. That eye is like me, Says first eye. Yes, only I am up, And it is down.	From visage of azure An eye sees Another eye around, On a green face. It is the same, The first thought. But up I am, He- down always.	From a blue visage, an eye On a green visage Saw an eye. Oh, how alike we are, (It) said to itself, But down there, Not up.	On a blue visage an eye An eye sees on a green visage. That eye is the same as this eye, Says the first eye, But down there, Not up here.

Table 3. Bilbo's riddle. Answer: SUN ON THE DAISIES. Metaphor: eye. Clues: blue face, high place vs green face, low place. Hidden clue: etymology of the word *daisy* (OE *daeges eage* 'day's eye'). Symmetry; high degree of opacity (particular image, not a general definition).

Consider also another riddle told by Bilbo in the first contest, which, oddly enough, is the one that Gollum finds hardest to solve. As pointed out by Olsen (2012), this is probably because the riddle is built around the subject EGGS, which are a symbol of light and life, while Gollum is a symbol of death and darkness. Actually, the only way in which he manages to find the answer is by remembering how he used to suck eggs robbed from birds' nests. If you look at the target texts in Table 4, you can see that TT1, TT3 and TT4 preserve the syntactic pattern quite meticulously. Both TT1 and TT3 retain all the elements of the metaphoric extension, while TT2 and TT4 either resort to explicitation by employing marked variants (*box*, whose equivalent is "cutie", is replaced by the poetic variants *sipet* "coffer, trunk" or *lăcrișă*, "little case") or change some of the components of the box (*hinges* is replaced by *lock* in TT4, due to prosodic reasons). The poetic or obsolete language seems to be an archaizing feature that is preminent in TT2

(which uses the obsolete, poetic *zăvor* for *key*, or the regional *țâțâni* for *hinges*), although the source text makes use of simple, basic vocabulary. TT2 employs disjointed syntax, which makes the decoding of the riddle almost a herculean task for the readers. In point of translation loss, all four versions seem to be unable to preserve the passive voice and the impersonal tone of the source text. The most upsetting instance of translation loss, however, is TT3's omission of the adjective *golden*, which is an important clue in the riddle. It appears that, due to disjointed syntax or to such omissions, both TT2 and TT3 fail to recapture the "riddle quality" of the source text.

Source Text	Target Text 1	Target Text 2	Target Text 3	TargetText 4
A <u>box</u> without <u>hinges</u> , <u>key</u> , or <u>lid</u> . Yet <i>golden</i> <u>treasure</u> inside is hid.	O <u>cutie</u> fără <u>balamale</u> , <u>cheie</u> sau <u>capac</u> , <u>Comoară</u> de <i>aur</i> închide ca-ntr-un sac!	Fără <u>țâțâni</u> , <u>zăvor</u> și- <u>ncuietoare</u> , În sipet sunt <u>comori</u> de <i>aur</i> oare?	<u>Cutie</u> fără <u>cheie</u> , <u>capac</u> sau <u>balamale</u> , Ascunde o comoară-n lăuntrurile sale.	<u>Lăcriță</u> fără de <u>lacăt</u> , fără de <u>capac</u> sau <u>cheie</u> , Ascunde înăuntru <u>comoară</u> <i>aurie</i> .
Source Text	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation	Back translation
A <u>box</u> without <u>hinges</u> , <u>key</u> , or <u>lid</u> . Yet <i>golden</i> <u>treasure</u> inside is hid.	A box without hinges, key or lid, Treasure of gold Closes as in a sack.	Without hinges, latch and lock, In the trunk maybe there are gold treasures?	A box without key, lid or hinges, Hides a treasure in its insides.	A little case without lock, without lid or key, Hides inside golden treasure.

Table 4. Bilbo's riddle. Answer: EGGS. Metaphoric extension: box, hinges, key, lid, treasure. Clue: golden, no hinges, key, lid. Contrast, paradox.

It is interesting to notice that even for this third riddle, TT4 manages an instance of compensation by using the repetition of the prepositional phrase *fără de*, "without", which makes this version more emphatic, while trying to repair the loss of the adverb *yet* that in the source text connects the two parts of the riddle and establishes the opposition upon which the riddle is built. The repetition of this prepositional phrase contributes to the retrieval of the concessive meaning that lies implicit in the fourth version.

3. Conclusion

My investigation indicates that riddle translation is tricky exactly because of the main mechanism by means of which a riddle is created: observing both a condition of reasonable opacity and of reasonable solubility, as identified by Pagis (1996).

An analysis of the riddle translations in the multiple versions of *The Hobbit* reveals that the main strategy that translators should employ is that of equivalence both at the lexical and the syntactic level. Most versions manage to preserve the

original syntactic parallelism and to faithfully render the revealing clues into the target language. When syntax is disrupted or when clues are omitted, the result is a riddle that can no longer be properly solved. The delicate balance between transparency and opacity is upset and the resulting poem no longer counts as riddling material. Since the narrative role of literary riddles is crucial for the advancement of the story, such translation loss should be avoided at all costs. One possible solution is resorting to compensatory strategies, as attempted in the fourth variant produced by the author of this paper.

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**(RE)MEDIATING NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY
IN US CIVIL RIGHTS DISCOURSE:
CMDA AS A PEDAGOGIC TOOL**

NICOLETTA VASTA

University of Udine

***Abstract:** Current revisitations of identities and achievements in US civil rights discourse have inspired pedagogically-oriented digital media projects. More importantly, they have also highlighted the need to rethink the role of Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) and its pedagogic applications in order to stimulate greater awareness of the effects of repurposing historical discourses. The case-studies investigated are the 2020 Pulitzer Prize winning 1619 Project – a podcast series whose account of Black America’s history conflicts with mainstream views – and the history section of BrainPOP, an animated educational site for primary school children, which monumentalizes relatively less well-known civil rights heroines.*

***Keywords:** BrainPop, Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), master narratives/ITFs, (re)mediation, The 1619 Project, US civil rights discourse*

1. Introduction

The digital age has brought with it an interest in re-reading the past through easily accessible, (re)mediated repertoires of historical documents and testimonies. This is especially the case with revisitations of identities and achievements in US civil rights discourse. Yet, particularly at this moment in time, re-reading the past is fraught with dangers. Language educators feel the need to provide their students with tools and safeguards against the distortions and manipulations potentially involved in ‘excesses’ such as fake news, hate speech, and, more recently, “cancel culture” (e.g. Duque, Rivera, LeBlanc 2021) – a form of ostracism, enacted mainly through social media, whereby public figures or celebrities are stigmatized, boycotted, or even ousted from social circles or cultural institutions because of their behaviour or for sharing questionable opinions on the Web. If supporters of cancel culture see it as closely connected to social justice and accountability, as well as to powerless people finally being heard, it must be acknowledged that, from a pedagogical point of view, this phenomenon is prone to excesses and raises the rhetorical question as to whether the ultimate aim of Education is still to get learners to critically engage with, support and/or discard alternative epistemological positions and ideologies.

Indeed, if revisitations of the past contribute, on the one hand, to building up learners’ civic conscience and, more generally, to the resurgence of civil rights movements, they are, on the other, liable to contribute to uncritically debunking the myths about civil rights heroes and heroines, or, vice versa, to perpetuating, not

only at school, but also in popular culture, some fake news on which those myths were originally built. A good case in point is the transposition into popular culture and amplification of the fake news surrounding the death of Bessie Smith, “the Empress of the blues”: on September 26, 1937, Smith was critically injured in a car crash between Memphis, Tennessee, and Clarksdale, Mississippi. According to her death certificate, she was taken to the G.T. Thomas Afro-American Hospital in Clarksdale, where she died without regaining consciousness. After her death, a story circulated stating that she had died as a result of having been refused admission to a whites-only hospital in Clarksdale: this fake news was amplified by the account published by jazz writer and producer John Hammond in the November 1937 issue of *DownBeat* magazine. Over 20 years later, it formed the basis for Edward Albee’s one-act play *The Death of Bessie Smith*. As recently as 2020, it was reinforced in Episode 16, Season 2, of the famous NBC medical drama *New Amsterdam*, which monumentalizes the struggle against the US healthcare system’s unfairness by a team of doctors working at the most ancient public hospital which still performs a large percentage of pro-bono treatments. In the Episode mentioned above, African American neurosurgeon Floyd Reynolds, suspected of willingly performing fatal surgery on a white supremacist terrorist, admits to his fiancée that he decided to be a doctor when he learned about Bessie Smith’s being denied medical assistance. On these false premises, he assumes the identity of the mythical hero completing the journey from the instinctive rage and drive for retaliation of the ‘enemy-within’ the civil rights movement to the mature compassion and non-violence of the civil rights activist.

Against this backdrop, the main aim of this paper is to illustrate the role and pedagogic applications of a critical multimodal discourse analysis (henceforth CMDA) perspective in the study of civil rights discourse and new media practices. This perspective is crucial when ideology, power, agency and responsibility are involved, because it gets students:

- a) to think critically about multimodal texts (i.e., the ‘norm’ in digital media) as a system of options;
- b) to develop an awareness of multimodal texts as social action operating in a specific context of situation and culture; and
- c) to feel empowered by mastering analytical tools and strategies that develop a habitus for monitoring the pragmatic/communicative, and indeed social effects of multimodal choices, and by ultimately discovering, demystifying and dismantling manipulative narrative practices.

More specifically, the paper will argue that a CMDA perspective is needed – one which has the potential for unveiling manipulation and distortion – when investigating:

- a) how US civil rights discourse is framed, multimodally constructed and (re)mediated for educational purposes;
- b) where and how, in attempts to (re)construct historical events, manipulation and distortion become manifest in (re)mediated discursive and/or pedagogical practices, and finally,
- c) which pedagogic approach and strategies might prove useful for raising critical awareness and fostering students’ empowerment.

2. CMDA as a pedagogic tool

The analysis of educational multimodal materials about US civil rights discourse potentially prone to oversimplifications and distortions provided the

basis for the present paper, whose main focus will be on arguing that a CMDA perspective is essential to achieve (at the very least) three pedagogic goals:

a) Firstly, to encourage a general propensity among teachers to avoid uncritical uses of the multimodal repertoires which, in the digital era, are the essence of young people's education; by multimodal repertoires I mean collections of videos, for example, or websites encapsulating different genres, in which the synergic use of various semiotic resources tends to facilitate the (re)mediation and understanding of historically and culturally crucial events. While the use of multimodal repertoires in the classroom has a powerful effect, there is a potential risk of oversimplifying or confusing reality and phantasy, as has been the case with Bessie Smith's story.

b) Therefore, the second relevant consideration is the need to sensitize teachers to adopt and foster a critical discourse analysis perspective, one capable of empowering students to investigate the potential for manipulation and distortion involved in attempts to (re)construct the past and construe identity performance in, and through, verbal and non-verbal language. In Fowler's words (1996: 4) "critical discourse analysis insists that all representation is mediated, moulded by the value-systems that are ingrained in the medium used for representation; it challenges common sense by pointing out that something could have been represented some other way with a very different significance". What critical discourse analysis can do, then, is "investigate which options are chosen in which institutional and social contexts, and why these choices should have been taken up, what interests are served by them, and what purposes achieved" (van Leeuwen 1996: 43).

c) Ultimately, within the wider framework of the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>), CMDA can have a fundamental impact on classroom practice and new literacy development, viz. in promoting "Quality education" (Goal 4), and in fostering "Peace, justice and strong institutions" (Goal 16). CMDA enables students to develop an awareness of language as social action and of language as ideology. Such awareness, it is to be hoped, will be adopted by empowered students in the fight against such rapidly spreading phenomena as hate speech and cancel culture.

2.1. Key concepts in (re)mediating narratives of identity

Before going into the analysis of the selected case-studies, the previous reference to the 'identity' of the civil rights hero/heroine needs to be contextualized and expanded upon. Identity is cognitively constructed, culturally situated and discursively performed in narrative as a "privileged locus for negotiation of identities", in the plural: indeed, identity is a cline, rather than an inventory, of socioculturally-shaped practices and, as Duszak (2002: 2-3) aptly synthesizes, "human social identities tend to be indeterminate, situational rather than permanent, dynamically and interactively constructed" through socio-psychological and discursive negotiation. 'Positioning' one's own and others' identities in discourse and society – in Fairclough's sense (2001: 233) whereby "differently positioned social actors 'see' and represent social life in different ways, different discourses" – is thus a function of "the continuous fine-tuning of one's identity performances in a culturally-defined, yet continuously evolving belief and value system" (Vasta and Caldas-Coulthard 2009: 2). As a result, the concept of identity needs to be framed against multiple and unstable 'timescales'

(Lemke 2008: 23), so that it is impossible to locate (our own as well as others') identity performances purely in the interactive present, the latter being constantly reformulated in the light of "retroactive recontextualization" (ibid.).

As discussed at length elsewhere (Vasta, Caldas-Coulthard 2009: 3),

Situated identity performance will then be both centripetal – instantiated through alignment and membership strategies for in-grouping within a given social community and/or for resisting change – and centrifugal – for affirming one's own individuality within that community, or for identifying 'strangers'. In both cases, doing identity work – in discourse as situated and mediated action (Scollon and Scollon 2003) – will inevitably bear the traces of the ideological tensions between competing worldviews and value systems (Caldas-Coulthard and Iedema eds., 2008; Cortese and Duszak eds., 2005) – a crucial issue in the language-and/as-power debate.

In the final analysis, "it is in narrative that people's individuality is expressed [...] because the purpose of narrating is precisely the creation of an autonomous, unique Self in discourse" (Johnstone 1996: 56).

At the interface of the here-and-now of storytelling and the fluidity of the surrounding sociocultural context in which identities are positioned and negotiated in an interactional collaborative effort, we find what Lemke (1988: 30; 32) calls Intertextual Thematic Formations (henceforth, ITFs) – akin to what Bamberg (2005) terms "pre-existent sociocultural forms of interpretation", or "master narratives". ITFs are common systems of semantic relations to speak of the same things in the same manner, which therefore represent "a community's recurrent saids and dones, [as well as] the semiotic resources for saying and doing" (Lemke 1988: 32). A sociocultural community's typical ways of meaning will be reproduced, resisted or challenged in its ways of saying, or rather its "linguaging" – one of the building blocks of identity performance –, a term that Cortese (2001: 199) derives from the domain of translating and interpreting.

Though instantiated in and through cultural scripts and related verbal and non-verbal languaging practices, ITFs (or master narratives), are not a simple inventory of fixed frames, scripts and schemata to talk about a given topic. Instead, as is the case with identity, they are embedded in a dynamic and inherently asymmetric sociocultural context. Thus, different discursive/epistemic communities will engage dialectically to construct heteroglossic relations of alliance and opposition (Lemke 1988: 40, 48 *et passim*) to impose 'new' (anti- or counter-) narratives (Bamberg 2004) over dominant (or master-) narratives, by shaping and creating alternative frames and contexts for interpretation in which the boundaries between truth and fake news may easily be blurred. At the same time, these dialectic engagements will inevitably reinforce and 'legitimize' power asymmetries, often sustained to enact social control (Vasta 2016) and "ideological common sense" – that is, in Fairclough's (1989: 84) definition, "common sense [which is naturalized and legitimized in order] to sustain unequal relations of power" and distort, marginalize or even silence minority 'voices'. In other words, when power asymmetries are instantiated in discourse, what happens is that powerful agents recontextualize and "favourably position" (Hodges 2008: 501) one representation over another, with the result that they manage to instil their own recontextualization with such value that it becomes "common sense" and produces a "master narrative". This raises fundamental questions as to who 'describes' or 'defines' identity and, ultimately, who decides what the 'norm' is, given that

different ‘descriptions’ may be produced from different ideological positions, while others may be silenced or distorted.

It is precisely in the critical discourse vein of unveiling hidden multimodal meaning-making practices, which can potentially distort historical ‘truths’, that the two educational projects under investigation in Sections 3 and 4 below were selected. When examining their macro-level structures, consideration was given to the main master narratives (chattel slavery; American inclusion; the “oeuvre civilisatrice”; white benevolence; white supremacy) identified by Clifton and Van De Mieroop in their (2016) seminal study of a selection of 26 former slaves’ interviews and narratives. These are included in the Roosevelt administration’s *Federal Writers Project* (FWP) and were published in 1972 to be used as the basis of many school programmes and TV documentaries. The interviews are now available from the Library of Congress (<https://lcn.loc.gov/2004565280>) under the heading *Voices Remembering Slavery: Freed people tell their stories*. However, the FWP poses several methodological problems: for instance, the transcripts are not *verbatim* and the interviews were ‘tidied up’ to make them more readable and to delete ‘racially sensitive’ material; the interviewers were mostly whites, so some interviewees preferred to provide an unrealistic vision of slavery designed to please the white interviewer (see Clifton and Van De Mieroop 2016: 15–38 *et passim*).

It comes as no surprise, then, that some educators see master narratives in US civil rights discourse as collectively serving to

offer a sanitized, noncontroversial, oversimplified view [...], which deprives students of a conceptual lens that would help them better comprehend the world around them (Alridge 2006: 680).

By the same token, according to Carlson (2003: 49), who investigated the monumentalizing of Rosa Parks within multicultural curricula and in popular culture, master narratives ultimately serve a conserving function. Anderson (2013: 117) even goes as far as to state that master narratives sustaining a unitary vision of racial harmony

trivializ[e] and decontextualiz[e] the historical impact of the Civil Rights Movement, [...and] discourag[e] analysis of persistent racial inequalities.

Be that as it may, endorsing Clifton and Van De Mieroop’s concern (2016: 25), not so much with “historical truthfulness, but [with] the way in which identities in talk are constructed in the storyworld of the interviews and in the here-and-now of the recorded interaction”, I have analysed US civil rights discourse through multimodal repertoires such as podcast series, educational websites, and so on. In so doing, I have identified some other interesting master narratives which go beyond the sameness-difference dimension at the forefront of Clifton and Van De Mieroop’s study, and which, for example, frame slavery through the eyes, and from the standpoint of former slaves’ young relatives who manage to lift the veil off their ancestors’ ambiguities and silences. This is done by remediating (Bolter and Grusin 1999), resemiotizing (Iedema 2003) and sustaining – in and through languaging – former slaves’ powerful, myth-like journey towards social redemption and liberation, an endeavour epitomized by the first educational project under examination here, to which my analysis will now turn.

3. Navigating identities: *The 1619 Project* – the fate of Black America

Awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 2020, *The 1619 Project* is a podcast series celebrating the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first enslaved Africans in America, when The White Lion reached the port of Point Comfort in Virginia. The series is hosted by the *New York Times Magazine*'s African American journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones, who undertakes a journey into the legacy of her ancestors and is complemented by a set of "resources for afterschool education" developed in 2021 by the Education branch of the Pulitzer Centre (pulitzercenter.org/builder/lesson/1619-project-resources-afterschool-education). The journalistic enquiry is aimed at uncovering what today's African Americans' aged relatives hid about their experience as former slaves.

Podcasting certainly has a contribution to make as regards the construction of social identities, both individual and collective, as podcasts are a medium through which social agents belonging to a specific epistemic community negotiate their identity on the Web. CMDA requires dynamic constructs and measurement indices that reflect social and technological changes. Hence, when exploring the journey from 'traditional' to 'technology-driven' forms of public dissemination, it is vital to bear in mind that, in its relationships with other texts, the 'same' text has the dynamic potential to be remediated (Bolter and Grusin 1999) through a variety of digital practices: from print to digital texts; from oral to official written transcripts; and, more recently, from video and audio recordings to digital platforms for sharing them on social media. The 'same' text can thus be resemiotized (Iedema 2003) through changing contexts of use and shifting cultural and ideological perspectives.

More specifically, from a socio-cultural and socio-communicative point of view, when public-interest discourse like civil rights discourse is disseminated, it undergoes actual as well as potential content manipulation (e.g., omissions or additions), promoting and privileging a given worldview or master narrative. Indeed, in this respect, even *The 1619 Project* has drawn its share of critics, as well as admirers: as *The Atlantic* reports (www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/12/historians-clash-1619project/604093/), the Princeton historian Sean Wilentz and three other colleagues wrote a letter to the *New York Times* that refers to "matters of verifiable fact that cannot be described as interpretation or *framing*" and concludes that the project reflected "a displacement of historical understanding by ideology." The *New York Times* published the letter along with a detailed rebuttal from the editor (at <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/20/magazine/we-respond-to-the-historians-who-critiqued-the-1619-project.html>). Yet, given the stature of the historians involved, this was a serious challenge to the credibility of *The 1619 Project*, one that makes it mandatory for teachers intending to use this, or any other material for that matter, to investigate (re)mediation and resemiotization practices.

The interview with former slave Fountain Hughes, recorded in 1949 and stored, in its oral and transcribed forms, in the US Library of Congress, offers illuminating insights into (re)mediation and resemiotization practices: in Episode 1 of *The 1619 Project*, two excerpts from the original interview, reproduced in Fig. 1, are cut-and-pasted together, post-edited and then embedded, as discussed below, in Nikole Hannah-Jones's narration (Fig. 2). Fountain Hughes' reconstruction of his and other slaves' identities encapsulates and instantiates Clifton and Van De Mieroop's (2016: 73ff) master narrative of THE-SLAVE-AS-CATTLE, as revealed in the transitivity structure (Halliday 1994) of the clause "They'd sell us

like they sell horses and cows and hogs”, by the discursual role of the participant “us” as Goal or, more precisely, Goods: slaves are only an economic asset, with no personal or ethical value. The dehumanization of group members, who are denied any individual identity, is realized discursively in what Bamberg (2011: 106) would refer to as “low-agency marking [which] assists in the construction of a victim role”, as is particularly evident in the clause “They’d put you up on a bench”; in a CDA perspective, this is to be contrasted with at least two ruled-out, alternative wordings: not just with “we were made to stand up on a bench”, but, even more significantly, with “we got up on a bench” – inconceivable under the circumstances, since it would have underscored an agency that was in reality denied to slaves.

As can be seen in Fig. 2, the (framed) original interview is not only re-edited and (re)mediated, but more importantly, repurposed (and thus ultimately resemiotized) to meet the Project’s educational aim of self-discovery by a new generation of African Americans. What was originally a fact-finding interview (or witness statement) recorded in 1949 is embedded in Hannah-Jones’s storyline as a parallel narrative. Once deprived of the original interviewer’s prompts and questions, it becomes one of the many voices within a heteroglossic documentary podcast. Through Fountain Hughes’ voice, the past intrudes into the present and the two narratives intertwine, as if Hughes were the reincarnation of Hannah-Jones’s own grandfather. What is silent here, with respect to the original unmediated interview from which Fountain Hughes’ testimony is derived, is the voice of the original white interviewer, which changes the context of narration and interaction, as well as the ideological values associated with it.

In other words, (re)mediation enables Hannah-Jones, and us together with her, to enter into simulated dialogue with Fountain Hughes as witnesses to a distant past that is recalled and actualized in the present, thereby producing a narrative effect called “the eternal present” (Gallacher 2017): this allows the immediacy of events to be felt independently of their temporal collocation and shifts the narrative focus from the interview’s original function and impact to Hannah-Jones’s personal journey into her identity, and those like her, through a rediscovery of their hidden past (see, again in Fig. 2, Hannah-Jones’s statements reading: “My own thinking started to shift” and “I understand for the first time why my dad was so proud of...”). As Nora (1989: 9) perceptively notes *à propos* of the controversial coexistence of memory and history,

Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it [...]. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. [...] Memory arises from the group that it bonds together [...]. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, and it aspires to be universal. Memory is rooted in the tangible, in space, gesture, image and object. History is only linked to continuity over time, to evolution and to the relationship between things.

It is memory’s legacy, not historical faithfulness, that obliterates the boundaries between past and present, remediates the past and ultimately forms the basis for secondary school educational resources (some examples of which are reproduced as Figs. 3 and 4) through which, for instance, students reflect on “how myths about history are perpetuated [...] and build timelines that illustrate how the fight for racial justice continues in [their] own lifetimes.”

(Re)mediation is a pedagogically crucial construct in the development of digital literacy, in that it presupposes the capability of thinking outside the box about the way texts are constructed and construed, a competence that is enhanced by the adoption of a critical discourse perspective that raises awareness of what is unsaid and of how the same thing might have been said differently under the same circumstances.

In this specific instance, it is important to grasp how the diverse timelines interwoven in Hannah-Jones's narrative can be teased out, managed and manipulated: the Question highlighted in the teaching activity reproduced in Fig. 4 asks the students "Why do you think it was important for the podcasters to include [Hughes'] voice?". Instead of steering their interpretation of the text in an ideological direction (see the section heading "Thomas Jefferson and the hypocrisies of the founding documents of the US"), it might have been more productive, in a critical discourse perspective empowering students to assess historical events, to ask them "How is Hughes' voice (re)mediated and repurposed in the context of Hannah-Jones's journey", so that they could reflect on the relevance of the silent past to the performance of her own identity and those of her kin in the present. The relevance of the past to the present performance of identity is also focal in the second educational project offered for analysis.

4. (Re)mediated and sanitized narratives: *BrainPOP* and the fostering of critical multimodal awareness

BrainPOP is an "animated educational site for kids, [aiming to] ignite a love for learning that leads to lifelong achievement [and providing] solutions to engage, excite, and challenge every child" (<https://www.brainpop.com/>). The teaching modules relevant to the history of Black America can be found within the Social Studies section, one of the seven subjects available for children aged 8 and over. Particularly interesting for the present purposes is the teaching module on the civil rights activist Fanny Lou Hamer, who promoted voter registration among Mississippi Delta blacks and co-founded the Freedom Democratic Party. At the 1964 Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, she delivered probably the most commanding of her many powerful speeches, in which she describes the moment she was violently and unlawfully arrested and reconstructs the physical and emotional journey she and others had undertaken for the sake of enfranchisement, specifically their attempt to exercise a legally-recognized right to register as voters at a time full of impediments for Black people.

As emerges from Fig. 5, the first storytelling step is to establish her identity in a way that children find attractive: the now/then question takes children back in time while establishing Tim, a young person, as the narrator of the story. Subsequent steps in the narrator's account (see Fig. 6) describe three of Hamer's real and metaphorical journeys: the first for (failed) voter registration, which ended up, on the way back home, with police stopping Hamer and 17 other volunteers for travelling on a bus that was the wrong colour (yellow, the colour of schoolbuses); the second, a metaphorical journey from various forms of intimidation to the decision to leave home with her children, work with the SNCC (i.e. the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee) and become an activist; and finally the journey that led from Hamer's imprisonment and beating for trying to eat in a whites-only restaurant to its climax, the Freedom Summer of 1964, when Hamer and other activists went to Atlantic City, the site of the Democratic National

Convention, to challenge the authority of the delegation from which Black people were excluded. As the narrator reports, “their protest caused an uproar, and Hamer was given a slot to speak on every news program”, as may be seen in the last, bottom-right frame in Fig. 6.

What Tim, the narrator, *should* have said, at this stage, is that it was the *same* speech being replayed on the news for days – something that becomes explicit only towards the end of the animation. No explanation is given to the children watching as to why the testimony was replayed; thus, on the one hand, Hamer’s legendary status is reinforced, but at the very same time the real reason behind what went down in history as the “official”, sanitized narrative is covered up. Ultimately, the real reason lies in the media reaction against President Johnson’s botched efforts to censor Hamer by calling an impromptu news conference in order to make it impossible for the national television networks to cover her testimony live, as reported in *The Washington Post’s* account on the 100th anniversary of her birth (www.washingtonpost.com/news/retropolis/wp/2017/10/06/civil-rights-crusader-fannie-lou-hamer-defied-men-and-presidents-who-tried-to-silence-her).

Leaving the political controversy aside, what is beyond any doubt is Hamer’s undisputed talent as a public speaker and singer:

She was something to watch. Here was this badly educated, wonderful woman who was able to communicate at a most comfortable level with people who were infinitely more educated than she, more traveled than she.... Everybody felt special about Mrs. Hamer. Everybody had that connection with her, and she obviously gave it back to you. She gave it to you and she got it right back. It was that kind of love connection that was her trademark (Mills 1993: 178).

Fanny Lou Hamer showed a rare capacity for grassroots interaction, and in the *BrainPOP* animation she is said to “often break into song to motivate crowds”.

Because of space constraints, only a couple of examples from *BrainPOP’s* mediated narrative and classroom activities can briefly be discussed here in order to show the usefulness of a CMDA-informed approach when teaching young children about the importance of fact-checking and of examining multimodal affordances when making sense of ideologically complex texts. Indeed, as Fig. 7 shows, a key frame in the animation relates to the failed efforts of Hamer and 17 other volunteers to register as voters at the Sunflower County courthouse. Confronting the would-be black registrees is a hostile crowd of white men and women, whose hostility is underscored in the movie by the closed-caption words “an angry crowd”, their animated fist-waving, and booing in the soundtrack.

A cartoon genre is eminently suitable for primary school children, who need constant intersemiotic support and reinforcement. So, embellishments in visual reconstructions are legitimized and motivated by such educational concerns as clarity and memorability; it therefore comes as no surprise that the cartoon faithfully reproduces the shapes and colours of the real courthouse but adds the name “Sunflower County” on the façade, which does not appear on the real building. While the addition of this fake detail is justifiable, the same does not hold true for the next example, which requires fact-checking to be carried out by comparing and contrasting *BrainPOP’s* (re)mediated meta-narrative of this crucial event with Hamer’s original account of the episode. This was conveyed in one of her most famous speeches, *We’re on Our Way*, delivered in early September 1964 at the nearby Negro Baptist School, also in Indianola. In the very first part of her speech, where she recalls the failed registration attempt, no mention is made of a

crowd, or of Whites *versus* Blacks confrontation. Instead, her speech confirms that there were “eighteen of us”, but that, on a day that she says she *never will forget*, she had to face up to *policemens with guns [...] They was standing around*:

When we got here to Indianola, to the courthouse, that was the day *I saw more policemens with guns than I'd ever seen in my life at one time. They was standing around* and I never will forget that day. [...] We stayed in the registrar's office – I'm not sure how long because it wasn't but two allowed in the room at the same time. After we got out from the registrar's office, I was one of the first persons to complete, as far as I knew how to complete, on my registration form. And I went and got back on the bus (<https://voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/hamer-were-on-our-way-speech-text/>, my emphasis).

By contrast, in the narrator's (re)mediated, multimodal account of this event (see Fig. 8), the first of the three frames visualizes the fist-waving crowd, while the voiceover “anticipates”, so to speak, the identity of the other participants that the crowd is to meet, but that is visually represented only in the second frame. This is what, in Kress and van Leeuwen's visual semiotics (1996: 181), is called a *non-transactive, disconnected reactional process*, in which there is only a Reactor looking at something or someone, called Phenomenon, left outside the picture frame. The Phenomenon is the 18 volunteers; what is more, the participants in the two disconnected frames are positioned in opposite (right vs. left) portions of the screen and thus appear to represent spatially contiguous, logically complementary realities. In the children's minds, this is triggered as a cause-effect script, as confirmed in the immediately following shot (see Fig. 8, third frame). In short, from a multimodal standpoint, this (re)mediated narrative constructs and construes the original historical event as an act of intimidation, whereas, in Hamer's own words, hers is a rather different perception of where the threat is coming from. To put it differently, there is an evident mismatch between the metanarrative level (the narrator's reported speech) and the authentic narrative level (Hamer's free direct speech), at the expense of truthfulness and adherence to reality.

The following example shows how the systematic application of CMDA as a pedagogic tool to arouse children's multimodal awareness may be crucial in such cases. The listening exercise reproduced in Fig. 9 asks pupils to decide what the function of Hamer's singing to the crowd “during speeches” was. I want to suggest that this is a tricky question because, in order to choose the only ‘correct’ answer (letter C, “inspire”), children need to be able to exclude one of the intended distractors (i.e., letter A, “soothe”) by distinguishing between the two references made in the *BrainPOP*'s movie script to Hamer's singing.

The first mention is in relation to *reporting a single, specific event* (i.e., the failed attempt to register, followed by the registrees being arrested and getting so disheartened that Hamer started singing to *soothe* them):

On the way home, their bus was stopped by the police; they said its yellow color was illegal. Hamer *sang to keep the group's spirits up* until they were let go.

The second textual reference in *BrainPOP* to Hamer's singing (the one that should lead to the right answer, *inspire*) occurs in the context of a more *general statement about Hamer's idiosyncratic habit* of singing to motivate crowds – a possible cue to answer C being the lexico-grammatical cohesion between Question and Answer, realized by the repetition of “motivate the crowd”/“motivate crowds”:

She knew what poor black families endured because she'd lived it! That first-hand experience made her a powerful speaker: she would *often break into song to motivate crowds*. Before long she was as well known for her singing voice as her activism.

Despite this, the Question remains tricky, not only because it takes for granted that children should be able to process two different temporal frames and timelines and therefore distinguish between a specific event and a general habit. The possible confusion is also caused by the grammatical construction of the quiz Question, where the Circumstance of Location (“During speeches”) is foregrounded as a marked Theme. Selecting the correct answer relies primarily on the recognition that the Circumstantial element (“On the way home”) in the first mention of Hamer’s singing (Answer 1, Fig. 9) does not match the Circumstantial element in the Question. The confusion in the children’s minds might also have derived from the greater affective impact, as well as psychological salience and emotional resonance that the adverse events in Hamer’s life, recounted by the narrator, produce. These events, especially when narrated in the showing mode, are more likely to be retained in children’s memory than the positive information conveyed in the telling mode, as emerges from several psychological studies (e.g., those collected in Biocca (1991), viz. Lang’s, on televised political advertising) on emotion and memory responses.

Incidentally, *BrainPOP* maintains that “on the way home [i.e., after the failed registration attempt], Hamer sang to keep the group’s spirits up”. For the sake of truth, it must be said that the singing took place *before* rather than *after* the attempt at registration, as testified in a video interview entitled *Fannie Lou Hamer and the Power of Song* (YouTube: https://youtu.be/M78izlHM_mw) with Bob Moses, another civil rights icon and co-founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, who was on the bus with Hamer on that occasion. The interview also reveals, in passing, that Hamer sang to “drive away fear”, i.e., to soothe the volunteers.

A remedial strategy, especially with older children, that a test designer trained in CMDA might have deployed to avoid confusion is the use of “would often sing”, instead of “often sang”, in the Question, so as to draw the children’s attention to the *habitual nature* of the information sought, rather than to the emotional impact (and hence greater memorability) of the images (also see Vasta and Trevisan 2017; Vasta 2020). Besides, had the question focused more on the holistic functions of singing in the cultural context of the journey *towards* freedom (soothing, inspiring, allaying fears), rather than on the stereotyped representation of the activist as an inspiring leader, it would have been not only more truthful, but also more consistent with the exploration of the master narrative of the activist performing her individual identity according to circumstances, e.g. to recruit followers to her cause, foster group cohesion, or fight against the “enemy-within” the Civil Rights movement, as the case may have been. Finally, greater attention to fact-checking would have been consistent with encouraging a capacity among young children to understand what activism is, and to make critical judgements about the characteristics and merits of specific activist campaigns, including violent ones by other Civil Rights leaders.

In short, however useful as an educational tool for raising children’s civic awareness of the journey towards obtaining civil rights, *BrainPop* presents areas for improvement in keeping with a pedagogic concern with the veracity of the information presented and the effort to avoid confusion, distortions or ideological bias.

5. Conclusion

The fundamental impact of CMDA on pedagogy and digital literacy development consists, as I hope I have been able to show, in developing an awareness among teachers, passed on to their students, of language as social action and language as ideology operating in a precise context of situation and context of culture. Both educational projects briefly analysed here strongly suggest the need for teachers to apply CMDA principles to:

a) fact-check against (re)mediated texts, by diachronically retracing the original sources;

b) scrutinize the visual-verbal interface (i.e., multimodal affordances) of ideologically complex texts and investigate their resemiotization practices, especially when different narrative levels and genres are reshuffled;

c) be cautious about devising quizzes, especially those involving historical reconstructions of events.

By the same token, if the above discussion has achieved its intended purpose, the usefulness of CMDA has emerged as a pedagogic tool to get learners to:

a) think critically (especially) about (multimodal) texts as a system of options, wherein what is unsaid/not shown, or said/shown differently is just as important, if not even more important, than what is made explicit;

b) acquire a habitus for monitoring the pragmatic effects of multimodal choices and develop reusable metalinguistic competences, which empower students to produce their own reasoned, critical analysis of a(ny) text;

c) develop an awareness of (re)mediation and resemiotization practices, both so pervasive in the digital era, and the manipulative strategies which, intentionally or not, produce “counter-”/“anti-narratives” and/or fake news. These can be unveiled by enacting explicit metaknowledge of multimodal meaning-making strategies (e.g. through fact-checking against textual evidence).

Such critical awareness and metalinguistic competences are the prerequisite for discovering, demystifying and dismantling inaccurate, historically discordant or intentionally manipulative narrative practices. In this sense, the two pedagogic projects under examination can be said to represent best practices in fostering critical re-readings of the past, a soft skill which is all the more crucial in a society where such dangerous phenomena as “cancel culture” threaten to impose hegemonic, biased and oversimplified frames for interpreting the world and establishing interpersonal bonds.

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Appendix



Voices from the Days of Slavery: Stories, Songs and Memories –Fountain Hughes (transcript)

LC ANNOUNCEMENT: From the Library of Congress in Washington, DC.

FOUNTAIN HUGHES (VO): My name is Fountain Hughes. I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia. My grandfather belonged to Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather was a hundred and fifteen years old when he died. And now I am one hundred and one year old.

AFC ANNOUNCEMENT: Welcome to the American Folklife Center's podcast series, "Voices from the Days of Slavery: Stories, Songs and Memories." Drawn from the unique collections of the Center's Archive, this series presents first-person accounts of African Americans whose experiences spanned the last years of slavery. They were recorded during the 1930's and 1940's, most often for the large-scale documentation projects sponsored by New Deal agencies during and after the Great Depression. Many of these recordings survive only as fragments and the audio quality occasionally suffers because of the deterioration of the original recorded media. Nevertheless, the compelling voices of these individuals transport the listener to a defining period in this country's history. In this 1949 interview, conducted in Baltimore, Maryland, Mr. Fountain Hughes recounts his memories of slavery times to Hermond Norwood of the Library of Congress.

[omissis... then at 10' 16"]

It was what they call... we were slaves. We belonged to people. They'd sell us like they sell horses and cows and hogs and all like that. Have an auction bench, and they'd put you on... up on the bench and bid on you just same as you bidding on cattle, you know.

HERMOND NORWOOD: Was that in Charlotte that you were a slave?

Fig. 1. Fountain Hughes' original interview tapescript
(https://www.loc.gov/podcasts/slavenarratives/transcripts/slavery_hughes.pdf)

Nikole Hannah-Jones: But it wasn't until I really started researching and reading and thinking about this project that my own thinking started to shift, that I realized my dad understood things that I never knew. I now understand for the first time why my dad was so proud to fly that flag.

Fountain Hughes: My name is Fountain Hughes. I was born in Charlottesville, Virginia. My grandfather belonged to Thomas Jefferson. My grandfather was 115 years old when he died, and now I am 101-year-old. Now in my boy days, we were slaves. We belonged to people. They'd sell us like they sell horses and cows and hogs and all like that, have an auction bench. Put you up on the bench and bid on you the same as you're bidding on cattle, you know

Nikole Hannah-Jones: So, you kind of have to put yourself in the scene. It is June of 1776, and Thomas Jefferson, at the very young age of 33 years old, has been tasked with drafting the document that is going to declare to the world why the British North American colonies, the 13 colonies, want to break off from the British Empire. He goes to Philadelphia and rents two rooms on the edge of town along the river and sits down to draft what we all know now as the Declaration of Independence.

Fig. 2. The (framed) original interview (re)mediated in Nikole-Hanna Jones's narrative (*The 1619 Project*, Episode 1)

<p>LESSON PLAN</p> <p>SEPTEMBER 29, 2021</p> <p><i>The 1619 Project</i> Resources for Afterschool Education</p> <p>Country: UNITED STATES</p> <p>Grades: ALL GRADES ELEMENTARY MIDDLE SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL</p> <p>Author:</p>  <p>Pulitzer Center Education LESSON BUILDER USER</p>	<p>1. Introducing <i>The 1619 Project</i> Students analyze and discuss the main ideas of <i>The 1619 Project</i> after watching a video in which Nikole Hannah-Jones introduces the project. They then explore how the legacy of slavery can be seen in modern life through a pair activity, and reflect on themes and issues related to Black history they want to know more about.</p> <p>2. The Idea of America: Celebrating Black Americans' Contributions to Democracy Students evaluate how the values stated in the Declaration of Independence have manifested in U.S. society, and examine what it would mean to reframe U.S. history by considering 1619 the country's founding date. Students read and discuss excerpts from Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones's introductory essay to <i>The 1619 Project</i>.</p> <p>3. Visualizing the Legacy of Slavery: Gallery Walk and Quote Museum Students will learn about the ways in which slavery's legacy persists in U.S. systems and society by examining images and text in an engaging gallery walk activity. They will also practice visually communicating tone and information to others by creating a group "quote museum."</p> <p>4. Fact-sorting Challenge: Examining Common Myths About U.S. Slavery Students learn about common inaccuracies in how slavery is taught and then strengthen their own knowledge and media literacy skills by working together to distinguish myths from facts, using credible sources.</p> <p>5. Analyzing and Constructing Timelines of Racial (In)justice Students reflect on how myths about history are perpetuated, analyze a timeline of racial (in)justice from <i>The 1619 Project</i>, and collaborate to build timelines that illustrate how the fight for racial justice continues in their own lifetimes.</p>
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Fig. 3. Exploiting (re)mediation/resemiotization in the classroom (<https://pulitzercenter.org/builder/lesson/1619-project-resources-afterschool-education>)

10:35-20:25	Thomas Jefferson and the hypocrisies of the founding documents of the U.S.	<p>In what ways does the podcast suggest the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were hypocritical when written? Do you agree?</p> <p>What is some evidence that Thomas Jefferson and some of the other founders of the country were aware of this hypocrisy?</p> <p>This section is bookmarked by the reflection of an elderly Black gentleman whose grandfather was enslaved by Jefferson. Why do you think it was important to the podcasters to include his voice?</p>
20:25- 25:55	Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War	What did Abraham Lincoln and James Mitchell want and expect Black people in America to do once they were freed?

Fig. 4. Activities for afterschool educators that “guide students in the contributions of Black Americans to democracy and exploring the genius of Black innovators and artists” (<https://1619education.org/builder/lesson/1619-podcast-listening-guide>)



Transcript: Tim reading Maegan’s letter

“Dear Tim and Moby, who was Fannie Lou Hamer? From Megan.

Well, on August 22nd 1964 a lot of Americans were asking that same question. That night they turned on the TV to see Hamer on every news program. She looked like a nice middle-aged lady, somebody’s mom or your neighbour, but in her home state of Mississippi she was well known as a fierce voting rights advocate.”

Fig. 5. The narrator’s mediated narrative on Fanny Lou Hamer’s identities



Fig. 6. The official, “sanitized” narrative

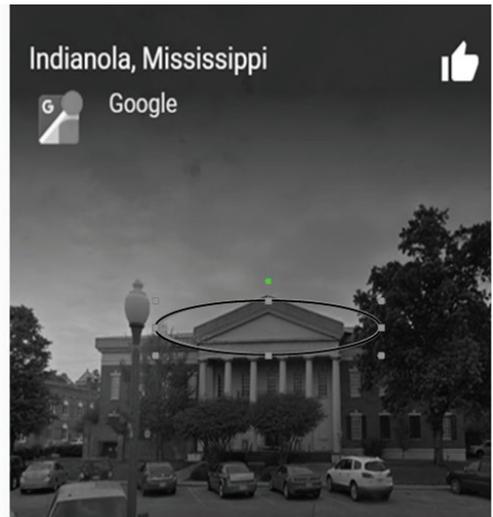


Fig. 7. Fact-checking: justified fake verbo-visual detail



Fig. 8. Fact-checking: unjustified fake report

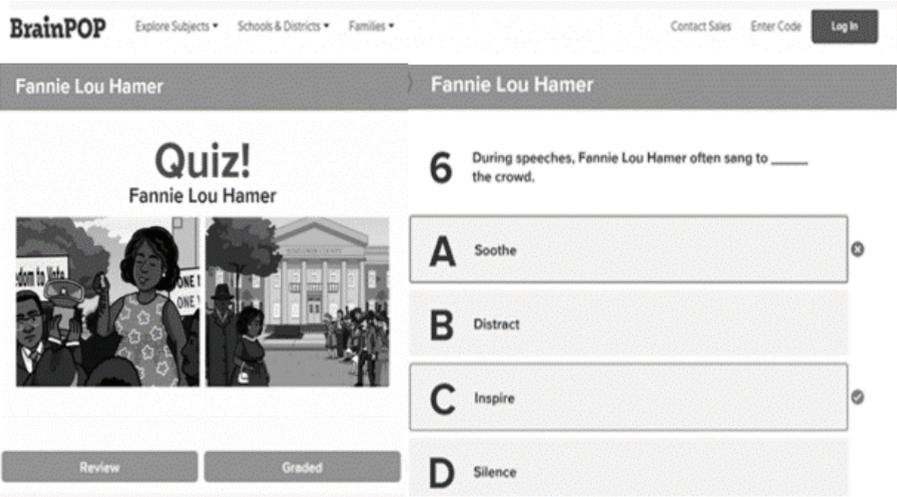


Fig. 9. (Re)mediation and resemiotisation in classroom activities

**TEACHER / STUDENT PARTNERSHIPS IN ONLINE VIDEO
CORPUS CONSTRUCTION AND ANNOTATION.
ENCOURAGING HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS'
DIGITAL LITERACY**

ANTHONY BALDRY

University of Messina

FRANCESCA COCCETTA

Ca' Foscari University of Venice

DAVIDE TAIBI

CNR-ITD Palermo

***Abstract:** Online video corpora constructed by Higher Education students play various roles in specialised digital learning. When supported by analytics, this can be a productive way of engaging with the multisemiotic processes associated with digital literacy. However, when reappraised, corpora thus produced often play significant roles in contexts other than those for which they were originally envisaged. The final section of the paper reflects on video corpora's role in consolidating digital literacy in Higher Education as part of inter-university and cross-degree teacher-student partnerships.*

***Keywords:** corpus monitoring, digital literacy, learning analytics, OpenMWS; video corpora*

1. Introduction: video corpus construction, annotation and monitoring

The advent of video-sharing websites needs to be accompanied by tools that allow Higher Education students to construct online video corpora on themes of their own choice. Websites such as *YouTube* and *Vimeo*, as well as other video platforms with educational concerns, such as Khan Academy (<https://www.khanacademy.org>) and others, including Ted (<https://www.ted.com>), whose expert speakers have backgrounds in business, science, and technology as well as education, do not provide students with an online framework that allows them to share their interpretations of videos within online projects. Enabling such projects is, instead, the major focus in the development of Multimodal Web System (henceforth: OpenMWS, <http://openmws.itd.cnr.it>), a specialised video corpus platform (Figure 1), that provides students with online distance-learning resources and guidance in the construction of video corpora as well as tools for analysis of the individual videos they contain. As Figure 1 (top part) shows, OpenMWS supports the presentation of embedded YouTube videos split up into sequences for

subsequent analysis and annotation, using descriptors such as those also shown in Figure 1 (bottom part). Crucially, as part of a shared environment, the corpora that individual students produce can be retrieved, and peer-reviewed by others, who can make further contributions. In particular, the *Multi-Summary and Peer Evaluation* section of OpenMWS (see Figure 4 below) allows students to express their interpretations of specific videos and compare them with those of others, encouraging the expression of different experiences and foregrounding alternative perspectives.

VIRTUAL_WORLDS_BLENDED_P - ITEM V3_BLENDED_066 - SEQUENCE 16

< Prev Sequence Next Sequence >

Time Point: 01:07 Time Span: 00:07

Item: ITEM V3_BLENDED_066	Duration: 01:21	Video: 4KFPRAgXiQU
		
Oral discourse: NONE		
Sounds: MUSIC		
Written discourse: TEXT: people get the care they deserve.		

Phase and Other features
Phases:

Overview Soundtrack Videotrack Composition Interaction Phase and Other features

Overview:

V3 BLENDED-SUBCORPUS 1, 2, 3:	V3 BLENDED-SUBCORPUS 1, 2, 3
V3 BLENDED-PLACE :	V3 BLENDED-PLACE
V3 BLENDED-THEMES:	V3 BLENDED-THEMES
V3 BLENDED-THEME & SIMULATION TYPE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Simulated human body Simulation Simulation for medical emergency Simulation graphs Simulation technology Simulation theory Smart Factory tour Smithsonian National Museum Virtual Tour Space travel simulation Spaceship simulation Standardized patient simulation Storm simulator Submerged city tour Sydney Aquarium self guided tour THE FUTURE OF VR, AR AND MR THE METAVERSE AND ITS IMPACT ON FUTURE GENERATIONS TYPES OF DEPRESSIVE DISORDERS Tour at Fire Museum Tour in Berkshire Hathaway Tour of Bletchley Park
V3 BLENDED-MAIN-SPEAKER:	
V3 BLENDED-SEQUENCES:	
V3 BLENDED-DATE:	
V3 BLENDED-SPACE:	
V3 BLENDED-ENVIRONMENT:	
V3 BLENDED-GUIDE:	
V3 BLENDED-FACILITY TYPE:	
V3 BLENDED-PROMOTED BY:	
V3 BLENDED-VIDEO TYPE:	V3 BLENDED-VIDEO TYPE

Figure 3: The OpenMWS interface: (top) transcribed sequences; (bottom) sequence annotation tools

OpenMWS can claim to break new ground in online group project work in its recourse to word processing and spreadsheet tools that students, in their preparation of the corpora, are either already familiar with, or which they can quickly master. In other words, students can work offline when preparing corpora, but are encouraged to ‘go live’ as quickly as possible so as to benefit from the online guidance that OpenMWS provides through the inclusion of analytics, i.e., tools that help monitor and guide the various stages in the corpus development. Monitoring is, of course, a key concept in the guidance and performance of individual students and student groups (Alemayehu, Chen 2021; Broadbent, Poon 2015; Lera-López *et al.* 2010; Theobald, Bellhäuser 2022) but is also applicable to, and supportive of, the constant updating of open-ended corpora that different groups of students can engage with (see Sections 2 and 3 below). The existence of monitor corpora and the need for monitoring ongoing corpus construction and content is, naturally, far from new:

A monitor corpus is a dataset which grows in size over time and contains a variety of materials. The relative proportions of different types of materials may vary over time. The Bank of English (BoE), developed at the University of Birmingham, is the best known example of a monitor corpus. (<http://corpora.lancs.ac.uk/clmtp/1-data.php>).

The principle of corpus expansion over time is traditionally taken to apply to very large linguistic corpora; for example, COCA (Corpus of Contemporary American English) states:

[t]he corpus contains more than one billion words of text (25+ million words each year 1990-2019) from eight genres: spoken, fiction, popular magazines, newspapers, academic texts, and (with the update in March 2020): TV and Movies subtitles, blogs, and other web pages. (<https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/>)

However, there is no reason why the open-endedness, traditionally associated with large monitor corpora such as BoE and COCA, cannot be profitably applied to the construction of specialised video corpora, particularly when the growth process addresses specific Higher Education needs, such as the reusability of corpora beyond the contexts for which they were originally conceived (see Sections 2 and 3 below). Obviously, at the time when monitor corpora (Sinclair 1991: 24-26) were first envisaged, analytics, whether of the monitoring or learning type, were not available, making it appropriate to revisit this concept in relation to video corpora within a project whose starting point is an online platform that allows YouTube videos to be re-indexed and efficiently accessed on the basis of their most significant sequences, but whose endpoint is, significantly, stimulating trust among undergraduate students, participating, often for the first time, in the collaborative construction of an online artefact.

As shown in Figure 2, in keeping with the principle of open-ended, reusable specialised corpora and, in particular, the modular approach adopted with OpenMWS, *Blended Realities* is the end result of three separate projects, each consisting of one hundred videos illustrating various blends of virtual (VR) and augmented reality (AR) or which are simulations relevant to training contexts, where feasibility, cost, and safety are major factors and which make use of these technologies, often in association with Artificial Intelligence (AI applications).

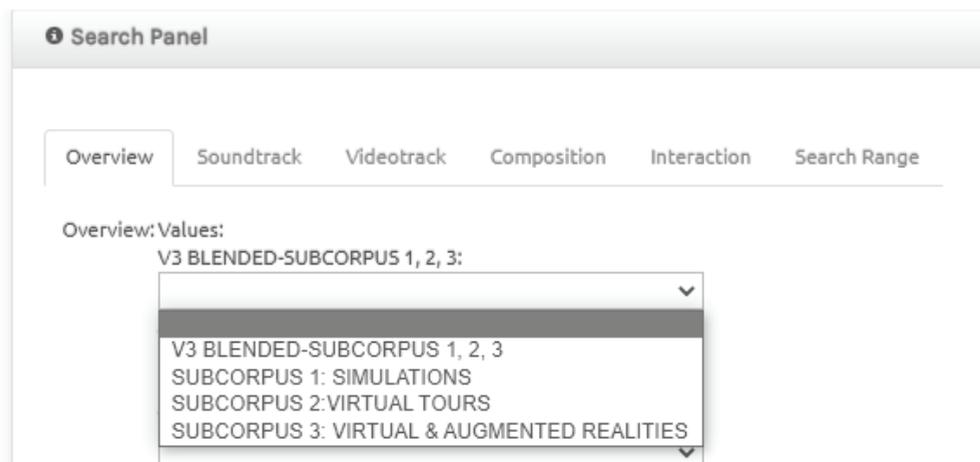


Figure 4. OpenMWS interface: one part of the search tool affordances

The role of learning analytics when guiding students through the various stages of corpus building and encouraging their engagement with digital multiliteracies is such that when students log on, the OpenMWS platform tracks their ‘moves’, by recording which text boxes have been selected and changed. In many cases, this takes place when the online environment of OpenMWS is used to adjust initial offline transcriptions and annotations. For example, a video’s initial offline division into sequences using a spreadsheet can easily be checked, in order to establish whether a precise match in duration exists between a sequence’s oral production and its corresponding written transcription. This is done by opening the Sequence Annotation functionality, selecting the sequence in question and clicking on the video (Figure 3, centre left). Thanks to the side-by-side presentation of video sequence and transcription (Figure 3, centre right), the student can, if need be, adjust the video sequence’s duration (Time Span, Figure 3, top left), when, as frequently happens, the video sequence cuts out one or two seconds before reaching the end of the corresponding transcription. Adjustments made in this way are recorded for subsequent examination by teachers and/or researchers participating in online video corpus monitoring and other related studies (Taibi 2020; 2021; Taibi et al. 2022).

VIRTUAL_WORLDS_BLENDED_P - ITEM V3_BLENDED_043 - SEQUENCE 01

< Prev Sequence Why This Virtual Human Is Being Injured by Scientists

Time Point: 00:00 Time Span: 00:00

Item:	Duration:	Video:
ITEM V3_BLENDED_043	04:21	9yqa0wfv2iA



Why This Virtual Human Is Being Injured by...

See our
-E-L-E-M-E-N-T-S-

Phase and Other features

Phases:

BLANK

Subphases and/or functions:

SP1: The bones in our body

Oral discourse:

OBMS: The human body is complex. It hurt so bad.

Sounds:

VOICE

Written discourse:

NONE

Visual images:

FR1a: Human body FR1b: A man spe

Overview Soundtrack Videotrack Composition Interaction Phase and Other features

Soundtrack 1:
BLENDED - SPEAKER:
OBMS, Steven Yule Ph.D

Figure 5. Guiding students in the description and annotation of video sequences

As mentioned above, the *Multi-Summary and Peer Evaluation* section of OpenMWS corresponds to a more sophisticated version of the Comments section found in many video-related websites that students entrusted with such adjustments, especially those new to a specific corpus, can select and use by clicking the Film Title section (Figure 3, second row) to gain access to a pop-up link to summaries (Figure 4), and peer reviews about this video's content and characteristics, before returning to the annotation of the sequence at hand. This selection is recorded, allowing researchers to understand, whether students view the entire video and/or read the summary before 'diving into' an annotation session.

Multi-summary

Close

Summary

SIMULATIONS VIDEO CORPUS 43 - Why This Virtual Human Is Being Injured by Scientists:

Background information

This video presents what the researchers in South Korea created, a neural network to control a simulated human body, which could be the future of physical therapy, surgery, and robotics. The broadcaster firstly illustrates the complexity of the human body that consists of 206 bones and of more than 600 muscles. Then he describes the processes that are involved. The researchers start with the training of the virtual body and then they teach an algorithm that allows it to control the skeleton. After this brief overview, the speaker explains the need for these researchers to simplify the body and the various activities it is able to accomplish, from simple walking to cartwheeling. Throughout the video we get to see the skeleton moving while coordinating its muscles, all made possible thanks to the use of a higher-end CPU and graphics card from 2017.

RATING: 5

Figure 6: Pop window with access to the main summary (other summaries not shown)

Recording changes provides information about the frequency of interactions with the various parts of the analysis of sequences and constitutes a guide as to where the assistance incorporated in OpenMWS needs to focus. While adjusting video sequence starting points and durations is a necessary step in students' engagement with digital environments, more complex annotations and analytics are already possible within OpenMWS or planned, including, in the latter case, how well students stand up to the challenge, in the absence of oral discourse, of establishing where a sequence can be said to start and end through observation of the written discourse, music, and visual images that it deploys. Such a step is consistent with monitoring and enhancing a student's capacity to undertake critical analysis of videos (see Sections 2 and 3 below).

Building trust is a step-by-step process. One example of improvement that *has* already been introduced relates to the SUGGEST functionality (Figure 3, bottom right), prompting students to change an existing entry where data are identified as absent, as happens with the speaker's name, omitted in the Oral Discourse text box, but present in the annotation (Figure 3, extreme bottom left). Currently, both the correct tag and the name have to be retyped, but a planned ACCEPT SUGGESTION functionality will allow omissions to be added with a simple click. This example shows how a machine learning technique derived from AI can be linked up with learning analytics to provide the overall guidance students require. Needless to say, whenever the SUGGEST button is pressed, learning analytics records the faith users have in AI approaches, itself an area where specialised multisemiotic digital literacy research that overcomes mistrust in reliability is still in its infancy (Chong et al. 2021). Cost-effectiveness is one of the aspects that learning analytics can illuminate with precise data. For each student, engaging in the adjustment of a video, it is possible to count up the number of changes made in a specific, timed session. To the knowledge of the author of this section, this too is an innovation in the analysis of learning activities based on video corpus construction (Taibi et al. 2022: 163, 171). Hence the current development underway, to include a dashboard that visualises:

- Number of sessions for each student;
- Duration of each student session;
- Frequency of changes made in a specific time session;
- Comments sent to teachers.

Access to this dashboard can be regulated so that:

- Students only see their own interactions;
- Teachers see the interaction of the whole group of students;
- Comparison between individual students' indicators and averages for the whole group can be used to monitor and encourage group/individual participation.

2. Corpus semiotics and the reusability of corpora

The author of this section teaches in a degree course in Linguistic and Cultural Mediation which, *inter alia*, has a vocational focus on the mediator in tourism. Clearly, this includes the role of the tourist guide and their skills when interacting with their clients. Over the last decade, the hospitality industry has undergone massive growth (EHL Insights n/a). Employees in this industry are well aware of the importance of the English language, and its command, in the delivery of quality service (Zahedpisheh et al. 2017). Hence the need to take into consideration the shifting nature of these skills in light of the changes that have taken place in the digital age, and, more recently, in light of the new possibilities that virtual tours can offer in post-Covid society. For example, during Covid lockdowns, virtual tours were well appreciated as temporary substitutes for real tours (El-Said, Aziz 2022), thus leading tourist guides to reconsider their role in the tourism industry. A survey carried out among 123 professional Portuguese tourist guides shows that “if they had the technical skills, [73.3% of respondents] would consider creating their own virtual tours, which they regard as an opportunity for the moment” (Carvalho 2021: 55). Nowadays, the tour guide is no longer just a person leading a crowd of tourists and waving some kind of flagging device, but increasingly an offscreen speaker who uses the camera to suggest s/he is visiting specific places in the company of their viewers. So, when it comes to the teaching of English for Tourism Purposes, educators must understand its practical applications and be able to design learning tasks and activities that learners can use “to perform their jobs more effectively” (Edwards 2000: 292).

The Virtual Tour subcorpus section (henceforth: VT) of *Blended Realities* can be applied to the work of tourist guides in various contexts, including, in particular, vocational training and continuing education. Clearly, digital genres have extended the range of tours, and access to them. And in so doing have fundamentally changed their nature. As Tieghi and Muniz (2020) observe, for example, the use of virtual reality in tourism represents a way for travellers to make a pre-visit to a place, and experience what it feels like to be in a given hotel room and admire the landscape awaiting them. In this respect, hotel chains, cruise companies and travel destinations use VT ‘promotions’ to make travel experiences more complete and generate desire among consumers, in keeping with Dann’s (1996: 2) frequently cited remarks:

[v]ia static and moving pictures, written text and audio-visual offerings, the language of tourism attempts to persuade, lure, woo and seduce millions of human beings, and, in doing so, convert them from potential into actual clients.

This means that both novice and seasoned tour guides can benefit from the examples contained in the *Blended Realities* corpus. For example, tours of physical spaces that cannot be reached by the general public, such as tours of the International Space Station (Item 130: *Narrated 3D tour of the International Space Station*) or seabeds (Item 126: *New Seafloor in Google Earth Tour*), presuppose a different type of ‘experience broker’ (Weiler, Walker 2014) on the part of a tourist guide when mediating between the places described and the tourists in question. VTs and virtual tourists differ from their physical counterparts, as underscored by various sectoral associations (Carvalho 2021), owing to the greater emphasis existing nowadays on accessibility in tourism (ENAT, <https://www.accessibletourism.org/>) and the need to develop internet services (see the Internet Marketing for Tourist Guide seminar promoted by the European Federation of Tourist Guide Associations). The Quality Charter of the latter organization (https://www.feg-touristguides.com/quality_charter.php) stipulates standards and best practices on issues as varied as communication, knowledge, continuing professional development and competence. What emerges from this charter, which supports Cohen’s (1985: 20) statement that “the communicative component is the kernel of the professional guide’s role”, is the need for tourist guides to possess communication skills and competences in languages that must be constantly re-assessed. However, besides technical and language skills, semiotic skills are also required, in particular, those relating to how a particular video could have been structured in a different way or how, when planning their own video, tour guides might draw on the underlying meaning-making strategies adopted in one or more existing videos. Creating opportunities in vocational training for trainees to practice their communicative skills is essential and includes the possibility for students to record their own oral description of a video sequence and then compare it with the original description.

Such activity includes selecting and comparing existing sequences in videos, proposing their repurposing as potential sequences in new videos, as well as positing their likely effects on viewers of immersive video tours. The availability in OpenMWS of clear, easy-to-search indexing is invaluable in this respect. The VT subcorpus was annotated for five guide categories: 1) caption-based written guidance; 2) eagle eye; 3) off-screen guide; 4) onscreen guide; and 5) silent guide. All but seven videos fall into one of two categories, the onscreen (72/100) or offscreen type (21/20), demonstrating that the narrator/guide promoting visits is the ‘standard’ subgenre for VTs. However, much of the value of search categories of this type lies in their identification of special cases. Hence, the four eagle-eye videos are a subcategory of off-screen guide where the offscreen speaker describes spaces and objects, some of them simulated, viewed from a vantage point above or below viewers: besides Items 126 and 130 mentioned above, included in this category are *360° VR Tour of Space* (Item 132) and *What’s inside the Space Needle?* (Item 133). Instead, two videos – *Oldest Submerged City in The World Found in Greece?* (Item 137) and *Discovering the Hidden Depths of the Ruinart Cellars* (Item 162) – exemplify caption-based written guidance videos where music and written captions replace an identifiable guide’s oral narration.

These two videos – just 2% of the subcorpus – indicate how rare it is for VTs to dispense with the physical presence of a tour guide, but point to the significance of subgenres as demonstrated in the final video, *What’s on Offa? – Offa’s Dyke Path – The Highlights* (Item 163), representing the sole occurrence of the silent-guide type. This video is about a hiker rambling along Offa’s Dyke Path,

a walking trail that follows the dyke that King Offa of Mercia ordered to be built in the 8th century as a defence against the Welsh (https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/offas-dyke-path/). In the video, the hiker/guide is depicted, but never talks or describes the places he visits. As a semiotic choice, the use of overlays and extensive use of images relating to signage (signposts, maps, placards and plaques) in English (and occasionally in Welsh) is in keeping with the dictum that actions speak louder than words, but also invites further reflection on this video's overall meaning-making strategy, as a choice fraught with questions over its applicability in other contexts.

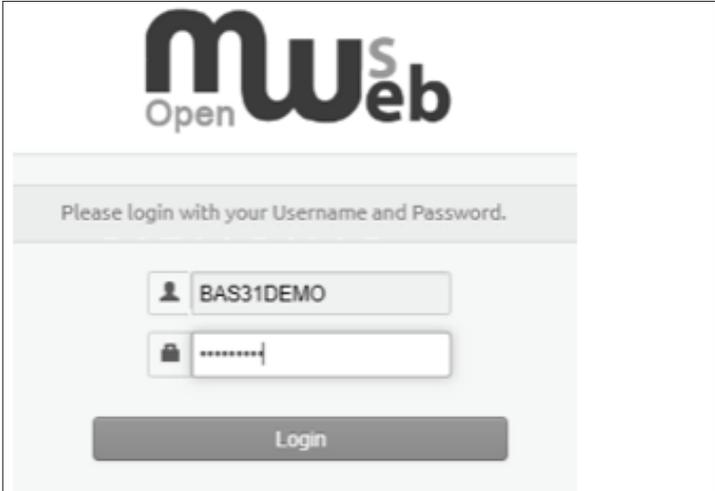
As hinted above, when used in tour guides' initial vocational training and/or continuing education, the VT subcorpus can also be used as a source of inspiration in students' creation of VTs. Illustrative of this are the genre subtypes identified above and their frequency in the subcorpus. Trainees can reflect on the effects of these subtypes on potential clients and choose those they consider most effective for the purposes of specific types of tour. However, the question that this section ultimately poses is: what further steps can be undertaken to ensure video corpora function to stimulate semiotic awareness? In answer to this, the dashboard proposed in the first section of this paper might well use analytics to show and record the data-driven choices made by trainees including their subsequently retrievable observations about awkward obstacles, such as the pronunciation of placenames, explanations of local cultural manifestations and translations of idiomatic expressions. Such a dashboard would harness the potential that video corpora have to combine data-driven learning (DDL) with simulation strategies (Cocchetta 2022; Baldry et al. 2022). It would display results to both trainees and teachers, possibly in a section called *My Choices*, which would substantially be an extension of the already existing *Multisummary and Peer Review* functionality.

3. Conclusion: reflections on teacher/student partnerships

This paper stems from a Workshop on Virtual Worlds and Artificial Intelligence: A Multisemiotic Video Corpus-based Approach that the authors gave at the BAS/31 conference (Timișoara, Romania), which used the *Demo* version of the *Blended Realities* corpus to illustrate the potential/actual outcomes of teacher/student partnerships in a changing digital world. Instructions to access the *Demo* are given at bottom of Figure 5.

The first part of this article mentioned the need to ensure that video corpora can, in principle, be modified and uploaded constantly, thereby stimulating corpus growth over time and encouraging link-ups between video corpus projects that began life as separate initiatives. Indeed, the *Demo* version of the *Blended Realities* corpus is the result of the amalgamation of three previous corpora each consisting of one hundred videos, themselves the result of projects undertaken by different groups of students. It is one of many such projects, currently being undertaken in Italian universities, with contributions from students enrolled in different universities and different degree courses, (Taibi et al. 2022; Baldry et al. forthcoming) within a framework of agreements between the Italian CNR and various University departments. OpenMWS's search tools are designed to allow virtual linkage of corpora sharing at least some descriptors so that they can be searched virtually as if they were a single corpus (Baldry, Kantz 2022). However, in the case of *Blended Realities*, currently containing some seven thousand sequences annotated over a period of two years, frequency of use led to combining

the data within a single spreadsheet in order to apply annotations more systematically to the entire corpus.



The screenshot shows the OpenMWS web interface. At the top, the logo 'mws' is displayed with 'Open' underneath. Below the logo, a message reads 'Please login with your Username and Password.' There are two input fields: the first contains the username 'BAS31DEMO' and the second contains a masked password '*****'. A 'Login' button is positioned below the password field. Below the login form, there is a block of text providing instructions: 'Go to: <http://openmws.itd.cnr.it>. Type BAS31DEMO as Username and Password; Select OpenMWS Search to access search tools. Alternatively, select Multi-summary and Peer Review to browse through the video corpus and related summaries.'

Figure 7. Accessing the *Blended Realities* video corpus

The results of this project, suggest that students willingly participate in online project work, when carefully framed within the overall objectives of the degree course that the students are following (Baldry, Kantz 2022). There are, however, other objectives that transcend the boundaries and confines of individual degree courses. These include ensuring that basic digital literacy transcends simplistic interpretations of tools – and somewhat pointless references in undergraduate CVs to ‘basic knowledge of Microsoft Office’ – and hinges instead on an interpretative semiotic framework. Online projects such as *Blended Realities* thus encourage students to interpret well-known spreadsheets and word processing tools not in terms of their differences, but as an integrated functional and semiotic entity, the mastery of which lies in understanding and implementing their affordances for integrating tabular, linear and diagrammatic texts. As such, video corpus construction is, in part, a data-driven answer to questions about what it takes for a table, as an integration of linguistic and visual resources, to be resemiotised as a diagram, a semiotic entity distancing itself from language-instantiated thematics (Baldry, Thibault 2006: 62-68). With its assembly of data produced through an OpenMWS search of the *Blended Realities* corpus, Figure 6 illustrates a tabular presentation of video-sequence annotations that helps appreciate the relevance of AR in videos produced in many different countries, social contexts and workplaces.

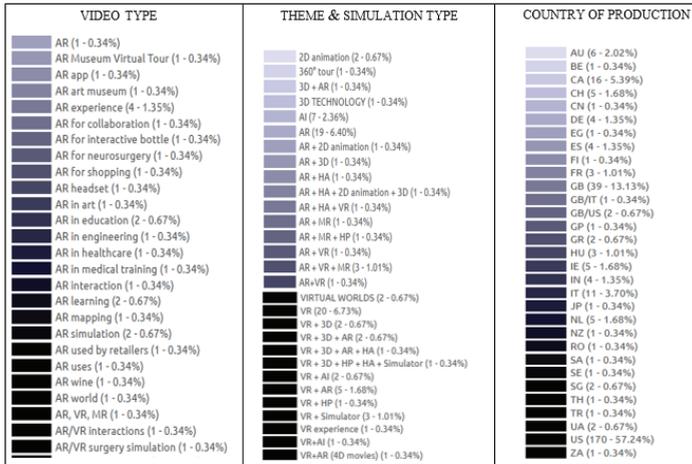


Figure 8: Tabulated search data from *Blended Realities*

However, like many video corpora produced so far within the project, the corpus contains diachronic data (Baldry 2021), a testbed for future diagram-producing tools to be incorporated in OpenMWS reflecting social, technological as well as semiotic changes over time. Such testbed data underscores the significance of student contributions in the teacher/student partnerships being undertaken. However, despite current platform shortcomings, the *Blended Realities* corpus already provides challenging examples of AR semiosis as Figure 7 exemplifies in its presentation of a sequence from Item 293: *Exploring AR interaction* (Google I/O '18).

So, for instance, in this prototype, Chris is using his phone as a controller to draw in space, but he's not actually seeing the AR annotations he's drawing. The other person sees the same AR content and uses their phone to take a video. They're playing different roles in the same experience. Kind of artist versus cinematographer. And we found there could be some challenges to asymmetric experiences if there's a lack of information about what the other person is experiencing. For instance, Chris can't tell what Luca's filming or see how his drawing looks from far away. So, as we mentioned previously, these kinds of different combinations of space, time, and precision are relevant for multi-person AR experiences, and they have different technical and experiential needs.

Figure 9. Towards a semiotic approach in corpus annotation

The sequence's verbal description (top part) and visual presentation (left-hand side), represented here by a single frame, are linked to thematic choices available to the student annotator (right-hand side). The example shows how assumptions about the normal, symmetrical realities of two individuals' visual perception can be modified in AR to the point where their normal perception is achievable only when blended together through the verbal description of a third party. This is almost a metaphor for the reshaping of mindsets that the *Blended Realities* corpus is attempting to achieve with its focus on recontextualization processes that typify online worlds and more specifically constitutes an illustration of remediation (Bolter, Grusin 1999) and resemiotisation (Iedema 2003) processes. As such, the example also illustrates the objective of shifting students' mindsets away from formal linguistic analysis and encouraging analysis of semiotic processes.

To summarise what has been stated in this paper: OpenMWS is a platform allowing systematic annotations for each video in a corpus, but embracing different interpretations made by students within the diverse realities of different degree courses, while recognising the overarching pedagogical need in today's society for all students to gain experience and awareness of perspectives that transcend traditional sectoral boundaries (e.g., Science vs. Humanities). Behind it lies a definition of digital literacy aligned with a focus on the changing nature of semiosis in a digital society. As described in various publications (Baldry et al. 2020; Baldry, Thibault 2001; Coccetta 2022), this type of research also involves challenges and changes in perspective, such as the shift in video corpus studies away from the traditional word-based conceptions typical of corpus linguistics, and embracing instead descriptor-based searches that support the quest to identify recurrent visual/verbal patterns within an approach that adapts DDL (Coccetta 2022) to the needs of critical multimodal discourse (see Vasta, this volume; Vasta, Baldry 2020; Baldry, Kantz 2022).

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Author contributions: Section 1: Davide Taibi; Section 2: Francesca Coccetta; Section 3: Anthony Baldry.

A PALIMPSESTUOUS READING OF SILVIU PURCARETE'S 2012 PRODUCTION *CĂLĂTORIILE LUI GULLIVER*

VERONICA TATIANA POPESCU

“Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași

Abstract: *The paper discusses Silviu Purcarete's 2012 theatrical production Călătoriile lui Gulliver/Gulliver's Travels, staged at the "Radu Stanca" Theatre in Sibiu, Romania, as an appropriation of Swift's famous satire, which uses fragments from it and from three other of his satirical texts, brought together in a multi-layered palimpsestic intertext. This intertext makes use of the title story as a frame narrative for a series of "scenic exercises" that deconstruct and critically as well as artistically reinterpret the writer's misanthropic vision of the human condition, pointing to its philosophical relevance in a contemporary context and to the director's philosophical affinity with the Anglo-Irish satirist.*

Keywords: *appropriation, Gulliver's Travels, palimpsest, Silviu Purcărete, Jonathan Swift*

1. Introduction

The field of adaptation studies is, as Kamilla Elliott (2020: 8; 9) correctly notes in her latest book, *Theorizing Adaptation*, one that “benefits from a variety of theories, epistemologies, and subject matter” because it “inhabits and crosses many fields”, and as a consequence it borrows concepts that it reinterprets and redefines in an attempt to cover the wide variety of processes and types of aesthetic works that are labelled adaptations, whether in a strict or a wide sense of the word. The issue of fidelity, though never a major concern for reviewers and critics even in the early days of adaptation criticism in late 18th century (Elliott 2020: 17-20), has been addressed theoretically in a more consistent way since the early 2000s, mostly owing to influences from the structuralist and especially poststructuralist theories from the 1960s onwards (Stam 2000: 58). Drawing on Julia Kristeva's highly influential theory of intertextuality, introduced in her 1966 essay “Word, Dialogue and the Novel” (1986: 34-61), Roland Barthes (1981: 39) describes texts as “tissue[s] of past citations”. To poststructuralists, all texts, and the adapted text is no exception, are collages, tissues of extant material, more like textual palimpsests, with an elusive final meaning, which makes fidelity in the process of adaptation a “chimera” (Stam 2000: 57; 54).

If, from the perspective of the audience, the term adaptation is inevitably linked with that of fidelity, the term ‘appropriation’ is free of such associations, as Julie Sanders explains in her *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2006). The thing that makes appropriation different from adaptation, in the narrow sense of the word, is that “the appropriated text or texts are not always as clearly signalled or acknowledged as in the adaptive process,” occurring “in a far less straightforward

context than is evident in making a film version of a [literary text].” (Sanders 2006: 26) What we see in adaptations and especially in appropriations is “a more sustained engagement between texts and their creators” (idem: 8), in which the interrelation between texts is intentional and possibly even political. The older text is revisited, reinterpreted and refashioned by the appropriator to put forth his or her agenda. In the process, the older text is deconstructed and then re-articulated, and, as this process is taking place, the older text’s own tissue of incorporated texts becomes part of the play of signification within the adaptation/appropriation, in a multi-layered textual structure, which is why the palimpsest becomes a perfect trope for the resulting aesthetic work. In the words of Linda Hutcheon (2006: 8), “adaptation is a form of intertextuality: we experience adaptations (*as adaptations*) as palimpsests through our memory of other works that resonate through repetition with variation.”

The French narratologist Gérard Genette’s also used the palimpsest metaphor in his 1982 book *Palimpsestes: Literature in the second degree*, where he explains it as follows:

On the same parchment, one text can become superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal, but allows to show through. It has been aptly said that pastiche and parody ‘designate literature as a palimpsest.’ This must be understood to apply more generally to every hypertext.” (Genette 1997: 399)

The hypertext, as defined by Genette, is the newer text, drawing on the older one, the hypotext, to which it is connected through a relationship of co-presence and interpretation. As he (ibid.) explains, “[t]he hypertext invites us to engage in a relational reading, the flavor of which, however perverse, may well be condensed in an adjective recently coined by Philippe LeJeune: a *palimpsestuous* reading. ... [O]ne who really loves texts must wish from time to time to love (at least) two together.” On a similar note, Linda Hutcheon (2006: 21) concludes that “[palimpsestic] adaptations ... are directly and openly connected to recognizable other works, and that connection is part of their formal identity, but also of what we might call their hermeneutic identity.”

The palimpsest is an appropriate visual metaphor in adaptation studies, because the very definition of the palimpsest indicates the visibility of the overlapping text. In the case of an adaptation/appropriation, the co-presence of selected fragments from the earlier text(s) helps create new meanings through the relations created between old and new “writing” and the complex discursive dialogue that is established. Appropriators like Silviu Purcărete reinterpret, recycle older material because it is relevant, meaningful, and important for their own political or artistic agenda, inviting the audience to perform a *palimpsestuous* reading.

This palimpsestic quality of Purcărete’s production is revealed to the audience in the form of “scenic exercises,” as the poster advertises, relying on fragments from *Gulliver’s Travels* and three other Swiftian texts, which address similar or complementary issues related to the human condition, the main interest of the Anglo-Irish author. The audience is invited to identify the citations incorporated in the text of the play and to also find the rationale for the way in which they are collated, rearranged, given new interpretations through scenes that rely on physical and visual theatre strategies to tell stories. Even without correctly correlating text and dramatic action, the audience can experience these “scenic

exercises” and the evocative power of the strong, often grotesque and nightmarish, but intellectually stimulating and emotionally engaging visuals of the performance.

In the following pages, Silviu Purcărete’s production *Călătoriile lui Gulliver/Gulliver’s Travels* (2012) will be the subject of a *palimpsestuous* reading that will be carried out focusing on the complex processes at work in the process of appropriation, resulting in a dramatic text and a theatrical performance with a pronounced palimpsestic quality and, equally important, on the ways in which the resulting work reinterprets for us the four texts it cites, making them relevant for a contemporary audience.

2. Silviu Purcărete’s *Călătoriile lui Gulliver/Gulliver’s Travels* (2012)

This production of the “Radu Stanca” National Theatre of Sibiu, first performed at the Sibiu International Theatre Festival in 2012, and winner of the “Herald Angel” Award at the Edinburgh Theatre Festival that same year, had a relatively short performance life. In all fairness, although the critically acclaimed Romanian director himself, known at home and abroad for his distinctive artistic style and unconventional approach to the literary texts he adapts for the stage, did not advertise his *Gulliver’s Travels* as a straightforward adaptation, it certainly is a challenging production for those not familiar enough with Swift’s satirical work, his misanthropic vision, and Purcărete’s theatrical style. As I will explain in the following pages, it is the very palimpsestic quality of his dramatic “text” that makes it both cryptic for larger audiences and a real treat for those prepared to perform a *palimpsestuous* reading that will reveal all the textual layers in the play and their interconnectedness. The appropriation is organized into a Prologue, an Epilogue, and twelve scenes, based on eight fragments from *Gulliver’s Travels* (1726) – particularly Book IV (5) and Book III (3), with echoes of Books I and II, suggested through visual means only (the two shadow play scenes of the piece) – and the other four scenes are based on passages from *A Modest Proposal* (1729), “A Beautiful Nymph Going to Bed” (1731), and “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D.” (1731), all made to create an organic dramatic work by the creative team: Silviu Purcărete (director), Crista Bilciu (translator and adapter of the fragments), Dragoș Buhagiar (scenographer), and the actors.

The play opens with an Epilogue that transports us directly into the world of Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*, Swift’s darkest and most sceptical meditation on human nature. What is interesting here is that Purcărete reveals from the onset that, like Swift, he too believes the human being to be both a Houyhnhnm and a Yahoo: his stage is filled with women dressed in tight spandex suits, moving about like horses in an upright position, neighing and circling the Swiftian character – a man looking like the Dean of St. Patrick himself – performing a kind of mating ritual that echoes Gulliver’s description in Book IV of how he was attacked by a female Yahoo in heat. Their Yahoo nature is further reflected in their violent, brutal nature: the Epilogue concludes with these creatures attacking the man, stealing his wig and the leather-bound book he was holding, one of them managing to rip off pages from it. They are all dispersed by some exterminators/hospital orderlies (the same costumes being used for scenes set in a hospital/asylum later on), who drag the collapsed man off stage. His place is taken by a boy (not older than 10) riding a wooden horse tricycle, a reference to Swift’s Houyhnhnms. As the Boy starts reading from the ripped pages, we recognise the passage in which Gulliver describes his departure from the land of the Houyhnhnms, which is the trigger for his mental collapse upon his return to England.

The entire production, in fact, is built around the idea of mental collapse accompanied by physical decay caused by illness, old age, or a life of depravity, moral decay, and the beastliness of humankind, all key themes in *Gulliver's Travels*, the text Purcărete chooses to foreground as his main source. The hospital/asylum in which the first scenes are set is not a place of healing and recovery, but a setting in which the abandoned individual becomes a prisoner of his own phantasmagorical, surreal, strange, confused and confusing exploration of human experience, as suggested to the Romanian director by what we know about Swift's final years, when, suffering from an incapacitating medical condition – the Ménière Syndrome – the author was deemed “of unsound mind and memory and not capable of taking care of his own person and fortune” (Smith 2012: 202), tormented by pain and possibly by his own distorted memories and perceptions of reality. This interpretation is supported by three elements of the appropriation: the overall dark, pessimistic, disturbing mood of the entire production, where the few comic interludes only provide the audience with an opportunity to prepare for yet another thought-provoking scene; the nightmarish quality of most scenes, where the grotesque and the darkly farcical seem the dominant modes; and finally the Swiftian character introduced in the Prologue as the Dean, and then as Gulliver – a patient in the care of his wife and the hospital staff. Later, against the background of lines 80-90 of “Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D.” where Swift talks about his own mental illness as if from the perspective of others, the character becomes the Dean again until, in the Epilogue, the line between the fictional character and his author is completely erased and the two become one.

Purcărete, like Claude Rawson (2014), sees beyond Swift's playful initial self-effacing strategy of indicating Lemuel Gulliver as the true author of his travel narrative, and he creates his Swiftian character as a purposely ambiguous one, as Swift himself had done when, in the book frontispieces of the 1735 edition of his *Works*, Gulliver's and Swift's portraits are so similar as to suggest that they might be one and the same person, almost as if the author had finally agreed to confess to the “authorial irony” (Rawson 2014: 138) in *Gulliver's Travels* where, in the constant changes of the narrative voice, one can get a glimpse of the author himself.

As Purcărete also likes to play with his audience, the Gulliver/Swift persona acquires another dimension through the character of the Boy, on stage for most of the 90 minutes of the performance, as a silent, innocent witness to the spectacle of human sinfulness, moral, mental, and physical decay presented before us all. Though we first identify him with the Houyhnhnms, as suggested by his horse-shaped tricycle, his pristine white shirt, and reserved manner while watching the human spectacle unfolding before him, he is also a symbol of our (Gulliver's/Swift's) innocence and idealism, soon to be crushed and replaced by disappointment and scepticism in man's superiority to the animal species. It is in the Boy's voice that we hear the Houyhnhnms' pronouncement on Gulliver and the human race, ending in what sounds like a sentence: “We ask you to leave. Go back to your Yahoos where you belong! You are what you are...” And then, as the Boy climbs on the old man's lap, cuddling there, becoming one and the same person, the audience understands that the Swiftian character becomes the Dean himself, his childish innocence, purity, naivety now deeply buried in a mind trapped in a helpless, old body, defeated and incapable of seeing man as anything but a creature whose existence is dominated and limited by its base instinctual nature, being prone to self-corruption and brutish behaviour, as demonstrated in all the situations presented to us in this production.

The Yahooesque, the brutish quality of the human being is a common theme in various scenes in this production. Take, for instance, the puppet show, a rewriting of a passage on the beastly lustfulness of Yahoo females in Book IV, chapter VII, and also a nod to an earlier scene inspired by “Beautiful Nymph Going to Bed”, both featuring prostitutes at their worst. They are represented as half puppet-half human women, whose physical deformity is appropriately matched by their moral corruption. Although the scene is farcical, incorporating elements of slapstick comedy, animal sounds, catfight gestures, false deaths (the client stabs the prostitute who has just serviced him, but she comes back to life and shoots him, dies again only to miraculously come back to life with a hysterical laughter), and a final Moulin Rouge end-of-performance number suggesting that it’s all been a show, this is only a dramatic strategy mimicking the entertaining quality of certain passages in *Gulliver’s Travels*, equally ironic in Swift’s work.

The scene based on lines from “A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed” uses the cabaret format in a much darker mode, and the human body is again used as a vehicle for satire. The poem is, in brief, Swift’s riff on the theme of moral and physical decay as portrayed by an old, decrepit and absurdly coquettish and delusional prostitute, whose disgusting body is gradually revealed as she removes her pestilent clothes and prosthetics, including artificial hair, a “crystal eye”, eyebrows made of a mouse’s hide, or her false teeth (l. 10-13; 19-20). At first sight, Gulliver’s horror at describing the apish, disgusting nakedness of the Yahoos is echoed in the description of this old prostitute, whose life of servitude to the appetites of men has certainly maimed her body and spirit.

Purcărete’s prostitute is replaced by a bearded male cross-dresser, a victim of abuse and, most likely, rape. He is further abused by two female cross-dressers looking like cabaret characters, who perform some lines from Swift’s poem, with gestures that visually translate the prostitute’s activities, the climax of the scene being when the text suggests that even members of the clergy use her services, at which point one of the female characters performs a symbolic anal penetration with her cane on the poor prostitute. The human spectacle before us is shocking, visceral, and emotionally disturbing, especially as the visual overpowers the textual and the implied in Swifts’ text becomes inescapably concrete. In a world where God seems absent (the only time He is represented in the play being as a detached, cynical puppet-master playing with anthropomorphic figurines whose body movements are mirrored by those of terrified human beings on stage), the image of Christ becomes a perverted representation of the victim and of what is innocent, pure, and beautiful in man. Corinna, the bearded cross-dresser, freezes in a Christ-on-the-cross posture, his naked torso and limbs having been covered in a lacquer that gives them a lustre reminiscent of that of the Christ statues above altars. Nothing remains sacred or pure in a world so unhinged and with no moral compass as that represented by Swift and Purcărete, whose art derives from the same kind of misanthropic vision.

The gender reversal in the scene (male victim, female abusers) presents human sinfulness and viciousness as universal features, the line between oppressor and the oppressed being fluid and relative on context. Purcărete appears to share Swift’s understanding of the human condition in social, political, and economic contexts, in which the mighty subdue, exploit and, albeit in hardly noticeable structures of oppression, enslave the poor, the needy, or the weak. Ann Cline Kelley (1976: 846), taking her cues from Book IV of *Gulliver’s Travels*, writes that Swift sees a relationship between “external enslavement and internal debasement”,

the latter being enforced through starvation and an inhumane treatment. And the question is, “Who is the brute then – the enslaver or the enslaved?” (idem: 847)

Purcărete dramatises this volatility of power relations and the causes and consequences of the dehumanisation of the human being in two scenes, the former a transposition of the most shocking passage in *A Modest Proposal*, the latter a personal contribution to Swift’s satire in the form of a long scene set in a contemporary context – a reminder that the true essence of Man has not changed in the course of history. In the former scene, the Irish poor of Swift’s satire are represented by women carrying even two or three babies at once in baskets or wheelbarrows, or simply in their arms and bellies; one woman even gives birth before our eyes and has her baby immediately taken away by people looking like hospital orderlies. It’s a financial transaction, and each woman, having received her money, walks away relieved, not before performing a brief dance routine, both joyous and absurd. A man dressed as a chef comes in and chooses a baby from the piles on what looks like a row of mortician’s tables, has the baby weighed and then plunges a hammer in its skull, removing a piece of the baby’s flesh. He will sear that on a grill, while in the background we hear a passage from *A Modest Proposal* (the paragraph about the various dishes that can be made from baby flesh) being read by the Boy, who has been on the stage the whole time. To translate Swift’s reification of imperialist subjugation and exploitation of the Irish as cannibalism, the Romanian director has the chef actually taste and then offer the Boy a plate of freshly cooked baby flesh, which the Boy eats without flinching. Are we to interpret this as a direct accusation for all of us who, like the Boy, remain silent witnesses in the face of even the most atrocious crimes, as Swift’s contemporaries did? Out of naivety, passivity, cowardice, shock, fear, all of these together? Possibly so. And this complicity is dehumanising, as suggested by the end of the scene, where two giant rats, disgusting disease-spreading animals, appear on stage, perform a brief mating act, and then take the plate with the grilled baby flesh from the Boy’s hands and fall dead to the ground as soon as they eat it. “Man differs more than Man, than Man from Beast” (Rochester qtd. in Smith 2012: 198-199), Swift’s sub-text in both *Gulliver’s Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*, becomes here only a pale reflection of the basest of human behaviour towards fellow human beings, as rats are more sensitive to human flesh than Man is.

The second scene capitalising on this idea of the beastliness of man focuses on the dehumanisation of modern man in a capitalist system, which exploits man’s gluttony, violent impulses and survival instinct. The modern Yahoos (the exploited) are part of a regimented society, being trapped in a thoughtless routine suggested here by the actors’ marching across the stage, in sync, with expressionless faces and no sense of direction. Their marching is interrupted by the Boy, who is curious to see what would happen if he placed an obstacle (an anthropomorphic figurine, metonymical of a change in leadership within this tightly controlled society) in front of the man leading the procession. Unable to advance, they bump into one another as if they were goods on a production line and the machine malfunctioned. The same man-as-part-of-a-machine imagery appears later, when the modern Yahoos sing a choral piece to Shaun Davey’s repetitive melodic line and they move like pistons in a running engine. It’s all part of a performance to please their new master – the Boy – an attempt that fails and plunges them into chaos. They disappear behind a sofa, from where they emerge crawling and growling, gradually learning to walk on their two feet like apes. They start fighting one another and the victims have their organs removed in the most

brutish way. Their bloodthirst quenched, the now naked Yahoos retrieve their suitcases and start marching again, but not before one of them performs another gratuitous destructive act, crushing several of the paper ships with which the Boy has been playing. The victim cannot resist the temptation to become an aggressor, even if only for the sake of finding out what happens.

3. Conclusion

A *palimpsestuous* reading, like the one performed in the pages above, is never complete. Much remains to be said about such a complex production relying on visual and physical theatre more than on text, which imposes a description of action, *mise-en-scène* and performance for each scene analysed. Also interesting for further analysis would be how Books I and II of *Gulliver's Travels* are included in the production in two instances of shadow play only, one representing the relativity and volatility of power relations, enacted by human silhouettes metamorphosing into threatening giants or shrewd midgets, the other evoking characters from the entire book, presenting them like shadows from another world – an image possibly suggested by Gulliver's encounter with the ghosts of famous people from antiquity in Book III. Or the scene where physical distortion, a key literary device in *Gulliver's Travels*, is paired up with Swift's views on the perverse nature of exploitation (presented as a felicitous solution to poverty in *A Modest Proposal*) and the result is one of the most confusing yet viscerally powerful theatrical experiences of the production, which seems built around the idea of exploitation of patients by doctors, as suggested by the medical imagery in the *mise-en-scène*.

Like Swift, his predecessor of almost three hundred years, Silviu Purcărete is a sceptic thinker who cannot avoid exploring the darker recesses of the human soul and the most repugnant manifestations of human behaviour. The Romanian artist made no secret of his affinity with the Anglo-Irish writer and his intentional appropriation of his predecessor's work. To quote the director, “[m]y performance borrows only the title of Swift's novel and is, in fact, an independent production inspired by the book... [it] is more like a post-mortem dream: pessimistic and sad.” (qtd. in Orr 2012). In truth, one feels that much of the entertaining quality of Swift's satires is lost in translation. With few comic interludes and a haunting musical score, this production feels less Swiftian and more like a theatrical philosophical essay in which the source texts are visible, but their meaning is altered through a process of revisionist interpretation, also deriving from the criteria for selection and the rearrangement of fragments selected for this theatrical collage. Swift's most disturbing conclusions on human nature and life are only passages in highly imaginative fantastic stories in *Gulliver's Travels*, carefully wrapped in entertaining, rhetorical masterpieces where the reader's pleasure derives both from the writer's penmanship and his rich, vivid imagination. Purcărete's production, with only 90 minutes to experience a visually and conceptually rich palimpsestic theatrical “text,” feels like a crash course in Swiftian misanthropy more than anything else. It is also an emblematic production for Purcărete as appropriator, as his aim is never to be loyal to his sources, but rather to forge his own creation through “powerful theatrical images that condense drama into a syncretic and imaginative experience that has the ambition to exalt the senses and challenge the mind.” (Komporaly 2017: 88) It is great theatre, true art and it

does what any appropriation should aim to do: it forces us to reread, to reconsider and to revalue Swift's satires by forcing us to see them through the lenses of theatre.

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ECOWOMANISM, MEMORY, AND THE SACRED¹

PETER GAÁL-SZABÓ

Debrecen Reformed Theological University

***Abstract:** The paper examines the interrelation of womanism, theology, and nature in an attempt to verify the ecowomanist liberation ethics that is both ecological and ecospiritual. Nature is conceptualized as a memory space, where the African American cultural trauma is remembered and reworked, and as a field of significance, where through creative action the restoration of the creation becomes possible.*

***Keywords:** African American ecomemory, ecowomanism, cultural memory and trauma, womanist theology*

1. Introduction

When Toni Morrison observes that “All water has a perfect memory and is forever trying to get back to where it was” (1995: 99), she forcefully brings African American awareness of nature to attention, pointing out that the environment in African American female memory has played a prominent role in constructing, reflecting on, and maintaining their identities. As *lieu de memoir*, it was in/through nature that the African American female subjectivity could be remembered and practiced, representing traumas inflicted upon them in nature while making up for the disrupted links in the female genealogy. Imbued with religious spirituality, “wisdom’s practice” (Daniell 2007: 465) including the wisdom of sustenance, and possibilities of intergenerational encounters, the natural environment crystalized as a mnemonic space where and through which expressing the emerging African American self becomes possible.

As the ecowomanist perception of nature intersects with religious conceptualizations, the present paper examines major topoi in womanist theology as they embed the black female self in nature from a religio-cultural point of view.

2. Womanism, theology, and nature

While the African American conceptualization of the natural environment is informed by African cosmological as well as Christian concepts, demonstrating maneuvers to appropriate the surroundings, the term “womanist” is conventionally traced back to Alice Walker’s book, *In Search of our Mothers’ Gardens* (1983), denoting her “fluid spirituality” (Harris 2011: 228) - an African American female spirituality that has been subsumed into womanist theology. On the one hand,

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womanism entails a black female genealogy with a centuries-long tradition, leading back to Sojourner Truth and even earlier; and, on the other, it refers to a black female community with nurturing memories and disruptive, yet identificatory traumas. Indeed, Sojourner Truth's essay "Ain't I a Woman?" (1851) problematizes race, gender, class, and religiosity in an intertwining way, suggesting intersectionality at an early stage (see Smiet 2021: 122):

And ain't I a woman? Look at me? Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen 'em mos' all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? [. . .] Where did your Christ come from? Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothin' to do with Him. If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again? And now they is asking to do it, they better let 'em. (Truth 2000: 39-40)

It must be noted that Truth's speech, delivered before an essentially white audience at the Ohio Women's Rights Convention in 1851, was transcribed and edited by white writers (Phillips-Anderson 2012: 25), thus it is difficult to decide to what extent authenticity can be attributed to the text. The complaint palpable in her text about female debasement and black displacement as well as her religion-informed identity formation echo an already existing black tradition and verify "a long-standing African-American women's intellectual community" (Hayes 1995: 4) that reverberate with later feminist (see bell hooks's *Ain't I a Woman* [1981]) and womanist thinkers. In the wake of black liberation theology, womanists, partially to address the exclusion of black women through an androcentric approach (Burrow 1999: 78), looked to ground themselves in theology much along the lines detectable in Truth's thinking, implementing most notably "interstructured analysis employing class, gender, and race," institutional criticism of the Black Church, as well as ecological investigations (Townes 2003: 159). While maintaining an activist vein, womanist theology formed a space of inquiry that is based on the context of black culture and the egalitarian interrelation of the black female self, the community, and non-human entities.

Bearing similarity to black liberation theology, womanist theology emphasizes the relevance of the social context, which for Jacquelyn Grant (1989: 212) means that "The Bible must be read and interpreted in the light of Black women's own experience of oppression and God's revelation within that context". The context is provided by black women's experiences and is mainly understood in the gender binary. As she (idem: 69) explains, "Theology and Christology have developed in this context. Characteristically then, in theology and Christology, the male-masculine is projected as the valued entity and the female-feminine is projected as a devalued entity. In effect, there is the institutionalization of dual existence". Grant further problematizes the contextual framework of black liberation theologians, which contextualizes African Americans primarily in a racist context. As Deotis J. Roberts, Sr. puts it:

The context of the faith of black people is a situation of racist oppression. Religion, and especially the understanding of the biblical faith, has been the source of meaning and protest for blacks. Our religious heritage has nurtured and sustained,

[sic] us through our dark night of suffering. Without this profound religious experience and the churches which have institutionalized it, blacks might not have survived the bitterness of American oppression. (1976)

With the emphasis on black women's experiences, Grant echoes their embeddedness in the oppressive American society and, at the same time, she insists that the institutionalization of the black faith marginalized black women, entombing them in the shadow of black male domination - much as this is an oversimplification (see Carr-Hamilton 1996).

Importantly, what she also seems to suggest is that, before the birth of the institutionalized black church (and besides it ever since), black women must have enjoyed a more egalitarian position within the religious community. As testified by Albert J. Raboteau (1978), Lawrence W. Levine (1977), and others, the period before the formation of the black church and the spiritual life outside the church are connected to the natural environment, which closely connects black female spirituality to nature. This is in close parallel with ecofeminist thinking, like Rosemary Radford Ruether's (1993: 21), who explains that "in ecofeminist culture and ethic, mutual interdependency replaces the hierarchies of domination as the model of relationship between men and women, between human groups, and between humans and other beings".

The womanist connection to nature is verified on another level, too. The emphasis on the context of female experiences reveals the de-emphasis of biases that represent the black woman in a muted way. A view is employed that embeds the black woman in an egalitarian way, in a relational black cultural context, which is away and elsewhere from oppressive white environments. De-emphasis is achieved by emplacing the female subject in nature and in relation to nature, i.e., it represents a move away, elsewhere, much in Teresa De Lauretis's sense (1987: 26).

Nature - a primordial space, which identifies a pre-racial entity both in time and space - represents the creation in womanist theological thinking. As such, it is cleansed from conceptualizations that for womanists reflect Western patriarchal values, or as Mary Shawn Copeland (2006: 226) terms it: "the hegemony of the pseudo-universality of a deracinated male posited as the Western standard of normativity". The principle *Creatio ex Nihilo* in Western theologies substantiates that order was made out of nothing, which sets and justifies hierarchies serving the human interests in Western understanding. By contrast, womanist theologian Karen Baker-Fletcher explores the principle *Creatio ex Profundis*, to offer a relational approach that illuminates the "the interconnectedness of spirit and matter and Spirit" (Baker-Fletcher 2006: 71). While she does not seek to debunk the tradition of creation from chaos, in her "Christian integrative relational womanist" interpretation, creation reveals that "God alone is not created but Creator who from eternity creates [and] creation has not been created without the presence and transcendence of Spirit" (ibid.). Creation is an ongoing process in her evaluation, which also implies that what has been corrupted can be reinstated, whereby she rejects fixities of any "man"-made orders. The active presence of the Spirit signifies for her how creation comes into being through "creativity, freedom, and depth" (idem: 68). Divine creativity is paralleled with female agency, since creation may represent the interconnection of male and female principles, as the African American cultural historian Charles H. Long (1963: 124) also points out about some creation myths. It reflects womanist engagement in/with nature: "To be

creation is to participate in divine creating” (Baker-Fletcher 2006: 66). Creation is not conceptualized as chaos, something estranging and dark, but as birth “revealing divine handiwork” (idem: 67), and as she states elsewhere (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 25): Genesis is “a birth story, a story about the nativity of the earth and its creatures, including women and men”. Participation is no simple habitation, but, in a Heideggerian sense, dwelling as in cultivating (see Heidegger 1971), i.e., building as in creating. Agency reclaimed in this way suggests empowering freedom for her: “Freedom is a form of power. In freedom, creatures have the power to choose whether to assent to God’s unsurpassable love” (Baker-Fletcher 2006: 78). For the womanist, empowering freedom in nature enables counteracting violence and subjugation.

The conceptualization of nature as creation serves to counter social and ecological injustices, i.e., racial violence and the violation of nature. To return to Grant (1989: 137): “The central problem is the domination-submission model of relationship [. . .]. Resolution of the problem involves not only the re-ordering of relationships between human beings but also the re-ordering of relationships with non-human realities”. The model Grant refers to emanates from fallenness in womanist theology. Baker-Fletcher’s (2006: 94) observation that “nature itself [is] fallen and awaiting human salvation so that it, too, may be redeemed” appears to merge meanings of “redemption” and “nature’s moment of violence” (ibid.) in that nature may be read as damaged, thus in need of healing, and corrupted in a moral/ethical sense. Since she also maintains that “The environment was thrown off balance through a human disregard for the interrelated structures of the cosmos” (idem: 88), nature itself is not corrupted, but tainted with defilement, bearing the marks of human activity.

It is refreshing to see that contextualization does not mean in the womanist thinking (much as there are other examples as well) that the corruption in nature - and the source of social injustice - originates in Western thinking, whatever that may be, but in the human nature, which is why it can be said that evil “does not come from any one place but in every disregard of God’s aim for creation” (idem: 89). Hence violence in societies and the violation of nature has been present in all cultures and at all times. It also suggests that “Western” cannot be considered a monolith, but it is itself heterogeneous, and very much functional, even useful for the integrative relational womanist Christian theologian.

The hope invested in this framework comes to the foreground in the treatment of human fallenness in relation to nature:

Earth creatures, male and female, became greedy, wanting more than their share of power. Taking the freedom they were created in by persuasive, loving, divine community, they greedily grasped at more than their share of power. This created an imbalance, leaving divine community, which was already eternally creating, creating anew what had been whole and now was broken. The creation that took millennia to become whole spiritually strives to find wholeness again. (Baker-Fletcher 2011: 170)

For Baker-Fletcher, the struggle can even be detected in Cain’s violence. In analyzing human sin and expulsion, Baker-Fletcher (2006: 89) identifies Cain’s mark as one of protection and not of curse, showing that God has not turned away from him, and his remorse is as hopeful as it shows openness to return, i.e., change, remedy, and redemption are possible. Integrative restoration is inherent in

womanist theology that becomes evident in the human relation to the creation and thus to the environment. The environment becomes, in this way, a reminder of the promise of redemption, the resurrection both in a Christological and a restorative sense, and thus healing in/through nature as the manifestation of the ongoing creation as God is believed to create “continuously, everlastingly, dynamically” (Baker-Fletcher 2011: 165).

It closely follows from the conceptualization of the creation and human connectedness to it that womanist theological thinking is inherently ecological: “To be spiritual is to be deeply, intimately connected with the earth” (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 19). As Edward P. Antonio (2004: 149) contends, ecology is “interaction with the ecosystem,” but, more concretely, it evinces “an *intentional* relationship to the world,” designating “a field of significance”. It suggests that beyond the identity of substance as “Dustiness refers to human connectedness with the rest of creation” (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 18), it expresses the meaning attached to the environment, both as it becomes meaningful and as it becomes the means or terrain of performative signifying. Co-creating proves ethical, moral, and authenticating as in deracializing as agency is claimed outside/in opposition to the American social space. However, the signifying participation in perpetual creation also means a restorative activity to enable “seeing goodness as intended by the creator in all his creation” (Kebaneilwe 2015: 702). For Mmapula Diana Kebaneilwe, it refers to the restoration of equality across creation, so that “Nature, that is, animate and inanimate creatures will be appreciated as having goodness inherent in them and hence would be nurtured and not raped by the powerful for their selfish wants, and hence creation would become as God envisioned it, ‘all good’” (ibid.). The a priori goodness of nature sets the demand for its recognition as such and consequent care - an ecological compulsion that, as Harris (2011: 233) reminds us, echoing Walker, is a trait of the ecowomanist: “being accountable for and to the earth is a more imperative for one operating within an understanding that the earth, nature, divinity, and humanity are interrelated”.

The ecowomanist deployment of creation principles does not thus only represent a restorative move, but also delineates an agenda for action. For Harris, ecowomanist ecology is situated in the intersection of race, gender, and class,

Uncovering parallels between acts of violence against the earth and systemic patterns of violence (racism, classism, sexism, and heterosexism) faced by women of color reveals the need for a fresh environmental justice paradigm; one that honors all earthlings and their approaches to earth justice in a community of life. (Harris 2016a: 13-14)

For Baker-Fletcher, too, applied ecowomanism crystalizes as liberation ethics: “To work in harmony with God’s intention for the well-being of the planet means that we must work toward the salvation, redemption, and freedom of entire environments. We must look to free both people and the planet that sustains us from a diversity of health hazards” (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 18). The trope of the creation reveals that the intentionality triggering the interaction with nature is based on the interrelation with it expressing “links between justice, gender, ecology, and equality” (Harris 2016a: 10). With the many layers, participation in creation also means recreating ties with nature and oneself, which unveils the ecowomanist mnemonic strategy.

3. Defilement and trauma: the ambiguity of African American ecomemory

The ambiguity of African American ecomemory can be described by what Kimberly N. Ruffin (2010: 2) identifies as the “ecological beauty to burden paradox”:

People of African descent endure the burden and enjoy the beauty of being natural. They bear the burden of a historical and present era of environmental alienation while they also come from and transform cultural traditions that enable – in fact, encourage – human and nonhuman affinity. African Americans struggle against the burden of societal scripts that make them ecological pariahs, yet they enjoy the beauty of liberating themselves and acting outside of these scripts. (Ruffin 2010: 16)

The duality described by her can be seen as fragmentation or split along multiple lines, as it has not just been the binary of race to cloud black female experience of the environment, but also gender, rendering the paradox tetrapolar (see Johnson 1986) or even other notions including age, geography, etc., making fragmentation multiple. Ruffin also extends the paradox to religiosity, when she (2010: 91) argues for “a religious burden-and-beauty paradox” to address the same ambiguity of “the Bible [...] used as textual support for American enslavement” and “its message [. . .] transformed out of the hands of racist oppressors and into those fomenting social justice” (ibid.), which she also connects to ecology.

Much as nature for African Americans has signified the possibility for a replenished community, it bears thus the marks of traumatization. Delores S. Williams forcefully attacks Western conduct in America by establishing a parallel between the violation of nature and the exploitation of the black female body: “Just as the land is vulnerable to all kind of uses by those who own the means of production in our society, the nineteenth-century slave woman’s body was equally as vulnerable” (Williams 1993: 26). In a reverse manner, Alice Walker (1988: 147) establishes the same identification of nature and black bodies: “*Some of us have become used to thinking that woman is the nigger of the world, that a person of color is the nigger of the world, that a poor person is the nigger of the world. But, in truth, Earth itself has become the nigger of the world*”. In either way, seen as an “extension of assault” (Williams 1993: 25), nature is regarded as a female symbolic, i.e., the black female body, and in that she projects black female trauma onto the natural environment:

Different from the traditional theological understanding of sin as alienation or estrangement from God and humanity the sin of defilement manifests itself in human attacks upon creation so as to ravish, violate, and destroy creation: to exploit and control the production and reproduction capacities of nature, to destroy the unity in nature’s placements, to obliterate the spirit of the created. (ibid.)

In the quote nature and the black female body are exchangeable to signify ultimately black female cultural trauma. Strip-mining and breeder women are juxtaposed, whereby the exploitation of nature triggers for Williams memory work that is further substantiated by religious contextualization. When she claims that “breaking the spirit of nature today through rape and violence done to the earth and breaking the spirit of nineteenth-century slave women through rape and violence, constitute crimes against nature and against the human spirit” (idem: 27), she insists that both are crime, as they represent defilement because nature and black

women were made in the likeness of God (idem: 29). In this way, much as she speaks of the suffering of nature as the extension of black female suffering, reminding her of black female experiences, her tactics are not mere anthropomorphization of nature by identifying nature as a black woman, but, much rather, it refers to being-there-together in close juxtaposition in the context of creation. As Melanie Harris (2016a: 13) puts it, “The comparable ways in which black women’s bodies have been treated unfairly, and exploited throughout history, and the ways in which the body of the earth has suffered through pollution, overuse of resources and general exploitation reveals alarming intersections of oppression that black women and the earth have suffered”. She, too, identifies parallel exploitations as “the sin of defilement” (Harris 2017: 10), which indicate that not only are the different realms of the female experience intersecting but also oppression is present in diverse and parallel forms in different realms of the planet, so that oppressions can intersect in multilayered ways (idem: 11).

The cultural trauma surfaces for African Americans primarily in their oceanic memory, revolving around the Middle Passage and so does it for ecowomanist theologians:

We remember our ancestors who crossed the Atlantic in slave ships, whether we are wading in the Atlantic or the Pacific. We remember the millions who drowned during the Middle Passage, some because they threw themselves overboard in the name of freedom, others because crew members threw them overboard as excess or defective cargo. The ocean is a place where horizons of past, present, and future meet, providing wonder for those who look and remember. (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 23)

The vast waters of the ocean are identified as the source of African American cultural trauma. Originally conceptualized in spiritual terms by Africans, the ocean has become to signify a defiled environment for the horrors experienced by enslaved Africans and for obstructing memory of the homeland, much as “Shared Atlantic experience and memory served as a touchstone for new cultural practices that emerged in the New World diaspora” (Smallwood 2007: 190). While African cultural practices were transferred to and remembered in the New World, the Atlantic experience included the New World experiences of slavery and the memory of the Middle Passage. It is the latter “as a fluid, yet collective, foundation for Africans in America” (Wardi 2011: 24) that has, in many ways, become the carrier of the nativity of African American subjecthood as “fixed melancholy” (Mallipeddi 2014: 237) - here as the memory of the Middle Passage as place—served as “a protest against deracination” (idem: 238). Indeed, as Stephanie E. Smallwood (2007: 190-191) contends, “[. . .] the connection Africans needed was a narrative continuity between past and present - an epistemological means of connecting the dots between there and here, then and now, to craft a coherent story out of incoherent experience”. The trauma of the ocean is recycled to be built in cultural memory as “memory emerged as the principal site of contestation” (Mallipeddi 2014: 247).

As the terror and negligence suffered in America are transposed on the oceanic memory, it finds reassertion in traumas connected to other water bodies and to wilderness in general. It is in this way that Glave describes the cultural memory of the Middle Passage, confessing to its impact on her, too, through her emotional writing. In doing so, she palpably connects the oceanic memory to

Hurricane Katrina: “The plight of African Americans exposed to disease by the putrid waters in New Orleans echoes the experience of Africans who died of disease and starvation after they were captured by whites in Africa and transported to the Americas in the dark holds of ships during the Middle Passage” (Glave 2010: 137). The oceanic ecomemory becomes the vehicle of traumas suffered by African Americans in the case of Katrina, too.

The cultural trauma represented by the oceanic memory also gives way to reframing the trauma as self-constructive. To remain with the example of Katrina, black victims traumatized before and after the hurricane (Casserly 2006: 197) suffered from “the disastrous intersecting realities of racism, classism, poverty, and environmental degradation in New Orleans” (Daniell 2007: 457). At the same time, the trauma experience is transformed into agency, as the victims are seen as survivors instead of victims. While initially “the city’s black residents, for example, were often described as victims of a storm rather than survivors of a terrible calamity, [whereas] [t]o be a victim is to be helpless, but to be a survivor is to possess courage and creative skills.” (Powell et al. 2006: 63), womanist thinkers - not neglecting the environmental injustice inflicted upon black populations (see Harris 2016b: 31) - emphasize the vertical encounter with God that enables an epistemological process resulting in the transformation of consciousness, instead of the horizontal encounter with racial injustice (constituents of the black experience in Williams’s (1993: 154) conceptualization). As Williams explains, “the vertical encounter between God and humans constitutes the most salient feature of the black experience. This encounter occurs in history and empowers black people to transform negative, oppressive social forces into positive life-sustaining forms” (idem: 155). For Baker-Fletcher, the hurricane represents resilience, creativity, and inspiration:

Survival was important. You did your best to live, do find higher ground, strong shelter. You prayed for and sought those things. Folk could feel a storm coming on their skin; smell the scent of it in everything, grumbled about the pain of it in their bones. They sought safe cover when first seeing and hearing of the shelter-seeking behavior of birds, dogs, squirrels, cows, all manner of two-leggeds, four leggeds, flying and creeping things—signs of a bad storm coming; divine revelations in creation to find safe, strong, hiding places, something hard to find today. People helped one another. God, even in fierce gales and roaring thunder, inspired community. (2010: 61)

She connects African American creative agency, the cleaning power of the hurricane from an ecological perspective, and resurrection hope to demonstrate that “Creation is called to participate in God’s aim for the well-being of all creation in spite of the problem of evil” (idem: 63). Importantly, the concept of interrelation between creatures, animate and inanimate, undergirds a holistic approach to nature, community, and creation in general, as it is in this way that the womanist integrative and relational approach can be verified. No part can be remedied without the consideration of the whole and the holistic approach requires attention to particular constituents belonging to the whole. Trauma is rechanneled to be embedded in this meaningful context, where, through the creative engagement of the ecowomanist, the constituents are reconnected to build a façade of significance. For the move, nature is the means and framework: “For me ocean and wilderness are God’s natural temple, which no human hand can build” (Baker-Fletcher 1998: 23).

4. Conclusion

Ecowomanist theologians seek to embed their environmentalist discourse in a theological framework revolving around creation, creativity, and a liberation ethics triggering their ecological understanding. For ecowomanists, it is through a religio-cultural lens that they view the environment and remember it, so that it can function as a context in/through which it becomes possible to make the self whole again and to find healing for the community in terms of remedying a ruptured memory. As Baker-Fletcher (1998: 51) vividly describes, "I remembered my African American ancestors whose bones and blood helped build this new nation called the United States. Every piece of land that I walked - urban, rural, suburban, woods, parks - became sacred to me in a new and more self-conscious way". Here, as elsewhere in ecowomanist writing, environmental thinking centres on the recurring issues of trauma, spirituality, and subjectivization opposing white objectification. The recollection of one's own memories and those of others related to the environment enables the ecowomanist to reconstruct memory in a creative way, as in participating in the creation work in theological terms. Inversely, re-creating the self and reconnecting to the community through ecomemories is the healing potential spiritually. From an ecological point of view, the healing of nature contributes to the healing process. In this intertwining, interstructured relationship, ecowomanists envision an ecological activity that is just as environmentalist as it is liberating.

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LOCAL BOY GOES GLOBAL: THE SEA SHANTY TO THE RESCUE

DAVID LIVINGSTONE

Palacký University, Olomouc

***Abstract:** This paper will look at how the grungy, old-fashioned, lowly sea shanty has become the unlikely hero of the Covid-19 pandemic, bringing people together globally and generating both community and creativity. Sea shanties, providing comfort and entertainment for sailors while at sea, far from their loved ones, became an odd bedfellow in this current day and age, as we counted the days for normal life to resume again. This phenomenon can serve as a template for other activities of this kind, using music and performance to combat isolation and loneliness.*

***Keywords:** call and response, Covid epidemic, folk music, online entertainment, sea shanties, TikTok*

1. Introduction

“The romance of the sea is gone, and with are gone Sea Songs”
(Whall 1913: ix)

The American comedian and television host Stephen Colbert declared not long ago on his hugely popular *Late Show* that “2021 is the year of the sea shanty” (The Late Show 2021). He went on to explain this seemingly absurd statement in an obviously humorous vein: “Now before I go on with this vital story, parents, a warning. Sea shanties are a gateway to much more dangerous online, maritime influenced behavior, like wearing cable-knit sweaters and carving scrimshaw penis pics.” (ibid.). Colbert and his comedy writing staff may be giving themselves a bit too much credit, however, as an episode from season 4 of *The Simpsons* seems to have beaten them to it way back in 1992, when Homer, desperate to raise money for his new business, ponders advertising on a local cable television station and is inspired by the character of the Sea Captain selling “ninety sea shanties on three compact discs” (The Simpsons 1992). The selection includes classic sea shanties such as “Blow the Man Down” as well as some rather dubious additions such as “In the Navy” by the Village People. For those unfamiliar with advertising on local television stations at that time, they were notorious for low-budget advertisements trying to sell seemingly unsellable items. A comment below the video on *YouTube* makes reference to the legendary prophetic talents of *The Simpsons*. “If only the sea captain would've released his album in 2021, when the sea shanty trend took off, he'd be a millionaire!” (The Simpsons 1992). The *Simpsons* screenwriters are occasionally given credit for having predicted several trends and events, including the Trump presidency, the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center, etc. (Salem 2018). This seems to be yet another one.

Like many fellow academics, I could have used a prophecy to prepare myself for the trials and tribulations of online teaching during the Covid epidemic. In my American Folk Music class, for example, I usually require my students to sing along or even play an instrument during lessons. I found myself performing in front of my screen, hoping some were at least interested enough to keep their screen turned on. At times, however, I realized that I had to open myself up to the new possibilities this current situation provides, thinking outside of the box. I was pleasantly surprised by the responses I received from a survey I carried out among students and teachers concerning how they were coping with online teaching and learning. Although the negative aspects generally outruled the positive, many of them pointed out certain benefits, particularly for the introverts, on both sides of the computer screen. Some students actually found it easier to participate in class discussions, for example, with their screen turned off as it made them less self-conscious. As a teacher, I found myself remembering students' names since they were conveniently placed under their profile pictures. I also began asking early-comers to the zoom session polite questions as to their state of being, something I rarely do under normal circumstances. On the whole, however, I found myself mired in frustration and despondency.

I had an eye-opening moment, however, when I came across a video, originally made on the social platform *TicTok* around Christmas of 2020, by a young Scottish postman, Nathan Evans, singing a so-called sea shanty *Wellerman*. I soon learned that the song was not actually a proper sea shanty, but 'only' a sea ballad. Whatever the case, this obscure song about whaling, originally from New Zealand and dating back to around the 1870s, has become a smash hit, not only viewed by millions, but also being joined with harmonies by other users and even by a number of instruments by means of the so-called duet feature on the *TicTok* app. Ironically, very few people singing the tune actually understand what the song is about and one wonders how they would react if they actually knew. The chorus of the song "Soon may the Wellerman come/To bring us sugar and tea and rum/One day, when the touguin' is done/We'll take our leave and go." refers to the expectation of the delivery of supplies from one of the boats owned by the historical Weller family. The 'tonguin' refers to the, undoubtedly messy and gruesome, practice of cutting off strips of whale blubber to make oil (Stevens 2021). Evans, a twenty-six-year-old postman at the time, from the tiny town of Inveraray, originally recording with only his voice and fist, became a global star overnight, reaching number one on the UK charts and even signing a lucrative recording contract.

Evans' version of *Wellerman* is actually not the first one, having been previously covered by the British a cappella group The Longest Johns in 2018. Both versions have spearheaded a remarkable interest in the sea shanty folk music genre, which has been made accessible due to the specific circumstances of Covid isolation. People have begun to experiment with online apps and programs such as *Zoom* and *TicTok* in order to share and even perform music. The most obvious takeaway from this is that singing and playing in harmony meets and has always met a very elemental basic human need for sharing, for community. Amanda Petrusich, writing for the *New Yorker* puts it very well.

It seems possible that after nearly a year of solitude and collective self-banishment, and of crushing restrictions on travel and adventure, the chantey might be providing a brief glimpse into a different, more exciting way of life, a world of sea air and

pirates and grog, of many people singing in unison, of being free to boldly take off for what Melville called the ‘true places,’ the uncorrupted vistas that can’t be located on any map. (Petrusich 2021)

This paper will consequently explore how the seemingly left-for-dead genre of the sea shanty has not only become the latest hit for a young generation of TikTokers, but has also opened up new paths and models for possible creativity and cooperation.

2. History

The sea shanty arose out of African-American slave work songs, which made extensive use of so-called call and response, technically a form of antiphony, in other words a song where the lead singer sings out certain lines which are either echoed or answered by the chorus. Classic examples of this from African-American folk music would include: *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, *Michael Row your Boat Ashore*, *Down by the Riverside*, etc. Originating in Africa, but not only there, the musical form was brought over by slaves and reintroduced on plantations while working in the fields. As with many work or military tunes, songs of this kind served several purposes. Most importantly, they helped workers pass the time, served as a way of coordinating physical labour and finally provided a sense of community and solidarity under brutal conditions.

Most ethnomusicologists argue that the sea shanty arose upon sailors (mostly from the British Isles, Ireland and North America) being exposed to the work songs of African-American and Caribbean stevedores on the docks. Whatever the case, the sea shanty is a primarily a nineteenth century merchant ship phenomenon, most famously sung by sailors in the English-speaking world.

3. Definition and themes

The word *shanty*, *chantey* or *chanty* has been the subject of a great deal of speculation as to its etymology, with no definitive conclusions. The most convincing explanation is it having its origin in the French *chanter*, although there also may be a connection with the concept of a *shantytown*. The songs had both a utilitarian and entertainment purpose. They were used to coordinate work: weighing anchor, setting sails, mopping the decks, etc. If one were to get technical, there were also specific sub-categories of sea shanties, sung for particular kinds of jobs: windlass and capstan; halliard; fore-sheet or sweating-up; bunt. The songs would be led by a so-called shantyman providing the call, while the rest of the crew or members of the team performing the particular task would answer with the response. As with folk songs in general, the lyrics were flexible to say the least, with many sea shanties consisting of so-called customary (more or less fixed, established lyrics), floating (can be moved around in the song) and improvised verses. The shantyman could therefore play with the lyrics, add new updated verses and demonstrate his virtuosity on the spot in order to receive a possible extra dram or two of rum as a reward.

The songs covered a wide range of themes: shore leave, complaining about conditions at sea, storms, battles, military heroes, dishonest dealings by shipowners, fishing, gutting, whaling, disease, exotic locations, hazing, etc. The songs frequently had bawdy content, displayed affinities with tall tales, employed sailing jargon and often used sea terminology for the female anatomy. The use of

local colour changed, of course, depending on the nationalities of the sailors. The songs displayed definite marks of so-called ‘toxic masculinity’, making their current popularity even more ironic.

Sea shanties gradually died out in the late nineteenth century with mechanization and the rise of the steam-powered ships. In the foreword to the classic collection of sea shanties, *The Shanty Book*, Sir Walter Runciman (who played an ignoble role in the development of the Munich agreement of 1938) was premature in pronouncing the definitive end of the genre:

It is sometimes difficult for old sailors like myself to realize that these fine shanty tunes – so fascinating to the musician, and which no sailor can hear without emotion – died out with the sailing vessel, and now belong to a chapter of maritime history that is definitely closed. They will never more be heard on the face of the waters, but it is well that they should be preserved with reverent care. (Terry 1921: iii)

For a number of years, the songs (with some exceptions) were mostly known only to ethnomusicologists, and only began to experience an upswing and consequent popularization with the folk scene of the 1940s, centred in New York City. One of the key recordings was *Deep Sea Chanteys and Whaling Ballads* from 1941 by the Almanac Singers, which at that time included not only Pete Seeger, but also Woody Guthrie. The album included the classic sea shanty *Blow the Man Down*, in their version with Guthrie as ‘shantyman’ and the other three members providing the chorus/response. Although not truly a cappella (a recorder is used at the beginning and the end, and banjo and guitar are strummed in subdued fashion through the rest), the Almanacs were obviously attempting to achieve a certain legitimacy. Their interest in the genre sprang from their left-wing politics, of course, with an angle on the working-class, immigrant experience. Starting in the mid 1950s, bands such as The Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem, originally from Ireland, began to draw increased attention to the genre, once again politicizing it somewhat by bringing the focus on the recognition of the contributions of minorities to American/British cultural history. The old sea shanty *Leaving of Liverpool*, also known as *Fare Thee Well My Own True Love*, for example, became an international hit in their version. Arguably the greatest propagator of sea shanties, again with often a socialist twist on things, was the British folk singer-songwriter Ewan MacColl.

There are a number of contemporary a cappella groups whose repertoire almost exclusively consists of sea shanties. Quite a few of them are surprisingly from Poland, for example *Banana Boat*, which has pioneered the genre of neo-shanties, with their repertoire being a mixture of traditional shanties and new compositions. Sea shanty festivals are popular in a number of countries and have received a new burst of interest after the forced hiatus of the Covid epidemic and the rise of the online shanty phenomenon. The current sea shanty tradition is, of course, gentrified, no longer wild and woolly, and, instead, displays definite aspects of the ‘hipster’ approach to working-class professions and traditions.

The previously mentioned *Blow the Man Down* manifests many of the traditional sea shanty features. There are a number of variations of the song, not surprisingly, but the most popular version is as follows:

As I was a walking down Paradise street
To me way-aye, blow the man down
A pretty young damsel I chanced for to meet
Give me some time to blow the man down

The lines alternate between the shantyman and the chorus. The song takes place, at least initially, on shore leave and involves an encounter with a young lady who seems to be working ‘in cahoots’ with a local ship desperate for seamen. Her body is described with euphemistic sailing jargon, which would undoubtedly amuse the listeners:

She was round in the counter and bluff in the bow
 To me way-aye, blow the man down
 So I took in all sail and cried ‘way enough now’
 Give me some time to blow the man down

The naive sailor is tricked into joining a ship in dock, only to be knocked on the head and ‘shanghaied’ or abducted. The song ends with words of warning to younger sailors not to fall into the same trap:

So I give you fair warning before we belay
 To me way-aye, blow the man down
 Don't never take heed of what pretty girls say...
 Give me some time to blow the man down

The phrase “blow the man down” apparently refers to a ship partially capsizing at sea, perhaps expressing the sailor’s wish for the ship, and its captain, to meet with a just punishment for their misdeeds. The line describing the attack on the gullible sailor, “The mate knocked me down with the end of a spar”, is practically identical to a line from the African-American stevedore work song *Pay Me My Money Down*, which testifies to the fluidity of these types of folk songs and a possible earlier, land origin.

What Shall We do With a Drunken Sailor is arguably the most famous sea shanty of all time, having been covered by a wide range of bands in varying genres. Its format once again typifies the genre with possible call and response and endless verses lending themselves to improvisation, often of a bawdy nature. Another classic shanty, *Roll the Old Chariot*, also known as *A Drop of Nelson’s Blood*, begins with the lines of the first verse, “A drop of Nelsons blood, wouldn’t do us any harm”, this being a euphemism for, not surprisingly, rum. Additional lines make reference to “Oh, a roll in the clover, wouldn’t do us any harm” as well as other sexual escapades.

One of the most famous pseudo-sea shanties *Fifteen Men on a Dead Man’s Chest* with its classic lines

Fifteen men on the dead man’s chest—
 ...Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!
 Drink and the devil had done for the rest—
 ...Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum! (Stevenson 1912: 7)

is unfortunately not really a sea shanty, but was invented by Robert Louis Stevenson in his legendary adventure novel *Treasure Island*. Yet another classic which is often confused with a sea shanty is the pornographic *Good Ship Venus*, which had been covered by the punk legends The Sex Pistols, among others. The first verse, which exists in a number of variants, provides a graphic picture of the ribald content and style.

'Twas on the good ship Venus,
 By Christ you should have seen us,
 The figurehead
 Was a whore in bed,
 And the mast a rampant penis.

Other classic sea shanties and naval songs have been popularized by films, for example, *Spanish Ladies* in *Jaws* or *Don't Forget Your Old Shipmate* in the film *Master and Commander*, based on the books of English novelist Patrick O'Brian. Last but not least, the phrase "heave ho", used to pull something in unison, was introduced to 'landlubbers' by shanties such as *Yeo, Heave Ho!*, a so-called capstan shanty, originally sung by sailors when hoisting anchor (Boni 1947: 134-135).

4. Theory

As mentioned earlier, I have personally been forced, practically kicking and screaming, to make use of new technologies in my teaching, when presenting at conferences and even when performing music. Nathan Evan's version of *Wellerman*, along with many other examples, has inspired me to rethink some of my suspicions and prejudices toward online formats for both education, and art and entertainment. A recent article by Tom Maguire, although not focused on music, but on theatre, and in relation not to *TicTok* but to *Zoom*, is very much relevant to the present discussion. Maguire makes extensive use of the concept of 'liveness' developed by Philip Auslander (2008). Maguire, in relation to two theatre 'plays' performed online via *Zoom*, argues for not only the blurring between traditional views of live and recorded art, but also for the merits of experimental online performance.

I propose that liveness might be experienced and conceptualised less as a binary between live and non-live and rather as a continuum. The experience of liveness along this continuum has the potential to create bonds *between* people, something of particular value during the enforced isolation to preserve life and health during the pandemic. (Maguire 2022: 42)

The *TicTok* layered songs by Nathan Evans, The Longest Johns, and others demonstrate not only the potential for shared musical, theatrical and educational performances and projects, but also the remarkable possibilities for bringing people together from all over the world, free of charge and without moving from one's own home. On the negative side, however, one wonders if this new technology might be used as an excuse to cancel or at least cut back on traditional (more costly) concerts and performances or, in my particular case, teaching and conferences.

Sea shanties are not, of course, the only musical genre or even activity which have experienced a revival due to the move online. Ian Youngs (2020), in an article for the BBC, discusses various approaches to mediating performances during Covid: "Beyond music, lockdown may turn out to be a tipping point for activities like quizzes, choirs, and exercise, yoga and cookery lessons, which have found new leases of life online (despite the inevitable loss of the human touch)". Who knows what will be next, the sky (or better said, the Internet) is the limit.

5. Conclusion

There is an obvious parallel between isolation on boats in the middle of the ocean and the forced seclusion which arose from the Covid epidemic. Many of the symptoms are shared: claustrophobia, sick of your family/shipmates, missing your partner/friends, missing freedom/movement, sexual tension. While sailors missed their families, however, we often had too much of them and them of us. Shanties provided and are now making possible relief, solace and even community. In addition, the *TicTok* format and additional online musical sharing allow both professional and amateurs to participate. The approach is very much democratic, as an original sea shanty would have been, with even the worst singer given the opportunity to join in on the response to the shantyman/lead singer.

Many of the songs make reference to the attractions of the land or are actually even set on shore. The ‘landlubber’ life, with all of its comforts and familiarity, is something to be desired, but only for a certain amount of time; like summer holidays for schoolchildren. The attraction of the land is heightened, because it is something rare and perhaps our return to normativeness should also be viewed in this fashion; as something to be cherished, because it could be so easily taken from us.

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BOOK REVIEWS

EIVIND ENGBRETSSEN, MONA BAKER

RETHINKING EVIDENCE IN THE TIME OF PANDEMICS.

***SCIENTIFIC VS NARRATIVE RATIONALITY AND
MEDICAL KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES***

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IRINA DIANA MĂDRĂNE

West University of Timișoara

In *Rethinking Evidence in the Time of Pandemics. Scientific vs Narrative Rationality and Medical Knowledge Practices* (2022), Eivind Engebretsen and Mona Baker join the scholarly conversation on the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in public communication and policies (see, among others, Oswald et al. 2022, Van Aelst and Blumler 2022). The authors address the limitations of scientific evidence use in the medical field, starting from the multiple public controversies about health policies, healthcare practices and medical expertise that surfaced during the pandemic. In their view, the reliance on randomized controlled trials as the chief source of knowledge, dominant in evidence-based medicine and, hence, in institutional decision-making and communication on health issues, can be problematic insofar as it reinforces an image of science as monolithic and marginalizes the lived experience of clinicians and lay people. As it became apparent in the course of the pandemic, practice and real-life situations often call into question traditional scientific evidence, and, if disregarded, may lead to mistrust in institutions and to forms of resistance. Against a backdrop of “tension and entanglement between science and politics” (1), the book aims to yield fresh insights into the considerable opposition to COVID-19-related healthcare policies and practices, and to facilitate public dialogue on values and matters of concern that various communities may conceive of differently. For these purposes, Engebretsen and Baker propose a “more socially responsive approach to expertise” (4), premised on the central notion that there are “different types of rationality, and hence plural conceptualizations of evidence” (8) that deserve consideration.

Taking as a point of departure Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm, developed in his book, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (1987), the two scholars advance “a modified and extended version” (81) thereof, presented in Chapters 2 and 6, as well as an analytical model, amply illustrated in Chapter 3, on the debate for and against face masks, Chapter 4, on the disagreements regarding mass public health measures (lockdowns, physical distancing), and Chapter 5, on the arguments for and against vaccination.

Following Fisher, Engebretsen and Baker conceptualize narrative as “a mode of being in the world” (10-11) and only secondarily as “a mode of discourse” (narration as a genre, alongside description, exposition and argumentation). Human beings make sense of the world through a narrative lens, by situating and interpreting events, as well as discourses about the events, within ongoing narratives about their selves and their communities, and within wider social narratives. From this perspective, scientific claims are themselves narratives that can be assessed according to “narrative rationality”, which rests upon “the logic of good reasons”: a values-based logic that brings to the fore people’s fundamental commitments, labelled “transcendental values” (25). Rationality, in this sense, encapsulates a “pre-reflective, practical aspect of being in the world in Heideggerian terms” (9) or “practical wisdom”, the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis* (10). The main instruments for understanding and evaluating stories adapted from Fisher’s paradigm are “narrative probability/coherence” and “narrative fidelity” (14ff.). The former comprises three elements: “structural or argumentative coherence” or the internal makeup of the story; “material coherence”, that is the “external consistency and completeness” of the story in connection to other stories; “characterological coherence”, referring to “the consistency and reliability of the characters involved”, primarily the narrator(s), but also the “sources of information and authority” in the story (15). The latter, “narrative fidelity”, has to do with the “truth qualities of a story”, with the resonance of the events narrated with the audience’s experiences, so that they appear authentic, and with the values they cherish (15). Understanding and interpreting narratives therefore involves identification, achieved through the assessment of narrative probability/coherence and fidelity.

At this point, however, drawing upon McClure (2009), Engebretsen and Baker depart from Fisher’s approach by expanding the notion of identification and by regarding it, in a poststructuralist vein, as a process of narrative co-production by the audience and of intertextual mediation among different meanings and narratives (Kristeva 1969), aspects detailed in Chapter 6. Similarly, the two authors point to the desirability of certain incoherences and contradictions that can challenge the audience to reflect upon new facets and possibilities of action (McClure 2009, Stroud 2002). The prospect of change is thus accommodated, in a move that breaks with the inevitable reproduction of narratives ensuing, according to critics, from Fisher’s concept of fidelity. Another point of novelty is the concept of “narrative accrual” (Bruner 1991, Baker 2006), introduced to explain how particular stories, and not others, become widely accepted and naturalized, namely through the audience’s “repeated exposure to a set of related narratives and their underlying values” (35). This framework, introduced in Chapter 2 and revisited in Chapter 6, by way of conclusion, is consistently applied to a wide range of (semi-) public communication sites that hosted controversies and debates on COVID-19 healthcare measures and recommendations.

The empirical chapters impress through the variety of domains (medicine, politics, traditional and new media, religion, everyday life) and cases covered, as well as through their geography, ranging from the UK and the US, where most examples come from, to other countries around the world that were affected by the pandemic in specific ways (see, for example, Brazil). They also cut across different scales, from international organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), to presidential, governmental and national medical institutions, and to local communities. The examples take readers from official stances and scientific

narratives to the narratives of marginalized and historically discriminated against communities, and to the narratives of ordinary people. Cases, debates and controversies that attained a symbolic status in the public imaginary of the pandemic are brought to attention and put under the scrutiny of the narrative paradigm, with a focus on structural, material, and characterological coherence, followed by a discussion of transcendental values, as related primarily to freedom and social responsibility.

The three analytical chapters identify the source of the audiences' mistrust and confusion regarding medical expertise and public health policies in perceived inconsistencies, first, in the scientific arguments released to the public, and, second, between their own experiences and official or expert discourses. Read through the narrative lens, such inconsistencies are a matter of structural and material incoherence. Thus, the medical community produced "conflicting messages" on the benefits of wearing face masks (Chapter 3), including at the top level of the WHO and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, which "created a space for the UK's Boris Johnson, Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, and other high-profile personalities to amplify values such as masculinity and personal liberty at the expense of public safety and social responsibility" (28). Such clashes originated in different understandings of what should be considered reliable scientific evidence in public health policies and in different approaches to dealing with scientific uncertainty. The experts' recommendations and the policies concerning lockdown and physical distancing (Chapter 4) were similarly fraught with structural and material incoherence. In the UK, for instance, the population's trust in lockdown measures was affected by political hesitancy and by a change in slogans, from "Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives" (March 2020) to the ambiguous "Stay alert, control the virus, save lives" a couple of months later (May 2020), and then back to "Stay home, protect the NHS, save lives" (January 2021), by which time "the argument supporting the need for lockdowns had lost much ground" (46). Overall, communication within the scientific community was negatively impacted, note the authors, by "a lack of acknowledgement of the values underpinning the adversary position" (47), as was the case with the Great Barrington Declaration (in favour of herd immunity, while protecting the most vulnerable) and the John Snow Memorandum (in favour of control and suppression of transmission). The latter engaged the former on the lack of scientific evidence, but failed to engage it on the issue of values, specifically on the concerns expressed about the social problems and inequalities accentuated by lockdowns. The vaccination debate (Chapter 5) presents yet the most fascinating case of the three, as, in addition to the structural and material incoherence that could be noticed, for example, in the public recommendations on the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, what came into play was a longstanding history of resistance to inoculation.

The rejection of the COVID-19 vaccine by significant parts of the world's population can therefore be related to a lack of trust in state institutions, due to previous "repeated attempts" by governments to make vaccines mandatory when faced with opposition (66), a matter of characterological incoherence. It can also be attributed to already established public stances and movements against vaccination, such as those generated by Andrew Wakefield's notorious link between the MMR vaccine and autism, and by ideologies and values concerning the "purity of the body" (73) that also led to the perception of inconsistencies in policy-making. The incompatibility between the European restrictive policies on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and the support for the COVID-19 vaccine, based on

equivalent technologies, is a case in point (76). The association with GMO technologies can further explain some of the population's fears that the vaccine might contain a microchip for surveillance (74). The media, in accordance with their role of watchdogs, circulated and magnified the contradictions and fissures in the official narratives, being the chief arenas for alternative "narrative accrual", in particular social media.

In every case, characterological incoherence added to the scepticism fostered by the structural and material inconsistencies in the coronavirus scientific and governmental narratives. Prominent politicians in executive positions, such as PM Boris Johnson, abused their citizens' trust when caught not wearing the face mask and not respecting physical distancing at times when the respective measures were being enforced for the general population (Chapter 3). The institutions imposing lockdowns (Chapter 4) or recommending vaccination (Chapter 5) were not regarded as trustworthy by many citizens, and neither were the big pharmaceutical companies accused of standing to gain immense profits from the COVID-19 vaccines (Chapter 5).

It was divergent views of transcendental values, however, that largely informed the disputes and controversies on mass public health policies. Chief among them was "a specific understanding of the balance between individual freedom and social responsibility, and hence the boundaries of legitimate intervention by the state" (56), with serious implications for freedoms such as freedom of movement, freedom of religious assembly, and, at a different level, freedom from poverty. The empirical chapters examine in depth the clashes of transcendental values in the public realm. They show an awareness of the challenges posed by COVID-19-related policies to the mainstream populations as well as to the disadvantaged communities and to the populations of developing countries around the globe, who found it hard or even impossible to identify with the official narratives, due to their particular histories and experiences, which had also shaped their concerns and commitments. Bringing to the fore the inequities, structural discrimination and mistreatment of minority communities, and the struggles for economic survival of the hardest-hit categories is a great achievement of the book, as it is precisely close attention to the narratives of these groups that has been absent from the expert and official narratives, and from public debate. Examples include the need for black Americans to find a way of coping with their mainstream perception as dangerous when wearing face masks (38-39), the acknowledged cases of minority population sterilization or contamination through vaccination in countries like the U.S., Israel or Nigeria (78-79), or the protest cries of Malawi street vendors, unable to make ends meet, "Lockdown more poisonous than corona" or "We'd rather die of corona than of hunger" (54).

As important caveats, the authors point out, first, that their approach is descriptive, not normative (89), in that it only seeks to illuminate diverse understandings of medical evidence, stemming from diverse values and ways of being in the world, so as to improve communication on public health issues, especially at times of crisis like the coronavirus pandemic. Second, they do not suggest that narrative rationality should replace traditional scientific rationality or that the critical appraisal carried out in evidence-based medicine should be discarded. They posit "only that such appraisal is incomplete" and that it is essential to grasp how people make sense of medical knowledge in their different, particular contexts, and why (91).

Eivind Engebretsen and Mona Baker succeed in making a thought-provoking, original, and engaging contribution to an ongoing academic and societal conversation on the role and status of medical expertise in public health policies and communication during the coronavirus pandemic. They put forward a theoretical-methodological framework and interpretations of findings that can be extended, beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, to other crises of the same kind. While the book is intended primarily for medical researchers, practitioners, and policy makers, it also speaks to scholars and decision makers in other areas, and to a general public interested in comprehending the complexities of public debate and policy-making at the time of pandemics.

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ADOLPHE HABERER

LA FORÊT OBSCURE.

POÉTIQUE & POÉSIE, ESSAIS & COMMENTAIRES.
Domaine anglais.

[‘The Dark Forest. Poetics and Poetry, Essays and Commentaries.
English Domain’]
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ANDREEA ȘERBAN

West University of Timișoara

“Words mean more than what is set down on paper. It takes the human voice to infuse them with shades of deeper meaning.” (Angelou 1993: 98) Similar to Angelou’s character Marguerite, Adolphe Haberer must have turned these words into his credo, as his long career as professor of literature and critic has proven.

This second collection of scholarly articles, published in 2021, continues Adolphe Haberer’s endeavour started with the first volume (*La Lyre du larynx*, 1998), relying, as the author himself acknowledges in the “Introduction”, on yet another metaphor related to the voice – not only of the poet/ writer, but also of the reader and – I might add – of the scholar dissecting literary texts. The title metaphor, *La Forêt Obscure* [‘The Dark Forest’] was inspired by Seamus Heaney’s reading of Dante (via Osip Mandelstam) as a “lyric woodcutter singing in the dark wood of the larynx” (Heaney 1997: 133), Dante’s own *Inferno*, with the poet’s initial wandering through the dark forest, as well as by the author’s own readings of William Blake’s *Tyger* with its “forests of the night”, and Jacques Lacan’s “forest of desires”. In Haberer’s view, the voice is the mysterious ‘place’ where body and language become one, conveying our deepest emotions and desires.

The book’s twelve chapters – of which five are written completely in English, while the other seven mix the literary analysis carried out in French with quotations in English from the literary texts and criticism – bring together Adolphe Haberer’s latest work, previously published in various scholarly journals and volumes, highlighting the author’s deep love of poetry and keen interest in English literature. Just as the dark forest in the title metaphorically represents the poet’s/ narrator’s voice speaking up, or the reader’s own voice reading (out loud) and decoding the message, there is another red thread connecting all the chapters, namely the metaphor of the (literary) room, which becomes, in turn, a narrow, restrictive form for sonnets, a page ‘space’ where poetry is visually organized into meaningful stanzas or parts, an indoor space where characters live, interact with others, and which they desert, as well as, eventually, a space where the literature professor ‘digs’ for meaning and writes his own masterful interpretation of literary texts.

The first chapter, “Pour une sémiologie du sonnet” [For a semiotics of the sonnet], explores the sonnet as “the poem par excellence”, “a paraphrase of the soul” (p. 20, my transl.) and discusses various reflexive sonnets by William Wordsworth, John Keats, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas Watts-Dunton and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Haberer argues that the sonnet emphasizes form over meaning and, relying on works by Jacques Lacan and Dylan Thomas, underlines the importance of holes and gaps in-between words, which actually confer meaning to the language employed and to the intended message. According to Haberer, the sonnet is a form of “écriture à la limite”, where phallic enjoyment (Lacan’s “jouissance phallique”), enabled by the laws of language, meets the enjoyment of the forbidden, of the gap. It is this type of writing which, for Haberer, joins together – in a visual image best created by Virginia Woolf – the limits of a narrow room (i.e. the restrictions of the form), the musical language, the emblematic vase/container of sublimation, and emptiness (the silence of what cannot be written).

Chapter two, “La chambre étroite” [The narrow room], offers a historical evolution of the sonnet in relation to its strict form, which is inseparable from the notion of “narrow room”, coined by William Wordsworth in one of his sonnets about the sonnet form. Originating in Italy in the thirteenth century, the sonnet became very popular throughout Europe, with a peak period between 1530 and 1650, during which time about 200,000 sonnets were written. In England, although the popularity of the sonnet died out with John Milton, whom Wordsworth admired for his deft ability to “get the best out of the Italian sonnet” (p. 51, my transl.), this type of poetry reemerged with the Romantics, while Wordsworth himself turned out to be one of the most prolific English sonneteers. Haberer also traces here the scholarly attempts to organize Wordsworth’s sonnets into various categories, none of which is fully satisfactory, as they diverge from the organization the poet himself requested when publishing. Haberer concludes that a poem’s meaning is partly given by its position within a book, and that Wordsworth’s metaphors of the “narrow room” and, subsequently, of the “flowery garden” (his favourite leisure activity) relate to one’s accepting endings and limitations of both poetry and gardening.

“Free verse; Du vers libre à l’écriture-jouissance” [Free verse; from free verse to writing as enjoyment], is a chapter that takes readers on a more theoretical journey from the French “vers libre” to the English “free verse”, by discussing works by Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, both followers of Poe; yet whereas the former was wary of free verse, the latter was vehemently against the passing of prose for verse. Haberer then looks at Walt Whitman as the first theoretician of free verse, who connected poetry and the poet’s body, rejecting all external laws, as well as at D.H. Lawrence (an eager defender of Whitman as “the only pioneer”, another Moses leading people to the land of “écriture-jouissance libre”, p. 79). Exploring Lacan’s three types of “jouissance” (of the Thing, of Being, of the Other), Haberer concludes – rather ironically – that absolute *jouissance*, merging the three above, is “à la fois interdite et inter-dite” (i.e. at the same time forbidden and said in-between, p. 85); that a poem can be such an absolute *jouissance* is not related to regular metrical forms, nor does it depend on the irregularities of free verse.

“A Defence of the Cliché”, the fourth chapter, stands out as an entertaining piece, covering the meanings of the term “cliché” in both French and English, with the author’s amused observation that in English it has suffered a degradation of meaning, always involving a value judgement, the speaker’s subjectivity (Lacan’s

“parlêtre”), and a speech act in an interlocutory situation. “[S]pring[ing] from a sense of disappointment or frustration” (p. 100), the “cliché effect” results in the hearer reducing the speaker to his/her words and in building a triumphant image of the self at the other’s expense. Analysing Louis MacNeice’s poem “Homage to clichés” from a Lacanian perspective, Haberer argues that, in literature, the cliché is related to modernity with its “aesthetics of novelty and originality” (p. 108). The cliché, therefore, “deserves to be rehabilitated” (p. 109), with people paying more attention to what is being said, so that they can actually hear “the speaking heart”.

The concept of intertextuality, as coined by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960s, but applied even earlier by T.S. Eliot and David Jones, is explored in the next chapter, “Intertextuality in Theory and Practice”, where the author points out that the many definitions and redefinitions of intertextuality are “a symptom of the vital importance of the issues at stake and of the impossibility of any final knowledge about them, as they concern [...] man, language and the real” (p. 122). He argues that the intertextual effect cannot be ended by erudition; it is meant “to defeat the notion of identifiable authorship” (p. 127), to “take us to the edge of something obscure and incomprehensible” (p. 129), and “to combine meaning and the exemption of meaning” (p. 131).

A whole chapter is dedicated to Louis MacNeice’s *Autumn Journal*, which examines the poem in relation to MacNeice’s brief experience of the Spanish Civil War. The poetic analysis of the poem’s meter, rhymes and accumulation-based syntax overlaps with the thematic analysis, covering aspects of the public and private areas of life, with readings in political, moral and documentary keys. Dealing with daily desires and fears, the poem is, in Haberer’s view, particularly concerned with the ending of things such as happy love, youth, illusions, war in Spain; in short, the ending of an era.

Chapter seven, “Orwell, MacSpaunday and Spain”, focuses on the gloomy 1930s and the five British writers who volunteered to fight in the Spanish Civil War: George Orwell and the collectively named MacSpaunday (Louis MacNeice, Stephen Spender, W.H. Auden, Cecil Day-Lewis), a derogatory label created by Roy Campbell, who imagined them as a group of like-minded poets with divergent sexual orientations. Although the five writers’ relations to socialism, Marxism, and communism were very different, they all played important parts in defending the republic, whether in verse or on the actual war front. As Haberer explains, of the five, Orwell seems to stand out as a failed and rather resentful poet, having learned the hard way that writers had better stay out of politics.

“Ted Hughes et la cruauté du réel” [Ted Hughes and the cruelty/rawness of the real] does a close reading of “The Howling of Wolves”, which Haberer discusses in the context of its creation as a poem about the burden of reality, madness and death. Commenting on free verse as providing imaginary immediacy, on the repetitions of words and structures, on the parallel syntax and the poem’s layout on the page, Haberer offers readers an in-depth analysis of the sounds and the implicatures of the text’s silences and unvoiced emotions, which, in turn, ‘speak’ about the subject’s “jouissance du réel”, a reality that is simultaneously cruel and raw and a linguistic enjoyment for the reader.

The ninth chapter, “Du littoral au littéral” [From littoral to literal], is an analysis of Louis MacNeice’s more obscure poem “Littoral”, which combines elements of regularity and continuity with elements of irregularity and disruption. In Haberer’s view, the horizontal sequence of sounds produces two seemingly contradictory effects: (re)centering and closing versus decentralizing and gaping;

the gap effect is heightened by the poem's last verse ("Each child his own seashore", pp. 196, 200-201), a metaphor which creates meaning from meaninglessness. Returning to Lacan's notions of the unconscious and *jouissance*, Haberer concludes that poetry in general is an interrogation of a forbidden *jouissance*, whereas in relation to MacNeice's "Littoral" (a metaphorical border place of the unconscious), the play-on-words (littoral/ literal) – i.e. language – confirms how the letter differentiating between similar words should be uttered, thus leading to *jouissance* as if in a cancellation of death itself.

"Robert Lowell au passage de l'histoire" [Robert Lowell at the crossroads of history] is a chapter that looks at Lowell's background, his obsessive interest in episodes of historical violence, and at his poem "For the Union Dead" about Colonel Shaw and his regiment of African-Americans. Uncannily linking past and present, the poem moves readers – in Haberer's perspective – through "the ricochet effect of the voice reflected by the wall of the impossible reality" (p. 229, my transl.). Thematically, Lowell's poem highlights the submission and alienation of modern city-dwellers, the effects of American imperialism, the end of a civilization that has lost the values it was founded on.

"A Personal MacNeice A-Z" is – as its title suggests – the most personal piece in the volume, constantly underlining (in alphabetical order) Haberer's connection to Irish poet Louis MacNeice, through a descriptive and anecdotal listing of poem titles and other works analysed by the French scholar (e.g. *Autumn Journal*, *The Burning Perch*, "Bagpipe Music", "Littoral", *The Strings Are False*), conferences (on clichés), courses and places or institutions (e.g. CNED, CCI, The Queen's College at Oxford) hosting Haberer's work on MacNeice, as well as people who impacted MacNeice's life and career (for instance, W.H. Auden, T.S. Eliot, Hedli Anderson, Charles Katzman, W.B. Yeats) or Haberer's (e.g. E.R. Dodds, John Fuller, Jacqueline Genet, Jean-Georges Ritz).

The last chapter, "Virginia Woolf's Non-Hero", discusses Woolf's first break with traditional forms of fiction by looking at her novel *Jacob's Room* (1922) and the elusiveness of its protagonist. Although critics have tended to read the narrative as a war novel, Haberer sees it as "an elegiac novel, related to Woolf's family romance" (p. 260), and dedicated to her brother Thoby Stephen. Similarly to Percival from Woolf's more famous *The Waves*, Jacob has nothing admirable about him; he is nothing but a "blurred image" (p. 258), always silent, 'uncatchable', until "he simply becomes radically absent, leaving his room empty" (p. 261).

In short, *La Forêt obscure* is a cultured collection of literary analyses set against well-defined cultural and historical backgrounds, which take the educated reader through a metaphorical enfilade of writers, texts and contexts, displaying its author's sound research and keen eye for detail. At the same time, the blending of English and French in the scholarly discourse keeps the reader alert for (un)expected code changes, making a delightfully engaging read for both students and teachers of English literature.

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DAN MANOLESCU

**MEMORY AND IMAGINATION
OR FROM REMEMBER TO CREATE**

Los Angeles: Book Writing Experts, 2022, 353 pp.
ISBN: 978-0-578-26232-1

MIHAELA COZMA

University of Timișoara

Living in a world which, more than ever before, is faced with constantly changing tendencies and events, people must use various strategies in order to adapt to an array of new and challenging situations in both their professional and personal lives. Even if these strategies are generally developed in a “learn-as-you-go” manner, numerous representatives of the educational theory formulated during the past few decades (e.g., Cannatella 2004, Richards 2013, Jones 2020) have suggested that teachers themselves can play an essential role in helping their students acquire adaptability skills as long as they make creativity an integral part of the teaching and learning experience. This happens because, as Maley (2015: 9) explains, “creativity helps us to deal with change, and as the world changes ceaselessly, so will more creative solutions be needed.”

This conviction that the teaching - learning process is an act that should go beyond the transfer of static knowledge and should involve the extraordinary power of curiosity and creativity lies at the very heart of Dan Manolescu’s book, *Memory and Imagination Or From Remember to Create*. Being meant as a handbook for teachers of English as a secondary/ foreign language, *Memory and Imagination* definitely represents more than a collection of principles, methods and activities that teachers can use with a view to enabling student learning. It rather is “a pleasant reading of discovery” (p. 8), as the author himself states in the section of Acknowledgements, an invitation for the teachers to reflect on the principles that facilitate student-centered learning and to realize that the success of an ESL class depends on “the knowledge and the preparation of every detail” (p. 10).

A brief look at the Table of contents reveals that the book consists of six main sections whose titles are straightforward and meaningful at the same time: *Curiosity and Creativity*, *Memory and Imagination*, *Lessons in Practical Knowledge*, *Stories, Retell/rewrite and Miscellaneous*. These sections are preceded by *Acknowledgements*, *Foreword* and *Rationale*, and are followed by two Appendices (*Collocations and Idioms Worksheets* and *The Irregular Verb Chart*), and by *Final Thoughts*. A valuable index is also provided in order to facilitate access to the abundant information offered by this book.

Starting from the reality that language is a means of communication among people, Manolescu embraces Dor's (2015) view that the language we use not only shares a certain experience, but also instructs our interlocutors in the process of imagining that experience. In the classroom, the teachers' communication with their students should be a process of discovery, in which, with the help of curiosity and creativity, students are guided to find answers to various challenging questions. Curiosity and creativity represent the focus of the first section in this book, in which the author argues that the potential of these factors to produce thousands of inventions and discoveries should be exploited in the classroom, where students and teachers have the ability to create "especially when their curiosity is aroused and stimulated by new knowledge" (p. 14). More specifically, the previous cognitive experience that teachers and students bring to the classroom will gradually turn into "the building blocks" that create new knowledge with the help of the communicative competence. Manolescu points out that, in this process of conveying new knowledge, teachers must always use examples, because abstractions cannot be properly understood otherwise. The section also includes an extensive collection of creativity worksheets and lesson plans that are organized according to the students' proficiency level (Beginning, High Beginning, Low Intermediate, Intermediate, High Intermediate, Low Advanced, Advanced, High Advanced) and to the levels of learning in Bloom's Taxonomy (Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, Creating).

The transition to the following section is achieved by means of the notion of "creative learning", which is defined as a fusion of two concepts: memory and imagination. Imagination is very much dependent on memory, because people cannot imagine things with which they have had absolutely no experience before. Therefore, as Manolescu explains, "from curiosity and creativity to memory and imagination, students will discover new information that will satisfy their thirst for knowledge, practical hints will stimulate their curiosity, and in time new skills will make them better thinkers, better speakers, and better writers" (p. 102). After synthesizing theoretical insights from philosophy, psychology and applied linguistics towards a thorough understanding of the dynamics of memory and imagination, the author offers another set of practical ideas that will help educators prepare motivating classes and, consequently, get their students to be creative and to use their imagination. Just like in the previous section, the activities proposed here are organized according to the students' level of proficiency and to Bloom's Taxonomy of six levels of learning, and cover everything from vocabulary and grammar to language skills and language functions.

The other four main sections enjoy a more special status, as here the author provides fewer conceptual explanations and clarifications, focusing more on the presentation of further ways in which teachers can empower their students to go from remember to create, and to use imagination in order to awaken the knowledge that is latent in them. Dan Manolescu offers practical examples of how the expression of virtually any kind of human experience, from literary pieces and stories from various sources, to proverbs and philosophical studies, can be exploited by those educators who want to engage their students in a complex learning experience, one in which, in addition to understanding the subtleties of the English language, they are also taught "lessons in practical knowledge" (p. 183), moral values, cultural issues and, maybe most important of all, "self-mastery, which, if appropriately dealt with, can self-produce excellence and simultaneously self-command of the highest order." (p. 242). I consider that the five pieces of

advice that teachers should keep in mind when devising lesson plans are relevant for the educational philosophy advocated by Dan Manolescu's book: (1) Inspire your students to learn from their own life experiences and, at the same time, set an example and inspire others; (2) Empower the students to emulate their own role models and, if possible, even exceed their own expectations; (3) Create an emotional attachment to goodness; (4) Motivate students to discover new things and use their power of imagination; (5) Cultivate the students' desire to learn what is right and useful in life (p. 185).

Based on the knowledge and the experience gained by the author over decades of teaching English as a secondary language, and benefitting from useful insights from other fellow educators, as pointed out in the section of Acknowledgements, *Memory and Imagination* represents an extremely useful resource for teachers of various backgrounds and levels. Anyone involved or interested in the field of English language teaching will certainly benefit from the wide range of worksheets and lesson plans on various language items, skills and functions, will find inspiration in the lists of questions to be asked in the course of lesson preparation, and will reflect on how to find ways to knowledge through the medium of recollection, discovery, and invention. What is the rationale behind such a book? The answer is offered by the author himself, when he paraphrases what Toni Morrison said about writing: "if you can't find the book you want to read, you will have to write it yourself" (p. 11).

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IOANA RALUCA VIȘAN

TRANSLATING MARITIME LANGUAGE

Timișoara: Editura Politehnica, 2021

vol. I *Maritime Language – A branch of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)* (267 p.),
ISBN: 978-606-35-0461-7

vol. II *Aspects of Maritime Language in Translation* (383 p.),
ISBN: 978-606-35-0463-1

DANIEL DEJICA

Politehnica University Timișoara

This book belongs to the broad field of applied linguistics, with ramifications in translation, terminology, specialized languages, and is extremely rich in information. It is published in two volumes in the *Translation Studies* series at Politehnica Publishing House. The author investigates maritime language and translation within this specialized field, arguing, rightly, that they are not mapped for the English-Romanian language pair, and that research in these areas is almost inexistent.

Volume I, *Maritime Language – A branch of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP)*, consists of two main chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. The introduction is followed by a list of abbreviations and a list of the figures and diagrams and tables used; after the conclusion, one may find useful appendices and the bibliography.

In Chapter 1, *From Language for General Purposes to Language for Specific Purposes – Maritime Language as Part of LSP*, Ioana Raluca Vișan introduces the notions of language for general purposes (LGP) and language for specific purposes (LSP), making a distinction between them, presenting them in detail, and citing established authors, such as Bowker & Pearson (2002), Quirk (1990), Duranti (1997), Hoffman (1987), Croitoru (1996) and many others, who have dealt with this issue. The author shows that maritime English is used as a teaching and learning tool in all maritime educational institutions in the world and claims that, today, maritime English has managed to acquire particularly important valences, being considered a lingua franca of the maritime industry, constituting a communication tool used on board of commercial ships with multinational and multicultural crews. This is another important argument that justifies the relevance and necessity of the research conducted by the author and presented in the book. In the same chapter, Ioana Raluca Vișan highlights the complexity of maritime language, offering her own classification and a graphic representation of it (figure 1.3, page 63 in the book), made up of five types of language: maritime language for communication purposes, maritime language for business purposes, maritime

language for legal purposes, maritime language for technical purposes, and nautical language. Another important aspect highlighted by the author in this chapter concerns the geographical, temporal, and social variations of the maritime language, which presents differences in American and British English, and which can sometimes raise translation problems. Last but not least, the author carries out a socio-linguistic investigation: she interviews ten Romanian sailors of different ages, and extracts and presents the terms, phrases and expressions they use in communication.

Chapter 2, *Differences and Similarities between General Language Words and Maritime Terms*, is also very extensive. The author makes a useful synthesis of the concepts of *term* and *word*, defining and presenting the differences and the similarities between them. Maritime terms and words from the common language are discussed by taking into account their various semantic and lexical relations, including polysemy, homonymy, hyponymy, meronymy, synonymy, and antonymy. In a complex, well-structured analysis, the author highlights the terminologization of some words borrowed from the common language, and, at the same time, the determinologization of some terms and phrases, showing the ways in which their meaning and usage shifted from the specialised to the common language. The commentary is detailed, qualitative, coherent, a mark of an established researcher, and is complemented by numerous tables, pictures, figures and original graphic representations, very useful for communicating the research results.

Volume II, *Aspects of Maritime Language in Translation*, follows the structure of Volume I, and consists of three main chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Similarly to the first volume, the introduction is accompanied by a list of abbreviations, of figures and diagrams, and a list of tables; appendices and bibliography come after the conclusion.

In the first chapter, *Maritime Discourse in Translation*, Ioana Raluca Vişan presents the characteristics of maritime discourse, highlighting its linguistic and anthropological ones, and those related to gender, power, identity, and hybridization. Knowing these characteristics is essential in the process of translating specialized texts, including those in the maritime field. Accordingly, the author analyses the source text from three different perspectives – atomistic, holatomistic, and holistic – using the theory of textual perspectives proposed by Gerzymisch-Arbogast (2008) and adapted to the translation process by Dejica (2010). The author details the perspectives from a theoretical point of view and exemplifies them with already translated texts (the English-Romanian language pair), or with her own translations of selected texts, proving thus a good knowledge of the theoretical framework, of the basic concepts and approaches to translation, as well as of their correct application.

Strategies Used in Translating Maritime Terms, Collocations and Idioms is a chapter in which the author discusses the ways in which the translator of the maritime language chooses to solve the problems arising from the translation of idiomatic terms, collocations, and expressions; she presents the main processes and strategies of translation as described in the specialized literature by several established translation scholars, including Lörcher (2005), Chesterman (1997), Venuti (1995), Vinay and Darbelnet (1958/1995) and others, which she then illustrates with maritime texts. The examples are accompanied by very thorough and relevant translation comments, the author demonstrating thus her experience and qualities as a genuine translator.

In the next chapter, *(Non-)Equivalence in Translating Maritime Language*, Ioana Raluca Vişan approaches the concept of equivalence in the translation of maritime texts. She presents and comments in detail on aspects such as the equivalence and non-equivalence of terms, collocations and maritime expressions in English and Romanian, aspects related to the cultural elements in translation, and, last but not least, the anglicisation of the Romanian maritime discourse – a successful completion of already existing studies in this field (e.g., Bujeniță 1966). She draws attention to the complexity of maritime language and urges translators to treat this type of specialized speech carefully, taking into account the differences between the English and the Romanian maritime language.

In the general conclusion at the end of the second volume, the author makes a summary of the chapters of the whole book and reconfirms her main objectives formulated in the initial phase of the book, namely, to familiarize translators with the peculiarities of maritime discourse and to unveil the problems which may occur in the translation of this specialised type of discourse, expressing her hope that they were fulfilled.

The author approaches a difficult and complex topic, starting from a vast bibliography, assimilated and interpreted critically. The topic chosen and the research carried out are extremely useful, the author contributing through the results obtained to the development of translation studies in our country. Both volumes of the book are well-structured and coherent, and the chapters are balanced.

The bibliography chapters are complex and well-organized in several chapters that include books, articles and works cited, books, articles and works consulted, corpus and webography. From the cited titles, it is possible to identify fundamental works, but also specialized works published recently, the author demonstrating thus that she is also familiar with the latest publications in the field. This is visible in the detailed syntheses that the author makes, in the clear description of her research approach, and, in particular, in the pertinent translation comments in the applied part of the book.

The book is valuable from both a theoretical and a practical point of view, as the author brings original contributions to the knowledge of the field, that have an impact in the sphere of specialized translation. Moreover, the numerous bilingual tables made by the author, with terms, collocations, idiomatic expressions from the maritime field are very useful; I think they can serve as a starting point for creating a maritime bilingual glossary or dictionary, which will certainly be a very beneficial for translators and for those who are working in this field.

Therefore, one can state that this book has multiple qualities. It brings a valuable contribution to the understanding of specialised discourse and specialised translation, in general, and it facilitates the understanding of maritime specialized translation, in particular. It is an important work for translators, translation scholars and students, and for all those interested in this field, as it gives them the opportunity to understand this type of specialised language in depth, which is one of the keys that can ensure felicitous translation and communication.

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CORINA MARTIN-IORDACHE

***EDUCATION WITH MEANING. A TEACHER'S JOURNAL
FROM THE YEARS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC 2019-2021.***

Amazon.ca: Bolton, ON, 2021, 247 p. ISBN: 979-875-577-9067

VALENTINA MUREȘAN

West University of Timișoara

Corina Martin-Iordache's book is organised as a kaleidoscopic display of thoughts and beliefs about key issues pertaining to education, organised in five parts and thirty-five sub-sections, each presenting a distinct point of view (political, philosophical, historical, cultural, moral, and ethical). The thirty-five sections, which function like a collection of separate journal entries, allow the author to explore key concepts, such as one's purpose in life, the pursuit of happiness, social strata, social action, identity and their impact on educational policies and practices across time, from antiquity to modern times, from Europe to North America, Canada.

From the introduction, readers find out a little about teacher Corina Martin-Iordache, who, with thirty years of experience as a teacher and an education that brought her into contact with Julia Kristeva and J. E. Chamberlain, sets out to explore how education opens doors for human fulfilment.

The first lens proposed by the author is that of political views that impact education, which shift between liberal, conservative, or socialist, in the section called "Defining concepts: Morality, Ethics and Liberalism". Starting from Kant's view of reason as the basis of any moral and ethical system and the definition of freedom as submission to laws that serve both the individual, and the larger community, the author moves through Blackburn's claim to balance between rights, freedoms and compromises through critical thinking and the exercise of healthy debate of moral and ethical issues, only to reach the concept of liberalism and the evolution of liberal thought from the Enlightenment age to the 20th century: "Thus critical thinking shaped by quality education becomes a key element in the healthy evolution of any society" (7)

In the section "Reforming Society through education", the author takes further the idea of political liberalism to its transfer for the educational system and the birth of concepts such as child-centred education, individual learner and critical thinking. She skilfully explores these key concepts as they came under the scrutiny of John Dewey at the beginning of the 20th century and comments on the importance of developing critical thinking "in the age of social media, fake news, trolls and influencers [...] since rising populist thinking and mob mentality threaten the very fabric of our society" (9). The next few journal entries continue the idea of freedom and critical thinking with a focus on the idea of reform of the educational

system in the context of the French Revolution of 1968. The author discusses the cry of the leftist-socialist movement, initiated at Nanterre University, for a reform of education, which, due to political manipulation, lost the support of the population and strengthened the power of de Gaulle's conservative party. Martin-Iordache brings to attention the role of Pierre Bourdieu around the same time, who fought for social equity within the educational system, so that all students be supported in the pursuit of their dreams. Key concepts such as meritocracy, cultural privilege and symbolic violence are brought into discussion, which culminates with the conclusion that the socio-cultural difficulties of students have a direct impact on their poor academic achievement. In the next section, the author focuses on the idea of coercion and Foucault's parallel between schools and prisons, only to re-state the importance of a shift from supervising the individual to nurturing as a primary role of public education. Change and reform are also addressed when mentioning G. Deleuze's claim for a shift from control societies to nomadic ones, which would allow the movement away from mainstream patterns of thought towards marginal ones and the modern principle of re-evaluating what we know and how we have come to know something. With the next few journal sections, the author concentrates on the changing beliefs of various societies - from the views of H. Marcuse in North America, who advocated the beneficial role of "constructive dissent" and critical thinking, to H. A. Giroux's claim for the teacher to act as an agent within a system of critical pedagogy, and to Herrnstein and Murray's pessimistic views concerning the "public education system as ill-equipped to properly develop talent and special intellectual endowment" (39), which she warns against.

The second and third parts of Corina Martin-Iordache's book cover different standpoints concerning moral values and theories, from antiquity and the Enlightenment (part two) to modernity (part three), as drivers of education. In these two parts, the author returns to the beliefs and educational practices of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca as inspiring lessons with impact at the individual and the societal level. Then she shifts her attention to the 18th century, to Hume, Rousseau, Smith and Bentham, as philosophers who have "all influenced the thinking of their societies in a significant way affecting every aspect of cultural life including education" (66). She bridges the historical gap between the 18th century and the present day by discussing the modern claim of Joseph Heath who argues in favour of a return to the pursuit of Enlightenment values in the modern age, but she also dwells on the negative moral values of evil, selfishness and anger and the dangers of their effects at the societal level, such as the inequality of opportunity. Part three moves the reader's attention to the modern moral theories, concentrating on the human personality and psyche, as the author claims that "one cannot be a good educator without going through some basic lessons in psychoanalysis" (87). She thus spotlights issues that resonate very closely with the experience of the Pandemic, such as anxiety, communication problems and autism, discipline, intellectual standards, by referring to psychoanalysts such as Freud, Jung, Horney, Lasch, but also to philosophers Kristeva, Heidegger or Dworkin. She also takes a closer look at issues pertaining to justice and fairness, and the utilitarianism – contractualism positions related to social justice through the views of Rawls, and concludes that if society managed to "create [...] reasonably confident conditions in order to give each individual the conviction that his or her plan of life can succeed according to their aspirations, we could say that we have put in place a society which is as fair as possible" (111).

In the fourth part Corina Martin-Iordache turns towards different hot topics in present day educational debates. The first entry opens the discussion about conformity and uniformity versus individually tailored educational practices and argues the case of Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences, underlining the teacher's task to "establish as early as possible the individual intelligence profile" of students (115) and adjust the teaching strategy accordingly. Next, the focus is on Canadian education theorist Malcolm Gladwell, who comments on the dangers of rapid cognition, responsible for inequity and discrimination, but also advocates for taking into consideration creativity and imagination when discussing intellectual exceptionality. In her entries, Martin-Iordache considers the issue of meritocracy, equality in education, success versus inequality, privileges and status anxiety, recalling the views of R. Collins, D. Markovits and M. Kingwell. She then moves on to examine issues pertaining to education and technology, by first mapping the shift away from the printed letter to the screen, with a reference to M. McLuhan's warnings against the dangers of disengagement from reality. Then, her attention turns towards further implications of technology in education, which may result in a degradation of critical thinking, and builds her case on B. Stiegler's claims for a need to engage in a process of dis-automation in order to control automation. Corina Martin-Iordache continues then to weave into discussion a deeper purpose for engaging in education and explores the idea of the pursuit of happiness and academic success, only to tackle, in a petal like structure, elements pertaining to the individual construction, which impact one's academic results. Here she revisits the concepts of the multiple intelligence theory in close connection to emotional literacy, the role of learned optimism and the role of positive psychology as a means of reaching intellectual well-being.

Being a teacher of literature, Corina Martin-Iordache dedicates the last part of her book to lessons learnt from literature and concentrates in turn on Victor Hugo and Romanticism, on Albert Camus and his social involvement, and on black and first nations identities in modern society. Major literary works are skilfully viewed both from the perspective of the message they encode and from an autobiographical standpoint, taking into account the social-historical context which led to their creation. From the fascination with Romanticism in general, Martin-Iordache moves on to document Hugo's real-life fight for human rights, his strong position against the death sentence, against poverty, and his overt support of abolitionists in the US, as well as the echoes of these fights in his masterpiece *Les Misérables*, but also in other important literary creations, concluding that Hugo should be viewed as a "humanist and a humanitarian" (170). Albert Camus is another important author whose work and life intertwine. Camus' cry for social justice reflected his day-to-day civic involvement. His Algerian origin and fight against the oppression of the poor, his position against Arab-Muslim terrorism and his involvement in the French Resistance movement interlace with topics covered by theatre plays such as *Le temps du mépris*, *Caligula*, *L'État de siege*, but also by his novels *The Plague*, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, *The Rebel* and later *L'étranger* - works that bear a strong voice for the pursuit of justice, defend the case of the individual versus society, and highlight injustice and the clash of cultures, to name just a few issues. Further, the author reflects upon different works with a strong impact on shaping modern views towards issues pertaining to the first nations people. The author moves from the reading of the Land Acknowledgement Protocol in the Toronto District, to the works of explorer Samuel de Champlain and the negative impact of the coloniser upon the colonised, to Voltaire's *L'Ingénu*,

with the bush garden as the space where the European mind projects the dream of possession in N. Frye, to the metaphor of the bush in M. Atwood, to the build-up of Canada as a mix of indigenous and immigrant blood in J. R. Saul, the hardship of indigenous young people in T. Talaga, the focus on indigenous peoples' rights in the writings of J. E. Chamberlain and the displacement of indigenous communities, the birth of residential schools for the Indigenous population in T. King, or N. Klein's proposal for a re-instatement of indigenous sovereignty. Martin-Iordache ends this part with a series of references to powerful voices in modern literature, voices of indigenous authors engaged in an effort to free their culture, such as J. Bacon, N. K. Fontaine and R. Mestokosho, or N. Kanapé Fontaine, but she also refers to authors who bring to the forefront issues connected to the Négritude movement in France and Créolité movement in the Caribbean literature.

To conclude, Corina Martin-Iordache's book is extremely dense and not easy to review, as it is not a research oriented book on education, nor a journal, as she proposes in the title - it is not characterised by a confessional mood and a regularity of entries - and it is not a book just on literary criticism either, but an interesting mix of genres, which follows the interior mapping of its author in a quest for the deeper meaning of the teacher's role. As such, this review has only managed to present some of the highlights of the author's thought-provoking invitation to look at underlying issues in education today and trace back their sources or discover similar challenges from different standpoints, perhaps wondering where education should be heading in the future.

NOTES ON THE AUTHORS

Hanan Alawna is a PhD candidate in the Comparative English department at the University of Szeged in Hungary. Currently, she is working on a doctoral dissertation dealing with the comparison of women representations in Western literature and Middle Eastern literature. Her main research interests are: feminist criticism, Palestinian literature, Arab women's writing and British literature.

E-mail address: hananalawneh4@gmail.com

María José Álvarez Faedo is a Senior Lecturer in English Literature and Drama at the University of Oviedo. She is the author of three books and co-author of three more, as well as of numerous articles and book chapters. She is currently participating (with the article included in this volume) in the research project: *Theatrical recreations of Don Quixote* (Ref: MCI-20-PID2019-111485GB-I00), working on the English theatrical rewritings of Cervantes's novel.

E-mail address: mjfaedo@uniovi.es

Senar Arcak, a graduate of Bilkent University, is a research assistant in the Department of American Culture and Literature at Başkent University, Ankara, Turkey, and a doctoral student at Middle East Technical University (METU), Department of English Literature.

E-mail address: senar.arcak@gmail.com

Arda Arıkan completed his Ph.D. at Penn State University's Science, Technology, and Society program in 2002. He continues his studies as a generalist by reading and writing on literature, education, and culture. Currently, he is a full professor at Akdeniz University, Department of English Language and Literature in Antalya, Turkey.

E-mail address: ardaarikan@akdeniz.edu.tr

Anthony Baldry, Professor Emeritus of English Language and Translation, University of Messina, Italy, has published volumes and numerous articles on multimodal semiosis and has participated in many EU and Italian research projects mostly relating to online learning.

E-mail address: anbaldry@unime.it; anthony.baldry@gmail.com

Eirini Dimitra Bourontzi is currently a PhD student at the University of Bucharest, Romania. She holds an MA in "British Cultural Studies" from the same university and a BA from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Greece (the Department of English Language and Literature).

E-mail address: eirini.bourontzi@s.unibuc.ro

Alexandru Budac teaches comparative literature and aesthetics at West University of Timișoara. He is the author of *Byron în rețea sau Cum a rămas liberă canapeaua doctorului Freud* (Humanitas, 2009) / *Byron on the Net, or How Dr. Freud's Couch Remained Empty*, a study on Thomas Pynchon's fiction and cognitive science, and of *Tomahawkul verde: pistolari, vampe, detectivi fără licență, supereroi și alte iconografii americane* (Cartea Românească, 2022) / *The Green Tomahawk: Gunslingers, Vamps, Rogue Detectives, Superheroes, and Other American Iconographies*. His main research interests are literary criticism, the philosophy of mind, American Literature, and aesthetics.

E-mail address: alexandru.budac@e-uvt.ro

Cristina Chevereșan is Professor PhD. Habil. at the West University of Timișoara, Romania, where she teaches American Literature, Culture and Civilization. She is Director of the *American Studies* M.A. Program, a member of several European and American scientific societies, Ca' Foscari Venice Visiting Professor (2019), past recipient of fellowships from the Salzburg Global Seminar, UCD Clinton Institute for American Studies, the Cornell School of Criticism and Theory, Fulbright Senior scholar (Harvard University) and Fulbright Ambassador. She has published nine books in Romanian and English, as well as numerous articles in national and international journals, collected volumes, the Romanian cultural press. She has translated and edited a dozen other volumes.
E-mail: cristina.cheveresan@e-uvt.ro

Francesca Cocchetta is an Associate Professor in English Language and Translation at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. Her research interests and publications centre on multimodal discourse analysis of domain-specific discourses, video corpus construction and annotation, English language teaching, Computer Assisted Language Learning and Data Driven Learning.
E-mail address: francesca.cocchetta@unive.it

Mihaela Cozma, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Her areas of expertise are English morphology, applied linguistics, and translation studies. She holds a PhD in Philology from the university where she currently teaches. She has published, both in Romania and abroad, books, book chapters and numerous academic studies in her areas of research.
E-mail address: mihaela.cozma@e-uvt.ro

Dana Crăciun is Senior Lecturer within the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures of the West University of Timișoara. Her research interests include contemporary literature, critical theory, and translation studies. She has also translated several volumes of fiction by authors such as Martin Amis, George Orwell, John Steinbeck or Salman Rushdie.
E-mail address: dana.craciun@e-uvt.ro

Daniel Dejica, PhD, habil., is Professor at Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania. His research interests include translation theory and methodology, LSP translation, and discourse analysis for translation purposes. He is the director of the Politehnica Center for Advanced Translation Studies – PoliCAT, and the coordinator of the *Translation Studies* book series at Politehnica Publishing House. Together with Muguraș Constantinescu and Titela Vilceanu, he coordinates the publication of *A History of Translations into the Romanian Language* at the Publishing House of the Romanian Academy.
E-mail address: daniel.dejica@upt.ro

Roxana Elena Doncu is an Associate Professor at the Modern Languages Department at the “Carol Davila” University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Bucharest, Romania. Her research interests cover areas such as postcolonial and post-communist studies, world literature, translation studies and medical humanities. She is a member of the international research group on Literary Modeling at University Kliment Ohridski in Sofia and the University of Münster, where she has been invited to teach at the graduate school on British, American and Postcolonial Studies.
E-mail address: roxana.doncu@umfcd.ro

Xiaorui Du is a PhD student at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. His research focuses on 19th-century American literature, particularly the fiction of Washington Irving, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Herman Melville. He enjoys exploring the intersections of

history, psychology and literature. In addition to his doctoral studies, he also teaches Chinese at the West University of Timișoara.
Email address: xiaorui.du10@e-uvt.ro

Péter Gaál-Szabó is a college Professor at the Debrecen Reformed Theological University, Hungary. He received his PhD (2010) and habilitation (2016) in Literary and Cultural Studies from the University of Debrecen. His research focuses on African American literature and culture, cultural spaces, religio-cultural identity, and intercultural communication.
E-mail address: gaal.szabo.peter@drhe.hu

Gabriela Glăvan is an Associate Professor at The West University in Timișoara, The Faculty of Letters, History and Theology where she teaches Comparative Literature. She is the author of a book on Romanian modernism (2014), of a critical essay on Franz Kafka's short stories (2017) and on Max Blecher (2020). She has published numerous academic studies on modernism, the avant-garde and post-communism and is a contributor to several cultural magazines.
E-mail address: gabriela.glavan@e-uvt.ro

Mona Jafari is a Ph.D. candidate and a part-time lecturer in English Literature at the University of Tehran, Iran. Her primary research interests include twentieth-century British / American literature, literary theory, literary suicidology, the Gothic, (post-)humanism, and parody. Her research articles have been published in Springer Nature's *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *ANQ: A Quarterly Journal of Short Articles, Notes and Reviews*, *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies*, and *Atlantis: Journal of the Spanish Association of English Studies* (forthcoming).
Email: mona.jafari1@ut.ac.ir

Kristīna Korneliusa is currently a PhD student in English Philology (Linguistics) at the University of Latvia. Her MA thesis, "Corpus Linguistics Application for Sentiment Analysis of the Texts on Political Economy Published in 1841-1850" deals with the analysis of a diachronic corpus. She continues exploring the functionalities of corpus linguistics in her PhD research.
E-mail address: kristina.korneliusa@gmail.com

Yurii Kovbasko, Dr. Habil., is Professor of philology at "Vasyl Stefanyk" Precarpathian National University, Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine. He is currently a visiting researcher (2022-2024) at Universidade Estadual do Centro Oeste, Guarapuava, Brazil. He holds a PhD in philology (Germanic languages) from the Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine. In 2021, he was awarded a Dr.Habil/D.Sc. (Germanic languages) from Zaporizhzhia National University, Ukraine. He is the Laureate of the "Young Scientist of the Year 2022" competition (Philology) and the Laureate of the "Monograph Publishing Grant for Young Scientists – 2021" competition (Philology) organized by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. He is the author of a number of linguistics papers in prestigious journals, such as *Acta Sapientiae: Philologica* (Cluj Napoca, Romania), *Baltic Journal of English Language, Literature and Culture* (Riga, Latvia), *Poznan Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* (Poznan, Poland), *Studies about Languages* (Kaunas, Lithuania) and others.
E-mail address: y.kovbasko@yahoo.com

David Livingstone is an American citizen living and working in the Czech Republic for the last thirty years. He teaches Shakespeare, Modernism, children's literature and American folk music at Palacký University, Olomouc. His most recent book, *In Our Own Image: Fictional Representations of William Shakespeare*, looks at novels, plays, short stories, films, television series and comics focused on Shakespeare as a character. Of late, he has been presenting and writing a series of articles concerning American folk music.
E-mail address: david.livingstone@upol.cz

Irina Diana Mădroane is an Associate Professor of Applied Linguistics and Cultural Studies at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Her main specializations are (critical) discourse studies, rhetorical criticism and practical argumentation, applied to public discourse analysis (primarily media). She is the author of *Romanians in the Right-Wing British Press: A Critical Discourse Analysis Approach* (Timișoara: Editura Universității de Vest, 2014) and of numerous studies, published in peer-reviewed, international journals (*Journal of Language and Politics*, *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, *Mobilities*, *Television & New Media*) and in international volumes (Routledge, John Benjamins, Sage, Wiley Blackwell). She has co-edited a special issue on “Discourse in Transnational Social Fields” in *Critical Discourse Studies* (2017, Taylor & Francis) and the book *Debating Migration as a Public Problem: National Publics and Transnational Fields* (Peter Lang, 2018), together with Camelia Beciu, Mălina Ciocea and Alexandru I. Cărlan. Since 2020, she has been editor-in-chief of the *Gender Studies* journal (DeGruyter/Sciendo).
E-mail: irina.madroane@e-uvt.ro

Valentina Carina Mureșan is Assistant Professor of linguistics at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. Her research interests and published papers cover various issues in the field of applied linguistics, including corpus linguistics, conversational analysis, ELT pedagogy, translation studies and gender studies. In addition to her publications in the field she has also been involved in postdoctoral research projects in ELT and corpus linguistics, and she is also a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at the university, co-editor of the *Gender Studies* journal, a yearly open-access Erih+ indexed academic journal.
E-mail: valentina.muresan@e-uvt.ro

Merve Peköz is pursuing her master’s degree in the Department of English Language and Literature at Akdeniz University. She is currently a research assistant at Ordu University, Department of English Language and Literature in Ordu, Turkey.
E-mail address: mervepekoz@yahoo.com

Veronica Tatiana Popescu is a Senior Lecturer at the English Department, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași, Romania, where she teaches British and American literature (British Neoclassicism and Latinx fiction) and film studies. She is also a member of the Editorial Board of LINGUACULTURE journal. Her research interests currently focus on adaptation studies and Latinx fiction.
E-mail address: veronica.t.popescu@yahoo.com

Daria Protopopescu is an Associate Professor at the University of Bucharest, Romania. She holds a PhD degree in Linguistics from the same university. She is the author of *Elements of English Terminology*, 2013, Editura Universității București, and co-author of *New Perspectives on English Grammar*, 2014, Editura Institutul European, Iași. Her research areas include terminology, translation studies and the history of the English language.
E-mail address: daria.protopopescu@lils.unibuc.ro

Aleksandra Radovanović, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Hotel Management and Tourism in Vrnjačka Banja, University of Kragujevac, Serbia. She teaches English for Specific and Academic Purposes. Her main research interests are Comparative Linguistics, Semantics and Language Education.
E-mail address: aleksandra.radovanovic@kg.ac.rs

Zohreh Ramin is an Associate Professor of English Literature and Editor-in-Chief of *Research in Contemporary World Literature* at the University of Tehran in Iran. She has

published extensively on twentieth-century English/American literature, literary criticism, and comparative literature.

E-mail address: zramin@ut.ac.ir

Adriana Răducanu is Professor in the English Language and Literature Department of Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her areas of interest are Contemporary Literary Theories, Philosophy and Literature, Shakespeare Studies, Gothic Studies, and Comparative Literature. She has published articles and book chapters on Global Gothic, Shakespeare Studies, post-colonial, gender studies, and comparative mythology. She is the author of *Speaking the Language of the Night: Aspects of the Gothic in Selected Contemporary Novels* (Peter Lang, 2014).

E-mail address: araducanu@yeditepe.edu.tr

H. Sezgi Sarac Durgun completed her Ph.D. in English language education at Hacettepe University in 2007. Her research interests focus on applied linguistics, stylistics, and pedagogical linguistics. Currently, she is an associate professor at Akdeniz University, Department of English Language and Literature in Antalya, Turkey.

E-mail address: sezgisarac@akdeniz.edu.tr

Džemal Špago is an Associate Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature (Faculty of Humanities) of “Džemal Bijedic” University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he has worked for the past 15 years. His research interests are mainly focused on rhetorical questions, as well as on the use and perception of insulting language.

E-mail address: džemal.spago@unmo.ba

Kiyotaka Sueyoshi is a PhD Candidate in the Doctoral School of Literature at the University of Szeged, Hungary. His research interests are American Renaissance and American Enlightenment. His thesis concerns the mediation between the textual and contextual reading of Walt Whitman. He is a holder of Hungarian Stipendium scholarship.

E-mail address: sueyoshikiyotaka@gmail.com

Andreea Șerban is Associate Professor of English literature at the West University of Timișoara, Romania. She also teaches British culture and civilisation, gender discourse and its translation. Her research interests cover Anglophone literatures, modern transmediations of William Shakespeare’s works (manga in particular), gender and cultural studies. In addition to several books on Margaret Atwood’s novels, Shakespeare’s plays, the cultural history of England/Britain and the rewritings of Little Red Riding Hood, her publications include book chapters in various thematic volumes and a series of articles in WoS, Scopus and Erih+ indexed academic journals. She is also a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies at the university where she currently teaches, and co-editor of the *Gender Studies Journal*, a yearly open-access academic journal.

E-mail address: andreea.serban@e-uvt.ro

Davide Taibi is *primo ricercatore* at CNR-ITD, Palermo, Italy, and contract lecturer at the University of Palermo, Italy, researching applications of innovative technologies in Secondary and Higher Education, including Mobile Learning, Semantic Web and Linked Data for e-learning, Learning Analytics, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality for education.

E-mail address: davide.taibi@itd.cnr.it

Jana Valová is a Ph.D. student of the programme Literatures in English at Masaryk University in Brno. Her doctoral research focuses on ostracised and overlooked characters in neo-Victorian works, the motivation and significance behind contemporary revisitations of the nineteenth century, as well as the issue of defining this constantly expanding and developing genre.

E-mail address: 437702@mail.muni.cz

Nicoletta Vasta is Professor of English Linguistics at Udine University, Italy, and former AIA Vice-President. She co-edited *Identity Construction and Positioning in Discourse and Society* (with C.R. Caldas-Coulthard, 2009) and *Multiliteracy Advances and Multimodal Challenges in ELT Environments* (with A. Baldry, 2020). Her soon-to-be-published monograph on podcasting's ideological/educational impact explores domain-specific discourse analysis, multimodality, (re)mediation, digital media in educational contexts.
E-mail address: nicoletta.vasta@uniud.it

Nadina Vişan, PhD, is Professor in the Department of English, University of Bucharest, Romania. Her main research interests lie in the direction of historical linguistics and translation studies. She is the author of *A Discourse Representation Theory Analysis of the Perfect in English and Romanian* (Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 2006) and *Elements of English Lexicology* (Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii Bucureşti, 2015).
E-mail address: nadina.visan@lls.unibuc.ro

Dragana Vuković Vojnović, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Sciences, University of Novi Sad, Serbia. She teaches English for Tourism, Academic and Business English, and English and Communication in Cultural Tourism. Her research interests are Contrastive Linguistics, Intercultural Communication and Language Education.
E-mail address: dragana.vukovic.vojnovic@dgt.uns.ac.rs

Narumi Yoshino is Professor at Kindai University, Japan. She holds a PhD in American Literature from Osaka University. Her main research interests are female figures depicted in the novels of the early 20th century in America, including those written by Edith Wharton, Kate Chopin, and Theodore Dreiser. She has also published several articles related to automobiles and gender.
E-mail address: nrmytkg@gmail.com

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E-mail: editura@e-uvt.ro
Tel.: +40 - 256 592 681

